

1 Samuel 26

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[0 : 00] not David hiding himself on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the east of Jeshimon. 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. 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, David sent out spies and learned that Saul had come. 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. 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 of Saul?

And Abishai said, I will go down with you. 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. Then said Abishai 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. But David said to Abishai, Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless? And David said, As the Lord lives, the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down in battle and perish.

The Lord forbid that I should put out my hand against the Lord's anointed. But take now the spear that is in his hand at his head and the jar of water and let us go. 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. Then David went over to the other side and stood far off on the top of the hill with a great space between them. 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? 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. 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 and the jar of water that was at his head. 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. And he said, Why does my lord pursue after his servant? For what have I done? What evil is on my hands? 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.

[3 : 18] Now therefore let not my blood fall on 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.

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.

And David answered and said, Here is the spear, O king. Let one of your young men come over and take it. 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. 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. 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.

This is the word of the lord. As you listen to today's text, you might be scratching your head thinking, didn't we just do this story two weeks ago? And in some ways you might be right. There are many similarities. And in fact, some of the commentaries will lump the two chapters, 24 and 26, together and explain the ideas in those texts at the same time. And some scholars will even say that when these stories were written, it really is talking about one and only one story, but there are so many details that were jumbled that they ended up becoming two stories. So you may be right.

If you're looking at that saying, it sounds like the same story in a way, but it's not really. And I actually have a hunch that the pastors got together, and they're looking at their preaching series, and they said the same thing. These are both very similar. How are we going to preach these?

[5 : 25] And they said, let's give it to the intern. So here I am today. But I have absolute confidence that they know how to do this probably much better than I do. And I'm thankful to Holy Trinity Church, actually, for two different reasons, two specific reasons. And children, if you haven't been completely engaged in your activity sheets, this is a good time to listen, actually, as I do a bit of an introduction. At Holy Trinity Church, I am thankful that we believe that this is God's Word.

That God spoke, and this is His Word. And when we read it, we are hearing Him speak to us. God breathed, and His Word came into being. It is written by individual writers, authors. Their personalities shine through, but the Holy Spirit orchestrated all the stories that are in this book.

We hold a high view of God's Word here in Holy Trinity Church, and we are thankful for that. We know that when we come to a text like this, where we scratch our heads, we know that we can then approach it with confidence, knowing that everything here is here for a reason. There's nothing in this book that is here by accident. So I'm thankful for our high view. We roll up our sleeves, and we ask the Holy Spirit to give us insight and understanding. The other part that I'm thankful to Holy Trinity Church, and as an intern we're being taught, is that we consider the discipline of biblical theology to be a useful tool in understanding God's Word. Biblical theology has the basic assumption that there is an overall story arc throughout the Bible, and that story arc culminates in Christ on the cross.

And so as we come to difficult texts, we look at it through that overall story arc to help us understand how this text fits into all of that and gives us greater understanding. So here we are today in front of our text that makes us scratch our head a little bit maybe as to why it's so redundant.

And so with that I'd like to open in prayer before we get started. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Word. We long to know what you have to say to us.

[7 : 39] And so it is that when we approach your Word this afternoon, we ask that your Holy Spirit open our hearts and minds and give us understanding. In Jesus' name, amen.

I think since these two stories are so similar, we don't want to just bypass that. We want to actually take a look at that and try to figure out why they are similar. And as we look at the similarities, then we will see how they are actually quite different in many ways. And those differences then will give us understanding what our text today specifically has to say. So I want to take some time to do that a little bit.

I think it will be beneficial. In both stories, we have the Ziphites coming to Saul and saying, David is hiding in our backyard. So in our text in verse 1 today, we see that and we also saw that.

Actually, we saw that in chapter 23. We didn't actually read that when Pastor Helm preached on it two weeks ago. And then we see that David, sorry, Saul rushes out into the desert with his 3,000 men. So that's the same sort of activity taking place again. In both stories, we have David having the opportunity to reach out and kill Saul if he wanted to, but he spared him his life.

And then we have both stories sort of ending in this dialogue between David and Saul. So those are the similarities, but outside of that, it starts to take shape in a different way.

[9 : 07] Our text looks a little bit different. So we'll take a look at that as well. In this case, David sees the army coming. He sends his men out to sea. Is David truly with his army?

And sure enough, he is. So then David, his natural response is, let's sneak up on him. He looks down on camp and sees that King Saul is surrounded by his men, 3,000 men.

And his first reaction is, who will go with me? And Abishai says, I will go. And again, he finds himself in the middle of camp, has the opportunity to kill Saul, but he does not.

So that's another similarity. But again, as we look a little bit closer at those opportunities, in chapter 24, when David had the opportunity, he cut off the corner of Saul's robe, and he had twinges of guilt at that time. He felt a sense of regret the minute he did that.

And Pastor Helm highlighted this when he preached on this text, and he basically was saying that there was some symbolic meaning behind this, this cutting off of the land or cutting off of the rule of the king.

[10 : 17] And David immediately regretted that. In our text this week, in chapter 26, we see that David approached this with confidence. Like I said, he saw Saul lying there and said, who will go with me, and heads down into the camp.

He was sure-footed when he walked down into camp. And he did this because he knew that God was with him. And we pick up a clue in verse 12 to understand that he knew that God was with him.

In verse 12, David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head, and they went away. No man saw it or knew it or did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them.

So this time, David took the spear and the jar of water, and there was no mention of regret in this narrative. David was much more confident. He was growing in righteousness and faithfulness in his relationship with God.

Another difference we see is in the narration. In chapter 24, when David cut off the corner of Saul's robe, he ran out after the king and bowed down to him and began the interaction with the king there.

[11 : 34] In that sense, he was perfectly vulnerable, but he trusted that Saul would not reach out and do him any harm at that point. In our story today, it takes a slightly different shift.

In verse 13, we see that David went over to the other side and stood far off on the top of the hill with a great space between them. So if you listen to that again, it's amazing how the distance is packed into this one sentence.

He's on the other side, stood far off. He's on the top of the hill with a great space between him. So this time, he has experience with Saul, who said, Come back, I won't harm you.

But in reality, here he is again, out in the desert, hunting him down with his 3,000 men. So this time, David's a little more cautious and keeps the distance between him.

These differences begin to show the changes that are taking place in the two key players of these narratives. To understand how David and Saul are changing, we look at the immediate context of chapter 24 through 26.

[12 : 39] So those three chapters kind of work together real well. We see a similar narrative at both ends. They're kind of like bookends. And then we have the story of Abigail in 25.

So in the first narrative, David is obedient in chapter 24. And he's faithful to God in his actions, yet he has some twinges of guilt in his actions, about his actions.

Saul is somewhat responsive and repentant when he speaks to David and acknowledges God's hand at work. In chapter 25, we see David almost stumble.

Instead of relying on God's sovereignty, he decides to take things into his own hands and teach Nabal a lesson. However, God, in his gracious mercy through Abigail's act of generosity, on behalf of her husband, sort of, stops David from actually following through with his plan to take Nabal in vengeance.

David faltered. He almost didn't make it if it were not for God's intervention through Abigail. Saul is not really in this narrative in chapter 25.

[13 : 50] But Pastor Jackson talked about how the foolish Nabal in this story reflects the foolishness of Saul that we see in the full bloom throughout our text.

So in these three chapters, we see these ups and downs of David as he's being tested in the desert and God is building David's character. In our text today, he lands securely on his feet.

At the same time, we can see Saul's character. It's disintegrating in these chapters. As a matter of fact, if we zoom out and look at the scope of the summer study of David, we can follow the process of building of David's character in preparation for him to lead God's people as God's anointed king.

We learned in our first lesson of the series this summer that God anointed David as his king and the Holy Spirit came upon him. But David was not yet placed on the throne.

Our entire series deals with this now but not yet period of David's life. At the same time, the Holy Spirit left King Saul while he was still on the throne and we see this downward spiral in Saul's life at the same time.

[15 : 07] So while David is being tested and growing in righteousness and faithfulness in this now but not yet period, Saul is spiraling downward as his character disintegrates.

When we zoom back into our narrative for today, we realize that this is a sort of turning point. This is the last time that David and Saul see each other and interact with each other and speak with each other.

They are at the crossroads as David is ascending to the throne while Saul is descending and spiraling downward in their interactions with each other.

So let's take a closer look at what our text tells us about how God is working in David and how Saul's heart becomes more and more hardened as a result of his sin.

So we'll take a look at these two men. David, we'll start out with him, grew in character because he knew God is sovereign. We see this in verse 9. Again, here we are.

[16 : 09] They're standing over Saul as he sleeps and Abishai volunteers to kill him. But David said to Abishai, Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?

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. The Lord forbid that I should put out my hand against the Lord's anointed.

David had faith that God would unfold his plan as he chose. It was up to God to remove Saul from his throne. It was not up to David. So God could intervene in three different ways.

The Lord will strike him down. He could immediately kill him at any time. Or he will die, basically, in old age. Or he will die in battle, which is actually what ended up taking place.

David was faithful to God's sovereignty and let God act in his own way in his own time. So David grew in character because he knew God is sovereign. David grew in character because he respected God's anointed king, which is really a subset of God's sovereignty.

[17 : 21] In verse 16, after he took Saul's spear, David calls out to Abner, 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 in the jar of the water that was at his head. Now David wasn't just trash-talking Abner. David had a high view of God's anointed king.

God is the one who placed Saul as king over Israel, and Abner's job was to protect God's anointed king, and he failed to do so. David was appalled that Abner did not treat his assignment with all the weight that comes with guarding the Lord's anointed king.

And again in verse 17, David shows this respect for God's anointed as he interacts with David, with King Saul. King Saul hears his voice and again says, David, is this you, my son?

And David responds and says in verse 17, It is my voice, my Lord, O King. Again, here's the man who's coming out to the desert yet again to kill him yet again, or attempt to kill him at least, and he still respects him and still speaks with humility and honors the king, God's anointed king.

[18 : 43] So David grew in character because he respected God's anointed king. David grew in character because God was with him. We saw that already in verse 12, I think it was, where it says that, you know, the Lord put a sleep on the men, so God was there protecting David, and David knew it.

David was fully aware of it. Actually, we can see that a little bit in Psalm 54. Psalm 54 goes along with these two stories. I'm not sure exactly where it comes into play, but it's very clear because in the opening of Psalm 54, it says, When the Ziphites betrayed David to Saul.

So it's either after the first or the second incidence, but it shows us some insights into David's understanding of his relationship with God, and he knew that God was with him.

Verse 4, Behold, God is my helper. The Lord is the upholder of my life. He will return the evil to my enemies. In your faithfulness, put an end to them. Verse 7, For he has delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.

So there's just this language of knowledge that God is in control, God is sovereign, God is there with him. God is the one who sustains his life. God is the one who protects him. So David grew in character because God was with him, and David knew it.

[20 : 07] David grew in character as he longed to be with God's people in God's place under God's rule. Some good biblical theology terms that I'm borrowing here. Take a look at verses 19 and 20, and listen to David's heart as we read this again.

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.

Now therefore let not my blood fall on the earth away from the presence of the lord. So we learn three things about David here. First, David longs to be able to offer sacrifice to God.

He challenges Saul that if God truly did send Saul out after him, then he wants the opportunity to go to the altar to repent, to sacrifice, and worship his God there.

We see the same desire to sacrifice his God again in Psalm 54, verse 6. In there, in part of his psalm, he's talking about, with a free will offering, I will sacrifice to you.

[21 : 27] I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good. So you can see, David has this desire to be at the altar, bringing sacrifice to his lord, offering up his honor, just worshiping God at the throne.

The longer Saul keeps David on the run, the longer he keeps him away from the high place of worship and sacrifice, and David longs for that act of worship of his God.

The second thing that we learn from David in these two verses is that he longs to be with God's people when he says, they have driven me out this day that I should have no share in the heritage of the Lord.

David is basically saying he misses being with his people. And we get a little bit better understanding if we look at chapter 10, verse 1 of 1 Samuel, that we use that same phrase, the heritage of the Lord.

We see that there. When Samuel is anointing King Saul, anointing Saul as king, he talks about the heritage of the Lord.

[22 : 38] The Lord has anointed you to be prince over his heritage. And in that same text, he's talking about that. heritage is the people of Israel. So what we learn here is that David longs to be with his people.

And he has a love for his people. He longs to be with his people. And these are the people that David was anointed to be king over them. So it's good to see his love for God's people.

The third thing that we learn here from David is that he longs to be in God's presence. Now therefore, let not my blood fall on the earth away from the presence of the Lord.

So we know already that God was with David and David knew that God was with him in the desert. So it's not so much a location thing that he longs to be in the presence of the Lord.

It's in those days, the other nations, they pretty much felt that you're in this nation so you have to worship this God. And that's actually the reference that they're making here.

[23 : 43] Go serve other gods. You're going to be with the Philistines. Go serve those gods then because you're in their country and that's what you do. And in a sense, God is locally there in Israel, in the temple, in the Holy of Holies.

But God is also with David in the desert. So it's not so much a location thing as it is being in the presence of God and his people. And I think to understand a little bit better, we can see how what it means to be with God's people is to be in God's place.

So the promised land, the land that God's people live in under God's rule where God rests in the Holy of Holies where the priests offer up sacrifice to God where God's people gather to worship their Lord.

And so we have this communal, this community worshiping of God in God's place under God's rule together with God's people again. So that's what he's longing for to be in the presence of the Lord I think here.

Yep. Actually, I thought of a timely example. We send our kids off to college which we're doing this week and you have the opportunity to talk to them via Skype.

[25 : 00] But it's not really the same. Even though you have that connection, you still long for those times like Christmas break where you have all the sights and smells and sounds and interaction and just being together with your family.

And so that would be a similar type of thing here where David just longs to be with God's people in his place. So until then, David is basically banished to Skype land.

Even though David longs to offer sacrifice to God, be with God's people, and to be in the presence of the Lord, we learn from our text in the broader context that David is determined to remain righteous, faithful, and obedient to God's rule as he is tested in the wilderness.

So that's David. The other person we're looking at is Saul in this text. Saul, on the other hand, has rejected God's sovereignty and has turned to a life of sin and disobedience.

Saul does not respect God's anointed king, which is David at this point. He rejects God's decision to put David on the throne and makes at least four attempts to kill David.

[26 : 11] As we compare the narratives of chapter 24 and 26, we can clearly see Saul's downward spiral. We see Saul lifted up his voice and, I'm sorry, in chapter 24, his response to David was, he lifted up his voice and he wept and said to David, you are more righteous than I for you have repaid me good whereas I have repaid you evil.

I believe that the weeping and the phrasing of the words here do reflect some sort of repentant attitude in the heart of Saul at this time during this first interaction.

In our text today, Saul simply states the fact, I have sinned. There is no sound of repentance there. There is no sign of feeling bad.

It's simply acknowledging and making a statement of the obvious. In another example, Saul goes on to say in our text, Behold, I have acted foolishly and have made a great mistake.

Again, this is more of a statement than a confession or repentance. The story of Nabal should be fresh on our minds. We just looked at it last week in chapter 25 and the foolish man who dies in his foolishness is fresh in our minds as we hear King Saul speaking about acting foolishly who also then dies in his foolishness.

[27 : 36] We find another example of Saul's corroding character when we look at chapter 24. Saul still acknowledges the hand of God in David's life as he admits with a prophetic tone in verse 20.

And now behold, I know that you shall surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. But in our text today, Saul simply states the obvious once again in verse 25.

Then Saul said to David, Blessed be you, my son David. You will do many things and will succeed in them. That actually sounds more like a Chinese fortune cookie statement, I think.

I'm not sure how heartfelt that blessing was necessarily. and Saul leaves God out of this statement entirely as he speaks his last empty and hollow words to David before they part.

We see a downward spiral in Saul's life and moral character. Saul rejected God and sinned against him. I heard a phrase this past week that applies very nicely here.

[28 : 45] God must withdraw from sin. So when Saul committed sin, then God had to withdraw his spirit from Saul and he appointed a new king for Israel.

David gets to the heart of this text when he says in verse 23, let's take a look at that. The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness.

I think that gets to the heart of this text. 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.

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. I love how he turns that.

It's like he's looking to God for deliverance and looking to its Godward focus. and may you have mercy on me but may God have mercy on me.

- [29 : 49] So again, he's consistent in his focus on God and God's sovereignty. So our text presents us with two men. What are their rewards? One rejected God and gave into his sinful desires.

The other was tested in the desert and grew in righteousness and faithfulness to God. God will often lead his people into the desert to test them. Pastor Jackson touched on that a little bit last week already.

God led the Israelites into the desert and tested them until they were ready to enter the promised land. God led David into the desert to test him so that he would grow in righteousness and faithfulness so that he was fully prepared to lead God's people when he ascended to the throne of Israel.

God will often lead us to the desert to test us for a time so that we may grow in righteousness and faithfulness as well. Our text today shows that David passed the test.

He stood firm and he was ready to rule. However, as many of us know, in the end David failed to the point of committing adultery, murder, and giving in to his own pride.

- [31 : 02] Israel grumbled and built an idol to worship in the desert and so they were barred from the promised land. Only the next generation was allowed to enter. We often fail as well when we're tested in the desert.

There is only one man who was tested and was perfectly victorious. Jesus was driven into the desert right after his baptism. Jesus was tested three times.

Jesus was victorious in resisting Satan's temptation. Jesus was perfectly obedient and faithful to God as he looked to God for sustenance, for safety, and allowed God to rule sovereignly in his temptations.

Jesus' righteousness and faithfulness led him to the cross. He passed the final test in the Garden of Gethsemane when he committed to obey God's sovereign will and the next day gave up his own life on the cross to pay the price for our sins.

On the cross, Jesus brought an end to the human disobedience that was passed down to us from Adam. Because of his death and resurrection, Jesus overcame sin and makes it possible that we too may become righteous and faithful to God the Father in Christ.

- [32 : 20] Our text shows us two men, one growing in righteousness and faithfulness to God, one spiraling downward as he rejects God and continues in a path of sinfulness.

Do you find yourself relating to one or the other of these two patterns? things? You may be familiar with the numbness to sin that we see in Saul.

You may have rejected God outright, rejected Christ his son, and continue in a pattern of sin leading you in a downward spiral. There is hope.

Christ loves you and longs to have you join him in fellowship as you repent and accept him as your Lord. Some of you may call yourselves Christians.

In fact, most of you probably do. You do believe that Christ died on your behalf, but you find yourselves caught in a recurring pattern of sin that just seems to have such a hold on you and you are becoming more and more numb to the prompting of the Holy Spirit within you, giving up the fight.

- [33 : 25] Again, there is hope. Turn to Christ and cling to him and don't give up, for he is your only hope. He is the only one who was victorious in temptation.

He came out of the desert unblemished and as a believer you are in Christ and he has already won the battle on your behalf. He has broken the power of sin that you may have victory in Christ.

David's character was tested during his now but not yet period in the desert. He came out of the desert more righteous with greater faithfulness to God.

We too find ourselves in this now but not yet period as believers or followers of Christ. We are now in Christ but we are also not yet fully sanctified, not yet free from our fleshly desires.

We are justified but not fully sanctified. In Christ we are becoming more and more righteous, becoming sanctified. We become more and more like Christ until he returns and puts an end to our sinful desires once and for all as he rules eternally.

[34 : 35] If Jesus did not obey his father, if Jesus failed in his faithfulness to his father, if Jesus was not righteous, we would have no hope.

We would die in the desert away from the Lord's presence. But because of Christ's work on the cross, because of Christ's faithfulness to God's sovereign will, because of Christ's perfect righteousness, if we believe Jesus is the Christ, God's anointed king, and we submit to his rule, then we can stand sure-footed like David did in the desert.

If we are in Christ, then we would know without a doubt that God was with us as the Holy Spirit living within us testifies to that fact. If we are in Christ, then we will enjoy eternity with God's people in God's place under God's perfect rule, and I can't imagine anything better than that.

Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you that you give us opportunities to grow as you test us in the desert.

You are slow to anger, and you are merciful. We thank you that you allow us to stumble and help us to our feet, making us more and more righteous through this process.

[35 : 54] sometimes this process hurts, but we know that in Christ you have already secured our victory, and that you will deliver us out of all tribulation, and that we will enjoy eternity in your presence forever.

But for those who have rejected you, may your spirit give them hope and salvation in Jesus Christ, our Lord, that they may share in this eternal hope. in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.