

1 Samuel 26

- It's time to finish the third part of the story of David's testing
 - Chapters 24-26 tell the story of how David's weakness was revealed and corrected by the Lord
 - In chapter 24, David employed tactics more in keeping with Saul's heart than for a man after god's own heart
 - So in chapter 25, the Lord gave David a vivid demonstration of how trusting the Lord is done using a remarkable heroine
 - So now in chapter 26 David gets to retake the test a second time
 - Specifically, the Lord will now place David in a situation similar to the one he encountered in chapter 24 with Saul chasing him
 - But this time David will have learned the proper way to address Saul's sin
 - And in the process, David grows closer to the man God desires him to be as he prepares to lead Israel following Saul's reign
- But first, we need to conclude our story of David and Abigail with a little romantic twist that serves as a foreboding of things to come

[1Sam. 25:38](#) About ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died.

[1Sam. 25:39](#) When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal and has kept back His servant from evil. The Lord has also returned the evildoing of Nabal on his own head." Then David sent a proposal to Abigail, to take her as his wife.

[1Sam. 25:40](#) When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her, saying, "David has sent us to you to take you as his wife."

[1Sam. 25:41](#) She arose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, "Behold, your maidservant is a maid to wash the feet of my lord's servants."

[1Sam. 25:42](#) Then Abigail quickly arose, and rode on a donkey, with her five maidens who attended her; and she followed the messengers of David and became his wife.

[1Sam. 25:43](#) David had also taken Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they both became his wives.

[1Sam. 25:44](#) Now Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

- We read v.38 last time noting how the Lord defended David's honor concerning Nabal by taking Nabal's life after ten days
 - The number ten represents testimony
 - It indicates David's willingness to trust the Lord for his defense became a testimony of his faithfulness
 - And in response the Lord took Nabal's life to emphasize Nabal opposed God, not just David
 - Nabal's end is a reminder to us that the Lord may at times end a person's life as a specific response to sin
 - Obviously, Nabal was going to die someday somehow
 - But the Lord chose to end his life in a specific way to make a point
 - And as our Creator, this is God's prerogative
 - If our lives don't glorify the Lord, then He may use our death to glorify Himself
 - You notice in v.39 that when David heard the news of Nabal's sudden death, he got the point
 - David knew the Lord had done that work on David's behalf
 - And in that moment David learned his lesson
 - He considered what might have happened had he carried out his mission against Nabal
 - But because he was patient and waited on the Lord, he got to see the other path and realized it was much better
- That should be the goal of our own walk with Christ
 - When we face a moment of decision for how to respond to our circumstances, we always have the fleshly option and a godly option
 - When you take the fleshly option, you'll never know what might have happened if you had followed Christ instead
 - How would He have come to your defense or aid?
 - What miracle did you miss? What lesson didn't you learn?

- But when you take the road of obedience, you will get to see the Lord working to reward to your obedience
 - That should be the goal of your life in obedience to the Lord
 - You should be jealous for the opportunity to see the Lord working in your defense or to provide or to heal, etc.
 - Resist the temptation to take matters into your own hands, to jump the gun rather than waiting for the Lord to act
 - Don't miss out on the lessons the Lord wants to teach His children
- David then turns his attention back to Abigail and sends his men to her with a proposal for marriage
 - When Abigail hears the proposal, she is overjoyed and probably relieved
 - Being a widow wasn't an easy life in that day
 - Nabal's property was probably inherited by one of his sons, not his wife
 - And so Abigail's prospects were uncertain
 - Abigail accepts the offer, though it's unclear if she truly had a choice in the matter
 - But if she did have a choice, then she should have refused to marry David
 - Because though Abigail was eligible to marry David, since Nabal had died
 - David was *not* eligible to marry
 - As Samuel points out in his foreboding footnote to the story in vs.43-44, David was already married
 - In fact, David had married twice already
 - He was married to Saul's daughter, Michal
 - But in light of his continuing conflict with Saul, Saul has taken his daughter away from David
 - And he gave Michal to another man

- Saul probably did this to move David farther away from the throne, since David would no longer be a son-in-law of the king
- But David had already married a second woman before this point
 - After Michal, David married Ahinoam of Jezreel
 - Perhaps David married this woman because he lost Michal
 - But now that he has her, he shouldn't be looking for more wives
 - In fact, later David will reclaim Michal despite being married to Ahinoam and Abigail
 - And when he does, she will become a snare to him in opposing the will of the Lord
- So we can see Samuel including this bit about David's wives to emphasize that David still has challenges in following the Lord
 - David learned one lesson in avoided the sin of killing Nabal but he still has sin
 - In particular, David is prone to one sin above others: lust
 - David's love for women will follow him all his days
 - And later as king it will lead to a severe penalty from God
 - But for the time being, all is looking up for David
 - He has come through the lessons of chapter 25 well
 - Now all that remains is to pass the test he failed in chapter 24

1Sam. 26:1 Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is not David hiding on the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?"

1Sam. 26:2 So Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having with him three thousand chosen men of Israel, to search for David in the wilderness of Ziph.

1Sam. 26:3 Saul camped in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, beside the road, and David was staying in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness,

1Sam. 26:4 David sent out spies, and he knew that Saul was definitely coming.

1Sam. 26:5 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.

- I mentioned earlier that the test God constructed in chapter 24 would be repeated in chapter 26, and now we see how that test will come
 - Once again Saul is chasing David and David must resist Saul without sinning
 - But there are differences between the two situations
 - And a key difference is David on the offensive
 - In chapter 24, David was on the defensive, constantly reacting to Saul's moves
 - This placed him in a position of fear and uncertainty, from which the temptation to act in his own defense was greatest
 - In this chapter David dictates the events
 - And instead of being an aggressor, David is his defender while accusing others of doing Saul wrong
- It begins in a similar way, though, with Saul hearing that David is in a particular place, in this case on the hill of Hachilah in the wilderness of Ziph
 - Once again, we see the reference to 3,000 men, reminding us that this chapter is linked with the previous two
 - As Saul sets out, David's watchmen know that Saul is setting out with his army
 - David sends out spies to confirm Saul was coming for him
 - This is the first indication that David is working with a confidence and strength he lacked earlier
 - Then David goes to Saul's encampment
 - Again, this is a reversal of the previous story
 - In the previous story, Saul found David's encampment
 - Now David is chasing down Saul
 - And as David and his men arrive at night, they find Saul and his army asleep with apparently no one awake guarding the king
 - Lying next to Saul is Abner, the commander of the army
 - Presumably, Abner was the man assigned to protect Saul

- But he's fallen asleep on duty

1Sam. 26:6 Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, saying, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you."

1Sam. 26:7 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.

1Sam. 26:8 Then Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand; now therefore, please let me strike him with the spear to the ground with one stroke, and I will not strike him the second time."

1Sam. 26:9 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?"

1Sam. 26:10 David also said, "As the Lord lives, surely the Lord will strike him, or his day will come that he dies, or he will go down into battle and perish.

1Sam. 26:11 "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."

1Sam. 26:12 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.

- Once again, David goes on the offensive
 - He determines to go down into the camp and sneak among the men
 - David's not hiding in a cave
 - He's out in the open risking his life
 - But doing it for a noble purpose, which is to convince the king of his loyalty above all other men Saul trusts
 - So he asks for volunteer to accompany him into the camp
 - David asks a Hittite names Ahimelech
 - And he asks Abishai, who was David's nephew by David's sister Zeruiah
 - Abishai agrees to go, indicating is bravery
 - That bravery must have run in the family, because Abishai's brother, Joab, later becomes David's commander of the army

- And so David and Abishai take the brave step of creeping down the hill into the camp of Saul
 - They find the camp asleep with Saul next to his weapon
 - Saul had stuck his spear into the ground not far from his head for quick access should he have need of it
 - Quick thinking Abishai sizes up the situation and decides this is the perfect moment to put an end to the conflict
 - This is exactly the same kind of moment we saw in chapter 24 in the cave
 - And like the cave, David knows better than to allow his men to kill Saul, the king
 - David warns his friend that the one who strikes down God's anointed will certainly be guilty before God
 - David said as much the first time in the cave
 - But notice what has changed from the last time
 - David also tells his men that Saul will see the Lord's discipline just as David has
 - If the Lord was willing to discipline the future anointed king
 - Then how much more will the Lord discipline the present anointed king?
 - David doesn't know how Saul will come to his end, but after watching the Lord deal with Nabal, David knows it will happen
- This is the fruit of David's testing
 - He has gone into essentially the same situation
 - But this time, he's thinking about the Lord and the Lord's power to defend him
 - It's not merely David's actions that are different
 - It's his heart and mind concerning the Lord's role in these matters
 - When you face trials and experience the spiritual growth the Lord intended, you will see the fruit most clearly in how you think of God

- Where before you thought only of yourself and your circumstances
- In the future, you begin to consider the Lord's purposes in what happens around you
- And you see the world with eyes for eternity, from God's vantage point as it were
- Like David, you realize that things aren't as they seem
 - What may seem like good fortune is actually a test of your heart
 - An option that looks like the perfect opportunity to solve your problems is actually a trap leading you into bigger problems
 - And what seems like a foolish alternative may actually be the obedience the Lord is demanding
 - Learning to see the world with godly eyes informed by the love and truth of the Lord is the ultimate reward of trials and the spiritual growth trials bring
- So David ends with the conclusion that he could never raise his hand (again) against the Lord's anointed
 - Where before David objected only to killing the king, now he objects to any show of insubordination or disrespect
 - So if David is not intent on dishonoring Saul, what can he do to make an impression upon Saul?
 - David shifts his target away from Saul and toward one of Saul's most trusted aides
 - David orders Abishai to take Saul's spear and Saul's personal canteen of water and they departed the area
 - Samuel explains David's ability to move so easily within the camp without waking anyone
 - The Lord had brought a deep sleep upon the men in the camp to aid David in the task
 - Where before David's course of action brought the conviction of the Spirit, now it brings the Lord's assistance and approval
 - The lesson is obvious to everyone

- As we hear the Lord and walk in His counsel, He gives us the strength, wisdom and even supernatural assistance to serve Him
 - But for the one who takes matters into his own hands, the results will disappoint
 - Moreover, we will know the conviction of the Spirit as we recognize we are working outside the Lord's counsel
 - Experience one often enough and you'll begin to yearn for the other
- What did taking Saul's equipment accomplish? We soon find out

1Sam. 26:13 Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the mountain at a distance with a large area between them.

1Sam. 26:14 David called to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Will you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner replied, "Who are you who calls to the king?"

1Sam. 26:15 So David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? And who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came to destroy the king your lord.

1Sam. 26:16 "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."

- David reaches a safe distance, with a large gap between them, so that once Saul wakes, he won't be in a position to pursue David
 - And then David calls out to the people to wake them
 - And he directs his call to Abner the king's captain
 - He dares Abner to respond
 - Of course, Abner isn't sure who is calling him by name in this wilderness
 - So he answers reluctantly
 - And then David lowers the boom
 - He asks are you not a man?
 - And is there anyone in Israel like you?

- His point is that Abner is an important, power man with an important job to protect the king
- And yet he failed in that job
- David says one of the people came to destroy the king, referring to Abishai's offer to kill the king
 - Literally, if it hadn't been for David, Saul would have been dead
 - And Abner would have failed to protect the king's life as expected
 - David isn't being dramatic here...he's speaking in literal terms
- David is making a point to Saul that he has placed his trust in the wrong men
 - Paranoid Saul was obviously willing to place his trust in Abner to protect his life
 - Meanwhile, Saul believes that David is intending to take his life
 - And so David is not trying to embarrass the king or threaten his rule
 - The point of the exercise was to embarrass Abner
 - But in the process, David hoped Saul would recognize that he should be trusted over even Saul's closest confidants
 - David presses his case a little farther by pointing out that Saul's men should be put to death for allowing their king to be so vulnerable
 - Once again, David's words are literally true
 - This was the usual penalty for failing a king in this way
 - But Saul will not carry out such a penalty, and I expect David knew that
 - So David is merely making a point that if Saul wished to pursue his adversaries, he should pursue these men, not David
 - Finally, David offers proof of his accusations by producing the things he took from the camp
 - In the last episode, David held up the piece of hem of Saul's robe, which had the effect of embarrassing the king

- It communicated that David was willing to do Saul harm but held back
- Though David claimed the hem was proof he wouldn't hurt the king, it was actually a symbol of the opposite
- This time David holds up even more threatening items, but his point is clearly different
- He's indicting Abner, not threatening Saul
- And then just as before, David and Saul exchange words from a distance

1Sam. 26:17 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."

1Sam. 26:18 He also said, "Why then is my lord pursuing his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand?"

1Sam. 26:19 "Now therefore, please let my lord the king listen to the words of his servant. If the Lord has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering; but if it is men, cursed are they before the Lord, for they have driven me out today so that I would have no attachment with the inheritance of the Lord, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.'

1Sam. 26:20 "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."

1Sam. 26:21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. 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."

1Sam. 26:22 David replied, "Behold the spear of the king! Now let one of the young men come over and take it."

1Sam. 26:23 "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."

1Sam. 26:24 "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, and may He deliver me from all distress."

1Sam. 26:25 Then Saul said to David, "Blessed are you, my son David; you will both accomplish much and surely prevail." So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

- Like before, Saul calls David his "son"
 - That term is even more disingenuous this time, since Saul has taken away David's wife

- It was David's marriage to Saul's daughter that made David a son of Saul
- But Saul ended that relationship
- Nevertheless, he continues to call David son
- In response, David asks the king why he's pursuing David, and what offense has David committed
 - Of course, there is no answer to that question
 - Saul has no offense in mind
 - He's simply acting out of jealousy, paranoia, fear and pride
- Next, David speak wisdom to Saul
 - He begins by acknowledging that the Lord is the One acting behind the scenes in this conflict
 - He tells Saul if the Lord is stirring up Saul, then let David and Saul make an offering to appease the Lord's anger
 - But if men have led Saul to think badly of David, then David says they are cursed since they act against the Lord's anointed
 - Either way, he argues that Saul has no reason to fear David
- Finally, David appeals to Saul for mercy, asking that his blood not be allowed to be spilled away from the presence of the Lord
 - David is referring to dying as a fugitive away from the tabernacle
 - It's a subtle way of asking that he be allowed to die at home as an old man, which implies peace between David and Saul
 - And he ends with a repetition of the statement that he is but a flea compared to Saul
 - Saul responds in much the same way as before, acknowledging that David is a better man
 - This time, Saul goes a step further and promises to stop seeking for David's life
 - But David doesn't believe he will ever be safe around Saul

- The two men go their own way, though David knows better than to put himself in a position where Saul can attack again
- At least David has blunted Saul's attack in this case as he did before
- When you compare David's words here to what he said previously, you can immediately detect the difference in David's attitude and heart
 - For example, listen again to David in his first encounter with Saul

1Sam. 24:10 "Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but my eye had pity on you; and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed.'

1Sam. 24:11 "Now, my father, see! Indeed, see the edge of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the edge of your robe and did not kill you, know and perceive that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands, and I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait for my life to take it.

1Sam. 24:12 "May the Lord judge between you and me, and may the Lord avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you.

1Sam. 24:13 "As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness'; but my hand shall not be against you.

1Sam. 24:14 "After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog, a single flea?

- Can you detect the marked difference in David's tone?
 - In the first encounter, David speaks in arrogance while issuing veiled threats against the king
 - He shows off the hem of the robe and then has the audacity to claim he has no rebellion in his heart
 - He claims Saul was lying in wait for David yet it was David who crept up on an unsuspecting Saul
- And the tone of David's speech is very different as well
 - He asks that the Lord avenges David upon Saul
 - And preaches a proverb to Saul about wickedness, which implies that David viewed Saul as acting wickedly
 - In everything he's saying, David is actually portraying the opposite

- The impression we're left with is that of arrogance, pride and defiance
- But when we look at David's words to Saul now, the tone has changed completely and the words are much softer
 - He makes no accusations against Saul, he issues no threats
 - Instead, David makes a heartfelt appeal for Saul's mercy
 - And he looks to other causes for Saul's anger, whether the Lord or Saul's men
 - When he speaks of the Lord, David doesn't ask for revenge but rather for recompense
 - Rather than wanting the Lord to punish Saul for his unrighteous behavior, David asks the Lord to reward his righteous behavior
 - Finally, notice David's appeal is not to Saul
 - In v.24 David makes his appeal to the Lord for protection
 - The overall tone is positive toward Saul, respectful, and directed at his trust and dependence upon the Lord
 - In short, David's heart and mind are focused on his relationship with the Lord, not his relationship with Saul
 - David's approach is a good example of Ephesians 6

Eph. 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

- By taking time to observe carefully the differences in David's commentary, we can see the growth in him
 - What at first sounds like an identical speech is actually a world apart from David's earlier moment
 - David knows that Saul is acting irrationally, and yet David no longer holds it against Saul
 - David is resting in the Lord to defend him

- David's experience reminds us that repentance can be hard to see in others if we aren't paying attention to subtle cues in a person's words and attitude
 - For every dramatic "Paul on the road to Damascus" repentance moment we encounter in life, there will be many more subtle "David speaking with Saul" repentance examples
 - Our friends, family members or even our own heart often respond to the conviction of the Spirit in subtle ways, especially in the beginning of our walk
 - Our word choices may change, our attitudes begin to shift even if our behaviors don't move in radical ways
 - Eventually, these smaller steps begin to add up to larger more obvious changes
 - Have you ever run into an old high school friend many years later and noticed they were much different than you remembered them to be?
 - Perhaps they looked different, sounded different
 - They expressed different political views, they were engaged in entirely new hobbies
 - From that experience you can see how small changes over time can add up to a big difference in the end
 - This is how sanctification works in all of us
- So we need to be prepared to recognize and encourage those around us who are making strides by recognizing the work of the Spirit in them
 - Don't wait for the full change to take hold before recognizing their progress
 - Acknowledge good changes as you see it, though do it in a positive way of course
 - We don't need to tell people, "You aren't nearly as mean and selfish as you used to be."
 - Find the right way to acknowledge their efforts
 - Encouragement can put the sanctification progress into overdrive
 - Each small step of obedience in a person's life becomes a bridge to the next moment

- As over time as a person's heart is softened and their will yields to the Holy Spirit
- But remember that progress can be slow, so we have to be looking for it
 - It may just be a withholding of critique where before critique was commonplace
 - Or refrain from gossip or are quicker to forgive
 - We may miss these steps if we are too busy remembering the past or unwilling to consider that real change is possible
- And sometimes we can miss our own progress for the same reason, which may discourage us in our walk or give room for the enemy to make accusations
 - Remember how similar David's two speeches were and consider how subtle your own progress may be from one week to week
 - Then remind yourself that progress take times
 - Don't allow that fact to become license for further sin
 - But at the same time, don't overlook that small changes are still evidence of the Spirit at work
 - Both in yourself and in others