

**Title:** The Dependability of God's Vengeance

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 26

**Series:** God, the True King!

1. Introduction:

- a. Last week we studied the failure of David in the matter of Nabal.
  - i. Having forgiven Saul, David intended to kill Nabal because of an offense.
- b. We learned that God, the Holy Spirit, often restrains us from committing grievous sin.
  - i. He does so by convicting our hearts through the Word, placing godly Christians in our path, reminding us of the character of God, and refocusing us on the eternal.
- c. Because of this truth, we rejoiced much to know that in a similar situation, **if we do not grieve the spirit of God**, we can be delivered from our sinfulness and impulsivity.
- d. Today, we explore yet another temptation of David. We are reminded that those who trust God and the certainty of His judgment can forgive great offense.

2. Verses 1-5: The Persistence of Suffering: Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is not David hiding himself on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the east of Jeshimon?" (2) So Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph with three thousand chosen men of Israel to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph. (3) And Saul encamped on the hill of Hachilah, which is beside the road on the east of Jeshimon. But David remained in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness, (4) David sent out spies and learned that Saul had indeed come. (5) Then David rose and came to the place where Saul had encamped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, with Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army. Saul was lying within the encampment, while the army was encamped around him.

- a. Our passage opens with the Ziphites' renewed betrayal. Saul, therefore, comes against David one more time.
  - i. David, once again, must face Saul's persecution. Such a constant threat can be incredibly spiritually draining. Like any of us, David must be careful not to live in the moment of this

sustained suffering; instead, he must learn to live by faith in the promises of God. This is the key to living biblically.

3. Verses 6-12: God's Way of deliverance: Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Joab's brother Abishai the son of Zeruiah, "Who will go down with me into the camp to Saul?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you." (7) So David and Abishai went to the army by night. And there lay Saul sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head, and Abner and the army lay around him. (8) Then Abishai said to David, "God has given your enemy into your hand this day. Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice." (9) But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?" (10) And David said, "As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish. (11) The LORD forbid that I should put out my hand against the LORD's anointed. But take now the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go." (12) So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head, and they went away. No man saw it or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen upon them.
- a. After having enlisted a volunteer, David approached the camp by night. Saul and all his men were in a deep sleep. None of them would awake.
  - b. Here, we are introduced to Abishai. Abishai has been present and learned much from David's past trials, yet not enough.
    - i. Abishai correctly asserted that God **had given Saul into David's hand**.
      1. Beloved, Abishai believed in the sovereign providence of God, and so should you. We have said that there are no coincidences in the kingdom of God. God had made it possible for Abishai and David to go into the camp unnoticed.
        - a. All the sentries and the bodyguards were asleep. Not one sole watched over the welfare of the king.
    - ii. However, Abishai had not learned the lessons of the last two chapters. He interpreted God's providence as an excuse to kill instead of a testing of love. He asks permission to **pin Saul to the earth with one stroke of Saul's spear**.

1. How easy it would be to kill this enemy and be free of his constant persecution.
- c. David whispers back. Don't kill him. He is **the Lord's anointed**. We have heard this truth before. David utters these exact words in chapter 24:6. But in this chapter, David has progressed even further in his faith. Vengeance truly belonged to the Lord.
    - i. God had killed Nabal, and God would deal with Saul in His way and time. David had learned the Spirit's lesson. He restrained his desire and chose the way of God instead.
    - ii. God can be trusted to handle fools and satanic oppressors when such matters are left in His hands.
  - d. In verse 10, David insists that God can deliver in a variety of ways:
    - i. **The LORD will strike him**: Like Nabal, God can take Saul's life any minute.
    - ii. **Or his day will come to die**: God may permit Saul to die of "natural" causes.
    - iii. **Or he will go down into battle and perish**: Saul could die in battle when God gives him over.
      1. **Commentary**: There are numerous possibilities in regard to deliverance. The important matter is that God will handle Saul's destiny. It is not in David's hands to deal with Saul.
  - e. David didn't know how God would deliver but knew he could not sin by disobeying the scripture's commands. Beloved, leave the matter of your suffering in God's hands. He will deliver, even if we don't know how. Our only mandate is to not sin against God by disobeying the Scriptures.
    - i. **Commentary**: God's ways will frequently baffle us, but God's will is sufficiently clear to lead us in the meantime. God's ways may not be clear, but our way is; at least enough of it to know what obedience requires. We may wait for God's providence, but we already have God's law, which is all we need for the moment.
  - f. How is it, we ask, that David and Abishai gain unhindered access to Saul's and Abner's location? How can they carry on such an animated debate without waking the troops? How can they take the spear and water jug with no interference? Why are the forces of Saul so helpless?
    - i. **...for they were all asleep because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen upon them.**

1. Beloved, marvel at the work of God. The proud king is helpless because God had made him that way.
  - a. How useless is it to trust in our strength or the strength of men?
  
4. Verse 13-16: Removal of Authority: Then David went over to the other side and stood far off on the top of the hill, with a great space between them. (14) And David called to the army, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, “Will you not answer, Abner?” Then Abner answered, “Who are you who calls to the king?” (15) And David said to Abner, “Are you not a man? Who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not kept watch over your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy the king your lord. (16) This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, you deserve to die, because you have not kept watch over your lord, the LORD's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is and the jar of water that was at his head.”
  - a. Our passage now comes to the climax. David calls out Abner, the commander-in-chief of Saul’s army. Abner had failed to protect the king.
    - i. Abner and the three thousand chosen men had proven themselves, worthless bodyguards. Accordingly, each is worthy of death. The evidence condemns them. David has both the king’s spear and his jug.
  - b. For all his protection, Saul is defenseless. The symbol of his power (the spear) has been taken by the man that will one day supplant Saul as king.
    - i. David said, “**There is only one step between me and death.**” On David’s part, this was desperation. The truth of the matter dawns upon the reader. Saul is **one step away from death**. At any moment, despite all his resources, God could require his life. Saul is a picture of the enemies of God. Every enemy of God is a step away from eternal judgment.
      1. Look at the scene, Beloved. Saul’s power is gone; nothing can keep David from obtaining the kingdom. This spear-taking was a sign for Saul but also for David.
        - a. For Saul, of his imminent destruction and judgment.

- b. For David, of the surety of God's promise to his elect. Today, David has Saul's spear; tomorrow, he will have the kingdom.
    - c. Beloved, those that persecute us today seem unstoppable, but they are not. They are always in imminent danger and do not perceive it.
      - i. In one of his most recognizable sermons ever preached, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, Jonathan Edwards summarizes this truth in the following four implications.
        1. Sinners are always exposed to destruction, as one who stands or walks in slippery places is always exposed to fall. This is implied in the manner of their destruction coming upon them, being represented by their foot sliding.
        2. Sinners are always exposed to sudden unexpected destruction. As he who walks in slippery places is every moment liable to fall, he cannot foresee one moment whether he shall stand or fall the next. And when he does fall, he falls at once without warning.
        3. Sinners are liable to fall of themselves without being thrown down by the hand of another, as he who stands or walks on slippery ground needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down.
        4. They are not fallen already and do not fall now, because God's appointed time has not yet come. For it is said that their foot shall slide when that due time or appointed time comes. Then they shall be left to fall, as they are inclined by their own weight. God will no longer hold them up in these slippery places but will let them go. And then, at that very instant, they shall fall into destruction..!
      - ii. The observation from the words that I would now insist upon is this: "There is nothing which keeps wicked men at any one moment out of Hell, but the mere pleasure of God."
        1. Saul is an example of this truth.
5. Verses 17-20: The Beauty of the Lord's Day: Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king." (18) And he said, "Why does my lord pursue after his servant? For what have I done? What evil is on my hands? (19) Now

therefore let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If it is the LORD who has stirred you up against me, may he accept an offering, but if it is men, may they be cursed before the LORD, for they have driven me out this day that I should have no share in the heritage of the LORD, saying, ‘Go, serve other gods.’ (20) Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth away from the presence of the LORD, for the king of Israel has come out to seek a single flea like one who hunts a partridge in the mountains.”

a. Saul now awakes to the stark reality. God had delivered him twice into David’s hand, and David had chosen, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, not to kill him.

i. Moved by David’s pity, Saul refers to David as a son. But David knows that Saul is a man that cannot be trusted. David tries to reason with Saul biblically.

1. First, David asserts his innocence both before God and men. He has committed no evil against Saul.

2. Secondly, David suggests two possibilities for the animosity between both men:

a. David had sinned against God (which he had not). In that case, God would be pleased to receive a sin trespass.

b. Saul was listening to worthless men. In that case, may these men be cursed for their evil?

b. So, what is the outcome of Saul’s persecution? David is excluded from the fellowship of God and the saints.

i. (Saul and his worthless advisors) **had driven David out so that he should have no share in the heritage of the LORD.**

1. David could not come to the temple to worship with saints. This, to David, was the cruelest consequence of his unjust persecution. David loved the Sabbath and worshipping God with the people of God.

a. **Psalms 84:1-2** How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! (2) My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

b. **Psalm 84:10** For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

c. **Psalms 122:1** I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD!”

2. Accordingly, to be cut off from the worship of God was to be cut off from the face of God. David could not bare such distance.
  3. **Commentary**: David was not content with a study bible, prayer list, and a quiet cave. God's presence was especially seen in the sanctuary...David was being shut out of the land and sanctuary where God met with his people. David's most severe grief was to be cut off from the ordinances of public worship.
    - a. Brothers and Sisters, would this too cause you spiritual anguish?
    - b. How prone we are to take the Lord's day for granted. How quickly we forsake the special grace of the gathering of the saints.
  - ii. (Saul and his worthless men) had instructed David to **"Go, serve other gods."**
    1. By pushing David away from the Sanctuary and Israel, David would find himself in a godless country surrounded by idolaters who serve false gods. The very thought repulsed David.
6. Verse 21: Saul's Reaction: Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, I have acted foolishly, and have made a great mistake."
- a. Saul responds with a
    - i. Confession - **I have sinned.**
    - ii. Invitation - **Return, my son David.**
    - iii. Promise - **For I will no more do you harm.**
    - iv. Rationale - **because my life was precious in your eyes this day.**
    - v. Repeats the confession - **I have acted foolishly and have made a great mistake.**
7. Verses 22-24: David's Wisdom: And David answered and said, "Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and take it. (23) The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, for the

LORD gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against the LORD's anointed. (24) Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the LORD, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation.”

- a. What should David do? David must forgive Saul, which he does, but just because Saul has been a fool, David does not need to be one. He does not entrust himself to the mercurial Saul.
  - b. **Commentary**: Instead of returning to Saul, David will remain with God. **God will repay each man his righteousness and fidelity because God gave Saul into David’s hand, and David had refused to put his hand out against the Lord’s anointed.**
    - i. Notice how David places himself in the hands of God
      1. **1 Samuel 26:24** Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the LORD, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation.”
      2. There is no better place to be than in the hands of the Lord. There is no more sure rest than to trust that God will deliver his elect from every persecution, trial, and tribulation.
    - ii. Beloved, David is not looking to Saul, not hoping on Saul, not believing Saul. David’s future is firmly in the hands of God.
8. Verse 25: A Final Farewell: Then Saul said to David, “Blessed be you, my son David! You will do many things and will succeed in them.” So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place.
- a. Our chapter ends with the departure of both Saul and David. These two men would never see each other again.
    - i. Saul leaves with three thousand men, yet he is alone, abandoned by God. David was correct in this chapter. God would deal with Saul once and for all.
    - ii. David leaves with the presence of God. The saints are never abandoned, never left on their own!
9. Benediction:
- a. **Psalms 132:7** “Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool!”

**Public Reading of Scripture**  
**Psalm 84**