

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF DAVID

Taught in Ambassador's Class of Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto, California

April 1979 through December 1979

by

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1 Samuel 26 Lesson #16 July 29, 1979

Today we are looking at I Samuel, Chapter 26. I do not agree with some of the commentators on this particular passage, so I present this interpretation to you as an option. Some of the commentators believe David was going to the hill of Hachilah to make Saul repent; that he was going with the idea of forcing Saul to come to terms. Looking at the passage, I do not agree. I believe David was going there in anger and fury. I think God was testing him; testing both Saul and David. I want to approach it from that viewpoint. I am offering this as an option. I believe it is a valid option. I will not be dogmatic about it, but I do not think a leopard ever changes its spots. David is a vindictive, hostile person. Just in the last chapter he intended to wipe out Nabal. From a human standpoint, Nabal deserved to be wiped out, but David intended to wipe out not only Nabal but all of his children plus any male servants in the household. When he is angry, David has a strong tendency to fly off the handle and take matters into his own hands. However, in Chapter 25 David repented of killing Nabal, made a confession and, in a sense, told God "No more."

Saul is also a vindictive, violent man. You will remember in Chapter 24 that while chasing David (with God's permission), he was trapped in a cave with David and could easily have been slain, but David held off. Saul, therefore, swore repentance, confessed his sin, and told David, "No more."

So in effect now, both men have made confessions regarding their sin of violence and revenge and have agreed their actions were wrong.

But how can you tell a true confession? 1 John 1:9 says, "If I confess my sins [literally 'say with God,' agree with Him about my sins] God is faithful and righteous to forgive my sins and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness." He will always do it because He is faithful. He has to do it because He is righteous. In Chapter 24 Saul was sorry about his actions toward David and apparently confessed publicly. In Chapter 25 David was sorry about his actions toward Nabal and made a public confession in front of his 400 men and Abigail.

A true confession requires repentance, and repentance means a change of mind, a turning around, some positive step to stop doing whatever was wrong. With that kind of confession God forgives and God cleanses. However, if it is not that kind, God does not forgive and God does not cleanse. Understand this, the present state of mind or the present state of activity has nothing to do with eternal destiny. If you have received Christ as your Lord and your God, positionally you are forgiven in Christ. He died for all your sins, past, present and future. There is no question about that. What we are talking about here is experiencing God's forgiveness, His fellowship, fellowship with a Holy Being. For that we need to keep short accounts with God. We need to agree with him that we need forgiveness. Then we need to do something about our former way of life.

While both Saul and David are already God's anointed, they are two men running in opposite directions, Saul in the flesh, David in the spirit. David has his ups and downs spiritually, but his general trend line is up. Saul also has spiritual ups and downs, but unfortunately his general trend line is down.

We have just seen them both confess. Now God tests their confessions. For Saul, it is a tragic test and he fails it badly. According to Scripture, this is the end of testing for Saul. God takes him home. He does not, however, lose his salvation. We will later see him joined with Samuel.

David, even though his trend line is up, is still tested. I think that is a key, so let's look at it.

I Samuel 26, verse 1:

Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is not David hiding on the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?" [the wilderness] So Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having with him three thousand chosen men [here is that Task Force again] of Israel, to search for David in the wilderness of Ziph.

Before we go further, let's look at Saul's confession. Does it meet the test? In Chapter 24 Saul publicly confessed to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you." However, at the next opportunity to commit the same exact sin, Saul with an army of three thousand men travels all the way from Benjamin down to Ziphite territory to seek David out. Now you don't move an army of that size without a lot of thought and planning. There's no change of direction here, and Saul fails the test of a true confession.

To continue, David has gone into the realm of the Calebites, up around Carmel, Ziph, just to the west of Engedi which is right on the Dead Sea about its middle point. About 12 miles into Judah, is the area of Maon, Ziph and Hebron founded by sons of Caleb. These people are Judahites, David's tribe. David is there married to Abigail, who is from one of the leading families in that territory. He has also married Ahinoam of Jezreel, which is only 3 miles north of Carmel. She is probably from one of its powerful families too. David is a king, and he is making alliances for the future. So he has married into two powerful Calebite families right in this territory.

Because of these alliances, the one spot in Judah where David ought to be safe, is the area of the Ziphites, the Calebites. Well, not so. Once before the Ziphites deliberately told Saul where David was hiding, after tricking him into an untenable spot, and except for God's intervention, David would have been lost. Now David is back, but this time he is family. Does that make a difference? No. The first thing the Ziphites do is travel all the way to Gibeah of Benjamin and tell Saul, "Hey, he's back again. Let's get him." If you were a red-headed, impulsive Irishman with a touch of Jewish blood, and inclined to get even, how would you respond when betrayed by your own family? How about David?

Before we go further, why does God bring Ziphites in to sneak and tell? Why does he bring contrary people into our lives? God's deliberate design is to work on some character flaw in us. Has it ever occurred to you that what you see mirrored in the person you cannot get along with is what is mirrored in you in the eyes of God, and incidentally, in the eyes of man? We never see ourselves the way we are, and when we run into people who reflect us as we really are, our backs go up and so do our defenses.

David has to learn to deal with Ziphites, and he does. When he becomes king he never takes vengeance on any of these people, and he becomes king of Judah first. He does learn his lesson, but he doesn't like it right now.

I Samuel 26, verse 3:

And Saul camped in the hill of Hachilah, [about 6 miles east of Ziph, about half way to Engedi in the wilderness. David likes this place. Apparently it has the advantage of being isolated. It must also have a good water supply and good game available because he has 600 mouths to feed.] which is before Jeshimon, [the wilderness] beside the road, and David was staying in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness, David sent out spies, and he knew that Saul was definitely coming. David then arose and came to the place where Saul had camped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army; and Saul was lying in the circle of the camp, and the people

were camped around him.

When David left his wilderness headquarters in the Cave of Adullam near Gath, where he was safe, and took up the defense of the city of Keilah which was being besieged by the Philistines, what was the first step he took? He inquired of God. When he heard Saul was going to come down to get him, what did he do? He inquired of God. When he wondered whether to stay in the walled city of Keilah and defend himself or to flee, what did he do? He inquired of God. God told him to go defend Keilah. God told him Saul was definitely coming, and God told him to get out of that city. Step-by-step David inquired of God. He could because God had sent him Abiathar the High Priest with the ephod, the royal vestment that was used in those days to divine God's will.

Do you see anything conspicuous by its absence here? David is the aggressor this time. He is the guerrilla. Saul has brought this massive army into David's territory, and David has had it with Saul. From his spies, he knows Saul is definitely coming. Then David arises and deliberately goes to Saul's camp. He can readily find where Saul is sleeping, since the king always sleeps with a spear at his head. David has plans for that spear. He is going to move it over about a foot right through Saul's head. I believe David is moving here in hostility. God is allowing David to check out his repentance, his confession. God is a very faithful God. He will never lead you into temptation for you to fail or test you for you to fail. He leads you into testing that you might succeed. He always provides the means by which you can succeed if you choose to use those means. Let's look at the means he uses here.

I Samuel 26, verse 6:

Then David answered [on the spies' report] and said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai [David's nephew] the son of Zeruah, [David's sister] Joab's brother, saying, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you." [Abishai is a very brave man and becomes David's leading general later on. He is also a rather opportunistic young man] So David and Abishai came to the people by night, and behold, Saul lay sleeping inside the circle of the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the people were lying around him. Then Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand; ["Everyone is sound asleep. Go down the middle of the camp to where Saul lies asleep with his spear right there. Just pick it up, move it over one foot, vroom, and that takes care of all your problems. Nobody will even wake up." Abishai is reasoning, "God has delivered him into your hands. Give it to him."] now therefore, please let me strike him with the spear ["the" spear. He plans to use Saul's own spear] to the ground with one stroke, and I will not strike him the second time." [I won't even have to strike him again.] But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed and be without guilt?"

Remember before when Saul came into that cave to relieve himself and was silhouetted against the bright sunlight? David and his men seated inside in the darkness had Saul totally at their mercy. What did his men say that time? Almost exactly the same thing, and that time David listened to them. While he could not quite bring himself to kill Saul, he did slash off a piece of his robe and thoroughly enjoyed thinking, "This is really Saul I am cutting." But his conscience immediately smote him. The action was not the issue here. The desire of the heart was the issue. God knew it, and David knew it. The Spirit of God put the finger on David right away. Guilt hit him immediately. Then he fought his men; literally, "He tore his men apart," when they encouraged him to kill Saul. He responded to the Spirit of God with true guilt. He fought his men and stopped them from killing Saul. He said "No" to the temptation.

There is a principle in Scripture. Your flesh will never change. All your life you will be assaulted in the avenues of weakness resulting from your lifestyle. Maturity does not come by no more assaults. Maturity comes by beginning to say, "No" to those assault points Satan uses on you. As you begin to say, "No, No, No" instead of "Yes, Yes, Yes" you discover the same temptation begins to trigger a "No" instead of a Yes." The temptation has not changed, but your response has changed. Because David took a strong stand back in that cave and saved Saul, when the same phrase cropped up again, "...God has delivered your enemy into your hand,' give me the spear." it does not trigger a "Yes," it triggers a "No." The second time it was easier to

resist, and David said, "Who can do it without guilt. I've had this trip before. I don't want it again. You cannot touch the Lord's anointed without guilt."

So why, then, did he go up to Saul's camp? I think he went in anger. However, the Lord gave him a choice. The Lord did not leave him without resources. At the key point of decision, Abishai uttered almost the exact words that were mouthed to David once before. He said "No" to them then, so when the temptation came again, the same words trigger a "No" again. Without the flesh ever being changed, David began to build a path toward righteousness. We kid ourselves when we think our flesh will change. It will never get better. Only our choices can get better. What we do with the flesh is what is going to change. David made a stand against the flesh in that cave, and he became strong in the faith in that cave. Now God deliberately has Abishai, without his knowing it (I think), mouth exactly those same words. What hits David, "Oh, No, I've been this route before, and the Holy Spirit stuck me with the spear of guilt. I don't want any part of this." David resists and says, "Who could do this without guilt."

David now begins to look at things from God's perspective. He sees that God himself will do the job that he would love to do.

Look at I Samuel 26, verse 10:

David also said, "As the Lord lives, surely the Lord will strike him [same phrase he used for Nabal, something like a stroke or a massive coronary. You cannot live in contention with Jehovah and stay healthy. Nabal is a good example of it.] or his day will come that he dies, or he will go down into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed; but now please take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water, and let us go." So David took the spear and the jug of water from beside Saul's head, and they went away, but no one saw or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a sound sleep from the Lord had fallen on them.

David thought he was so smart, and so sly and such a good guerilla fighter, but God had anesthetized the whole of Saul's camp. Do you see the horror of that? If you want to go your route and you insist on it, God will let you. If David had wanted to go ahead and kill Saul, God would have let him, and nobody would have awakened. The irony is that God is about to kill Saul a couple of chapters down the road. So David would have sinned in killing Saul while actually doing the will of God. You think that God loves you so much he will stop you from those willful, deliberate choices that you make. No he won't. He loves you so much that he will let you do what you should not do when you choose to do what you know you should not do.

You ask, even though everyone was asleep how was David able to approach the camp? Wouldn't there have been some kind of out post on the alert? Saul slept in the middle of the camp surrounded by the men, while the guards would have been out in wilderness country. With about 3,000 men, they would have been all spread out and not a nice little group around a camp fire. Once David got by the outer guards he'd be OK. That is why I am sure Abishai went around to Saul's head. He didn't want a sound, not even want a groan, from Saul.

David, after making this statement, "God forbid I should stretch out my hand," says, "Now please take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water and let us go." David has a purpose here. The spear, which before was to have been an instrument of unrighteousness, is now going to be an instrument of righteousness used to convict Saul. David is human though. Look at 13.

I Samuel 26, verse 13:

Then David crossed over to the other side, and stood on top of the mountain at a distance with a large area between them. [He still knows Saul, and he wants to get plenty of room between himself and Saul. Listen to the line now] And David called to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Will you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner answered and said, "Who are you who calls to the king?" [How dare you disturb the king's sleep] So David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? And who is like you in Israel? [He is in command of all the army. He is the man who has been bugging David for the last 10 years, chasing him like a hare in the

hills.] Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came to destroy the king your lord. [There is the action of David's heart. If David had not really wanted to kill Saul, this taunting would have had no value in David's sight. But, oh, it did taste good. However, he has had a victory over it, see.] This thing that you have done is not good. As the Lord lives, all of you must surely die, because you did not guard your lord, the Lord's anointed. And now, see where the king's spear is, and the jug of water that was at his head." [In other words, "Hey, Abner, I take better care of your king than you do.]

Notice David's humanness. He has just had a tremendous spiritual victory, but he cannot resist just one little jab. Now, David can not coarse talk Saul because in Exodus 20, Scripture says you are not allowed to revile God or curse the ruler of your people. However, it says nothing about cursing the General of your people. So David has a little proxy vengeance here. He goes way over on the other side of the hill and holds up the spear and the jug of water. The jug was right by Saul's head as was the spear. He takes this opportunity to taunt Abner, the man who has been harassing him. This is a very tactical error. (Abner is now commander of the king's army. David used to be commander of Saul's army. Possibly there was rivalry between them even then.) Abner is quite a general, and David causes him to lose face in front of 3,000 of his troops. Abner is an oriental. How do you think Abner is going to respond? Poor old David just can not resist this kind of thing. When David, upon Saul's death, becomes king of Judah, Abner takes the remaining son of Saul, Ishbosheth, and with the ten northern tribes sets up his own kingdom in opposition to David. He does not return to David until Ishbosheth insults him and he loses face in Israel. Only then does he deliver Israel to David. David's little indulgence here may well have kept him from becoming king of all of Israel for several years. When you have a spiritual victory, don't push your luck. The retribution of God is always there. When you disobey God you will pay for it somewhere down the line. I think this incident is one of the basic reasons Abner refused to allow the ten tribes of Israel to join with Judah. under David as king.

Now how about David and Saul? I Samuel 26, verse 17:

Then Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord the king." He also said, "Why then is my lord pursuing his servant? For what have I done? ["You call me your son David, so what's with this 3,000 man army?"] Or what evil is in my hand? Now therefore please let my lord the king listen to the words of his servant. [Where did David get that phrase to get Saul to listen to him? Abigail to David. Those are almost her exact words when David came running down in his rage to kill all the males in her family. Back in chapter 25, verse 24b she says, "Please let your maidservant speak to you and listen to the words of your maidservant." And he did listen and got out of trouble. David pleads with Saul based upon an experience he has just had when he was kept from sin.] If the Lord has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering; [This is interesting theologically. David recognizes that God does allow you to go your willful way, and he will, for example, put the whole camp asleep for you. He realizes he came down here with a heart to do evil, and God let him come. So he is telling Saul, "If God is letting you do this evil, all right then bring Him an offering." This is a technical term. This is the bloodless offering of good works. It is the very offering David has just offered God because of his own attitude. David wanted to kill also, and God almost let him do it, but David repented. Now he tells Saul, "Saul, you are being allowed to do this by God, then the answer to your problem is to offer an offering of good works just like I did."] but if it is men, cursed are they before the Lord, for they have driven me out today that I should have no attachment with the inheritance of the Lord [Just write me out of the nation of Isarel] saying, 'Go, serve other gods.' [In a sense they are making me flee Israel and flee Jehovah. You've dragged me out of my inheritance and away from my God.] Now then, do not let my blood fall to the ground away from the presence of the Lord; for the king of Israel has come out to search for a single flea, just as one hunts a partridge in the mountains."

That is an intriguing metaphor. Remember before when David said, "You have come out to look for a dead dog and a single flea." Of course, dead dogs won't bite. A single flea is ridiculous when you are infested with Philistines. So he makes Saul look ridiculous, "You come out here to look for one single flea." Then he changes his metaphor because of what just happened. The Israelite partridge runs along the ground. It does not

fly. It escapes by fleeing, by running. In the flat lands large coveys are chased until they become exhausted. Then the Israelites throw sticks along the ground, strike them in the legs, knock them to the ground, catch them, break their necks and eat them.

So David says, "Saul, you are not being very bright. You are hunting a single partridge up in the mountains when there are coveys down there in the valley. There are Philistines everywhere, and in the mountains the partridge has the advantage. You can't chase him up and down hills very long. He can hide, and this particular partridge can turn around and bite you. Dead dogs may not bite, but a partridge named David can bite, and you just had a chance to see that."

So David gives him this veiled warning, and Saul gets the message.

I Samuel 26, verse 21

Then Saul said, "I have sinned. [There is his confession again worth about two bits] Return, my son David, for I will not harm you again because my life was precious in your sight this day. Behold, I have played the fool and have committed a serious error." And David answered and said, [And look at the freedom a man of God has to rebuke the king of Israel, God's anointed. It is not sin to rebuke a man on a godly basis] "Behold the spear of the king! Now let one of the young men come over and take it. [He gives back to Saul his scepter. He is not trying to get the kingdom. He's not grabbing that symbol and keeping it] And the Lord will repay each man for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the Lord delivered you into my hand today, but I refused to stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed. [He senses that God had arranged this thing and had allowed it to happen and he made the right choice] Now behold, as your life was highly valued in my sight this day, so may my life be highly valued in the sight of the Lord, [Not in Saul's sight. He can't trust Saul anymore] and may He deliver me from all distress." [And, of course, he means mainly you. He's telling Saul, "You are no longer a man of your word. I cannot trust you, but I can trust YHWH, and that is where I rest my case, and it hits] Then Saul said to David, "Blessed are you, my son David; you will both accomplish much and surely prevail." [literally "vanquish" "You are going to win."] So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

David took two things, a spear and a jug of water, literally "a pitcher" of water. He did not return the pitcher of water. I would like to offer a Roe sanctified theory here as to why I think he did not return the water. Turn to II Samuel 23, where the mighty men of David and some of their deeds are being described. The particular deed described here happened just prior to this action in I Samuel 26 when David was at the cave of Adullam, the cave just outside of Gath back in Chapter 22.

II Samuel 23, verse 13 says:

Then three of the thirty chief men went down and came to David in the harvest time to the cave of Adullam [That is the one just 10 miles east of Gath where David is hiding] while the troop of the Philistines was camping in the valley of Rephaim. And David was then in the stronghold, while the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem [The Philistines would come at harvest time, drive the people inside their walled cities and then take all the crops that had already been harvested. It devastated the land. This is what was happening at this time.] And David had a craving and said, "Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem [his home town] which is by the gate.[Now the Philistines were sitting right there in Bethlehem] So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of Bethlehem which was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the Lord; and he said, "Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it.

David's men brought him the water he craved. It was an offering of their love for him and was at the risk of their lives, I might add. That water symbolized the blood of those men which might have been poured out had

they not been successful. "The life of the flesh is in the blood," the Lord said in Leviticus 17. "I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls." Therefore, no Israelite could eat or drink blood. The blood was precious to God for it represented the life of the person that was sacrificed. So David, before this latest episode, had offered to the Lord this drink offering a symbol of the blood of these men.

I believe David kept the jug of water he picked up by Saul's head because it represented Saul's blood to him. The spear represented David's ability to kill Saul. It also represented Saul's authority to reign as God's anointed until God put him away, either by stroke, by natural death, or by perishing in battle. So the spear David could give back to Saul, but not the water. The water represented the desire of David to shed the blood of Saul, and he cannot give that back to Saul. That had to go to Jehovah. So he poured it out as a drink offering. He realized that except for Jehovah he would have taken innocent blood. This is why I believe he did not give the jug back. He did not want to usurp the prerogative of God by shedding innocent blood. David passed the test, but Saul did not. That is my sanctified opinion. You can take it or leave it, but I personally feel it is possible from Scripture. It also ties into the way David acts both before and after.

What, then, can we say about I John 1:9 then? What does it really mean to confess? And what does it really mean to repent? It means to deliberately do something positive in the opposite direction. If you honestly see things as God sees them, then you will know that the sin you call a peccadillo, just a slip, will separate you from God, and alone would be enough to cause Christ, the Son of God, to die for it. That gives you some concept of how to look at sin with the eyes of God. That produces a real desire to change. David did. He confirmed his position of true confession. So, my friends, do not claim I John 1:9 unless you plan to take a positive step in the opposite direction. You will either be a Saul or a David every time.

Before we close let me go back to something that came up very early in this message. I said, "If you have received Christ as your Lord and your God, positionally you are forgiven in Christ. He died for all your sins, past, present and future. There is no question about that." Someone asked, "If that is true then what is meant in Philippians 2:12-13 which says, '...Work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure.'"

The word for "work out" means "to exploit" something you already possess. The Greek word means to take something that is your and wring it dry. It is from secular documents of that time. For example, one of the documents was written by the Romans to their silver mines in Gaul. They said "exploit" those mines. They already possessed the mines, but they told the manager, "We want those mines 'exploited.' Get all that silver out." So, that passage means "exploit" your salvation, which you already possess, with fear and trembling. The word "fear and trembling" does not mean cringing fear. It does not mean fear of God but rather a trembling sensation of, "I want to please God, and I do not want to fail." It is a positive emotion. Why? For it is God who is at work within you ("energon" the word that is only used for supernatural power) both to give you the desire to do this, and also to energize you ("energein" again), to give you supernatural power to fulfill your desire. It has nothing to do with gaining something. It refers to what you are doing with what you have.

Next week we'll look at I Samuel, chapter 27.

Prayer:

Father, we thank you now from your Word, and we just ask for your blessing upon our lives that he might truly look at our lives and see them in your sight. We thank you for David, Father, who was a man after your own heart and a man after our own hearts. He had all the feelings and emotions we have and all the foibles and fallacies and You are in the process of molding that man into a really solid citizen, a man who will represent you, a man who will be a picture of Jesus Christ, a type of Jesus Christ all down through history. Father, we have a high and holy calling being made in your image and your likeness and some day we shall be exactly that, but, Father, help us to walk seriously before you knowing that you are at work in our hearts, that you want us to exploit our salvation with fear and trembling and with a deep desire to please you, but all the while resting in the fact that you are the one who is at work within us empowering us both to desire to do your will, and then in turn to give us the supernatural power to accomplish your will because everything does come from you. We are

the choosers. We are not the actors. We have no power to act, but we do have power to choose. Father, help us to make the right choices. Thank you, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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