

David Spares Saul a Second Time

Call to Worship: Psalm 46

1st Scripture: 1 Samuel 24

2nd Scripture: 1 Samuel 26

Hymn Insert #46C- *God is Our Refuge and Our Strength*

Hymn #17 (Supp)- *Blessed Assurance!*

Hymn Insert- *Blessed be the Name*

Introduction:

In chapter 24, we left off with the ongoing drama of King Saul's pursuit of David, where David had righteously forfeited a golden opportunity to take Saul's life, in a cave, in the Wilderness of En Gedi. There, David spared Saul's life, refusing to harm the "Lord's anointed," since it was God who had set Saul upon the throne. And after David had confronted Saul, proving that he had spared his life, Saul expressed at least some shallow, outward form of sorrow for his actions, in response to David's merciful kindness. And then, they went their separate ways. Judging by Saul's utter lack of stability in the past, his lack of a sincere fear of God, and his grossly marred integrity, we don't expect Saul's change of attitude toward David, to last very long, and the end of chapter 25, where we are told that he had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to another man in marriage, begins to further confirm this warranted suspicion.

And now, following a one chapter diversion, into the events surrounding David's dealings with Nabal and his wife, Abigail, we return once again, to continue to consider the "cat and mouse" drama between Saul and David. And once again, we find David responding to Saul's unrighteous pursuit of David, in a way that greatly testified to the sincerity of David's strong confidence and faith in the Living God!

I. David Spares Saul a Second Time

Once again, the friendly neighborhood Ziphites report to Saul, David's whereabouts, in the Wilderness of Ziph, hoping that Saul will come and exterminate David and his army of six hundred men. And once again, Saul unrighteously pursues David with three thousand of Israel's best soldiers (Gotta love them odds, huh!). [Read verses 1-2]

In the midst of his pursuit, Saul decides to set up camp, just off the road, in the hill of Hachilah. And we are told, that David had discovered that Saul was, yet again, coming after him (presumably, David, though frustrated, was probably not surprised at this point). And David had sent out spies to confirm that Saul had indeed come, and to further locate where Saul and his large army were setting up camp. Enlisting Abishai, Joab's brother, to accompany him, David

then goes to the camp at night, at a time when Saul and his army were sleeping. And they find Saul and Abner (the commander of Saul's army) fast asleep, with the entire army sleeping and encamped around Saul.

Once again, a golden opportunity is granted David, such that he could sneak in and do to Saul, all his good pleasure. There he lay, in a deep sleep, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. In fact, David does not have to do anything. Abishai is more than willing to do the deed for David...should David give the word. [Read verses 7-8]. "David, this is of the Lord! Look, Saul is given to you on a silver platter. Let me go in and deal with him once and for all. I will spear him through, right into the ground, and I won't have to make a second thrust. Please, you don't even have to move. Just let me at him, and I will quickly deal with this unrighteous nuisance!"

How then does David respond to this opportunity, with a heaping load of pressure coming from Abishai, who desires to "do the good deed?" And we can note that, the pressure is more than likely greater at this point, than it was last time, because now, as an additional motive for David to kill Saul, we can add the fact that David had already spared him once. I mean, on top of all that Saul has wickedly done up to this point, he has now managed to trample upon David's merciful kindness, when David had spared Saul the first time, in the cave in the Wilderness of En Gedi. But that said, David does have something under his belt, which he did not have before, which could yet motivate him even now, to continue to entrust Saul to God, rather than touch the Lord's anointed. David has his experience with Nabal, and the events which took place right before this, as faith strengthening means, for once again dealing graciously with Saul, allowing God to avenge David, in His time.

In other words, brethren, God has used the circumstances with Nabal, in part, as a means of preparing and strengthening David for this additional encounter with Saul. David had almost acted in haste with Nabal, preparing to avenge himself on Nabal and all of the males of his household. A lot of unnecessary blood would have been shed and David would have unrighteously taken vengeance on Nabal, committing great sin against God, rather than entrusting Nabal's life to the God, who will bring about justice in due time. But, by the vehicle and means of Abigail, God had stayed David's hand, allowing David a golden opportunity to secure and strengthen his faith in God's sovereignty, in the handling of the wicked Nabal. And indeed, God struck Nabal, repaying his evil upon his own head, while vindicating David for the

gross offense committed against him by Nabal. And by this means, David's confidence and faith in God were strengthened. David saw yet again, that he could trust the Judge of all the earth, to bring about justice in His due time. He did not have to rely on his own efforts and strength, as means of avenging himself. His invisible and yet, all sovereign God, would act on his behalf, in due time.

Well, David was able to carry this, further strengthened confidence, with him, to this present trial and circumstance involving Saul, who was once again, wickedly pursuing David's life. And brethren, here we find another significant reason for the interruption and sandwiching of the events of chapter 25 (with Nabal and Abigail), between chapters 24 and 26, where David is dealing with Saul. The application of this reality (the bridging of chapter 24 to 26, by means of the events of 25) will be brought out further, when we finish our overview of the remainder of chapter 26.

And so, how does David respond? [Read verses 9-12]

David wisely develops another "Plan B," that would enable him to show Saul, that, once again, he could have killed Saul, but spared him. First, he restrains Abishai, commanding him not to kill Saul, since Saul is the Lord's anointed. And then, he manifests his confidence in God's sovereignty over the matter, ensuring Abishai that God will avenge David, in His perfect timing. As was the case with Nabal, God would deal with Saul by directly striking him, by eventually bringing him to death and judgment (as is the course for all men) or by causing Saul to perish at war. And in a few chapters, we will find God fulfilling the last of these possibilities, when Saul is killed in a battle against the Philistines. While Saul perishes for his sin there, as his guilt soon catches up to him in its fullness, certainly, David is avenged by that means as well. Needless to say, David, once again, testifies of his confidence in God's sovereignty here, as a testimony to Abishai, the rest of David's men, Saul and his army, and us! And again, David manifests the very thing that Saul has lacked all along, a genuine faith in the Living God! And so, David says, "God will take care of Saul, but God forbid that I should take matters into my own hands, and strike the Lord's anointed." And following this, David brings forth "Plan B."

Rather than kill Saul, David asks Abishai to sneak over to where Saul is, and to take his spear and a jug of water, which are near his head. And you might be hard pressed to believe that they could successfully sneak all the way into the middle of the camp, without waking any of the thousands of soldiers in the camp, but indeed they did...but not without a little divine

intervention. We are told in verses 12-13, that they got in, took the items, and got out, without waking anyone up, *because God had caused a deep sleep to fall upon Saul and his large army!* Indeed, God met David's faithfulness with a significant bit of divine help!

Following this, David got a good and safe distance away, where he traveled up to the top of another hill, so that he could reach Saul with his voice, while remaining beyond the immediate grasp of Saul. And so, from that distance, David calls out, first to Abner, chiding him for not faithfully protecting the king. As the commander of the army, he was especially responsible for protecting the king, and yet, he was asleep, when David and Abishai were there, leaving the king vulnerable to certain death, should David have taken a different course of action. David held up the spear and the jug of water, which were by the king's head, as a means of confirming the real danger, which could have come upon Saul, should David and Abishai have chosen to strike him dead.

Following David's stern rebuke of Abner, Saul, realizing that it was David who was speaking, chimes in with the response, "Is that your voice, my son David?" Gentle words from a cruel and rebellious tyrant, but only because he realizes that, once again, David had spared his life. David then affirms that it is him, and once again, he seeks to reason with Saul's conscience, putting the question forth, "What have I done? What evil have I done, that you still seek the life of your servant? Bring out the wrong...tell me, please!"

"And furthermore, consider O' king, if I have done wrong; if God has moved you in some way to recompense me for any particular sin, let me offer a sacrificial offering; I am more than willing to repent and to offer a sacrificial atonement, to deal with my sin." "But if men have put you up to this, then "may they be cursed before the LORD!" "If this is of God, tell me my sin, and I will deal with it here and now, but if this is of men, then their sin against me is weighty. For, they have driven me away from my inheritance, and my portion in God. I am forced out of the land of my heritage, and incapable of worshiping God at His appointed place in the land. Indeed, they push me away, so that they would unrighteously drive me to serve other gods...and that is no small offense!"

Indeed, yet again, David is here wisely seeking to appeal to the conscience of Saul. And with the hope that Saul will finally "get it," or at least for a time even, David reasons, "Don't let my blood fall to the earth before The Lord." "O King, see the great injustice here, and don't unrighteously pursue my life, lest the guilt of my murder come before the Lord." Perhaps, David

would here have Saul recall the unrighteous and wicked act of Cain, who shed the blood of his innocent brother, Abel, without cause. The Lord, then, spoke of Abel's blood as crying out from the earth, into which it poured. For, like Cain, Saul was envious of David, so much so, that he was blinded unto the set determination of murdering David. And David is here attempting to remove the blinders from Saul. Saul was pursuing a harmless flea, a partridge (a "calling bird") in the mountains, that was in no way a threat to Saul, and in fact, was rather a voice of reasoning, attempting to rescue Saul from great guilt. David's actions confirm this. He was, in fact, a blessing to Saul in many ways, because rather than kill Saul and send him to immediate judgment, he spared Saul, and attempted to lead him to the path of repentance, by exposing Saul's guilt and blindness (in his unrighteous pursuit of David). [*Jesus and the Pharisees]

II. Saul's Response

And once again, how does Saul respond? [Read verse 21]

Saul brings forth his usual, shallow confession of sin, grounded not in a sense of his guilt before God, but rather, in the realization that David had once again graciously spared him. And he claims that he will no longer seek to harm David; a claim that is as baseless as quicksand, for Saul has, on many occasions, broke his oaths, and David knows this all too well. But, needless to say, he tells David that he will not harm him anymore, again, not because of any conviction of guilt before God, but because David spared him, yet again. "I have been foolish, and I have greatly erred here David...I will leave you alone now. Return, my son." "You can come back now David, I won't harm you anymore." Do you want to take a poll to see how many of us would think that David will actually return with Saul, at this point? Oh, he's gone that route one too many times already. Not only is he not going to return with Saul, who is about as stable as an overcooked marshmallow at a campfire, but David is leaving the land of Israel altogether. He's done with the "cat and mouse games." We will see this, Lord willing, next week, when we come to chapter 27.

And so, although David does not go with Saul, as a further extension of his kind and humble heart, he gives Saul back his spear. [Read verses 22-25]

Again, David states his confidence *not* in the king's integrity, but rather in the faithfulness of his God. "May God repay every man according to their righteousness and faithfulness," "for, although He delivered you into my hands again today, I spared you, because I refuse to harm the

Lord's anointed." "Out of respect for God, I did not touch you. And since I know the king has no concern for the value of my life, may God consider my life precious, and deliver me out of tribulation, even as I have valued the life of his anointed."

Saul then offers his worthless and yet, prophetically accurate blessing to David (in vs. 25), and they part their separate ways, never to cross paths again, as David flees to the Philistines.

III. Conclusive Thoughts and Applications

1) Notice again, how David's faithfulness to God, in the previous events surrounding his conflict with Nabal (in chapter 25) have served to encourage his faithfulness here. In other words, brethren, David's heeding of Abigail in chapter 25, in his willingness to back off from his original plan of destroying Nabal (and his household), and rather leaving vengeance to God, have further enabled him to exercise an even deeper faith here. David restrained his burning passion to exercise revenge upon Nabal and his household, and he left Nabal to be dealt with by "the Judge of all the Earth." And God indeed struck Nabal dead within ten days. And David blessed God for avenging him then, affirming that his confidence in God was not in vain. And now, when David was confronted with another opportunity, where he could have taken matters into his own hands, he continued to remind himself of the faithfulness of God, and he dared not touch the Lord's anointed. He trusted that God would deal with Saul, in His own time (and He soon does, as we will see in the upcoming chapters). But, in all of this, brethren, David's faith was growing stronger and stronger. He was growing more and more God-dependent and less and less David-dependent. And this was a key strong point of David's life and testimony. Chapter 25 serves, in part, as a bridge from chapter 24 to chapter 26, to this end. God is dealing with David, by means of the wicked Saul, all along. And then David is sent to the school of Nabal, where his faith is strengthened and rewarded further, so that he is prepared to grow more, when he encounters Saul again. There is a "string of faith" moving through all of these chapters, which is preparing David both, to be a king after God's own heart, and ultimately a man of God. And though the string is not perfect, it is growing along the way, and by grace, it will reach its final destination in glory!

And here is the application for us, brethren: God is going to test your faith throughout the entire duration of your walk with Him, but not unto some vain end. He means to strengthen your

faith and confidence in Him, along the whole way, so that you will be of an increased usefulness to Him, and ultimately fit to be called a child of the living God, and a brother of the Lord Jesus Christ! And the more we are trained by our trials; the more we are determined to set our confidence and trust in the invisible God, when all else in nature (fallen nature) speaks contrary, the more God will prove our faith, by exercising His power in response to it, which will in turn prepare us to strengthen it further, in the trials that lie in front of us. Trials produce perseverance and faith and hope and confidence and the kind of fruit that does not grow on natural branches...heavenly fruit and Christ-like virtues! Let us not be as the Hebrews, who could not leave the stage of infancy, always only able to drink milk, when they ought to have grown to eat meat and solid food. [Read Hebrews 5:12-14; Hebrews 12:1-11] [We can stunt our own growth, when we fail to respond to our God ordained trials in obedience and faith]

Let us ever be taking risks, and exercising our faith in the Living God, with David!

2) Remember God's sovereignty along the way. God is active in mysterious ways, preserving His faithful children. Before, Saul received a message that the Philistines were invading the land, when he was encircling David around the mountain, and nearly had David pinned down. Here, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Saul and his army, so David and Abishai could sneak in and take the spear and the jug of water. God is with us, brethren, in a multitude of ways that we do not realize. He is sovereign. He speaks and His will is accomplished. He swallows Jonah with a great fish to bring him back on course, he keeps the fire from burning Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, He restrains the hungry lions before Daniel, He parts the seas, He creates war, He causes deep sleep, He raises the dead, He speaks and the winds and waves obey His voice; He walks upon the stormy waters and they cannot thwart His mission...He is God! And, He is our God! Our impossibilities are God's opportunities to show forth His power. Be faithful, for all who are in Christ, will not be put to shame! Death cannot even ultimately harm you! Your upcoming resurrection from the dead will confirm this to the utmost!

3) Lastly, beware again, of a short-lived, shallow repentance. Saul is often sorry for his wrongdoings, but he never changes! **The Gospel!!!**

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25