

# DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE

[BIBLE TEXT](#): 1 Samuel 26:1-25;

LESSON 215 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Say thou not, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee" (Proverbs 20:22).

## BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

### 1 Samuel 26:1-25

<sup>1</sup> And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, *which is* before Jeshimon?

<sup>2</sup> Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.

<sup>3</sup> And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, *which is* before Jeshimon, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness.

<sup>4</sup> David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed.

<sup>5</sup> And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him.

<sup>6</sup> Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee.

<sup>7</sup> So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him.

<sup>8</sup> Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not *smite* him the

## BIBLE REFERENCES:

### NOTES:

#### Seeking David

Once more the Ziphites took information about David to Saul (**1 Samuel 23:19** <sup>19</sup> Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, *which is* on the south of Jeshimon? ). For a time Saul had stopped his search for David. The Ziphites' report brought to Saul's mind his hatred for David, and his jealousy of David. To renew his pursuit, Saul took 3000 chosen men to seek David in Ziph.

Perhaps Saul would never have taken up another chase of David if the Ziphites had not encouraged it by their report. Their words revived the evil in Saul's heart, which was "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:12, 13). The Ziphites themselves did not seek David; but by betraying David, the Ziphites became partakers in Saul's evil plan to slay him: May we never, by giving encouragement to others that they sin, have a part in sin. Some children may not commit a wrong deed themselves, but they urge others to do it. When they stir up evil and hatred they are guilty along with the others.

When Saul heard of David's whereabouts, he immediately went out against him. David acted differently when he heard of Saul's whereabouts. David did not march out to battle as some people do against their enemy. David had no reason to fight. David was interested in his own safety, not in the defeat of Saul. By keeping out of Saul's way, David showed that he was patient and willing to "wait on the LORD." It might have been easier to do away with Saul, but then David would have been guilty of the blood of Saul, the Lord's anointed.

No doubt, it was about this time that David wrote the fifty-fourth Psalm. He said, "God is mine helper: . . . he hath delivered me out of all trouble" (Psalm 54:4, 7). David believed that God would deliver him out of this trouble, too.

#### In Saul's Camp

There are other ways of dealing with enemies besides fighting. David was no coward. When the opportune time came, David went to Saul's camp, and found the host of the enemy asleep. Perhaps for safety, Saul, and Abner his captain (**1 Samuel 17:55** <sup>55</sup> And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.), were in the center of the camp, surrounded by the other men of war.

David's nephew, Abishai (**1 Chronicles 2:15-16** <sup>15</sup> Ozem the sixth, David the seventh: <sup>16</sup> Whose sisters were Zeruiah, and Abigail. And the sons of Zeruiah; Abishai, and Joab, and Asahel, three.), volunteered to go with David as he ventured into Saul's camp — into the center of it, to Saul. David and Abishai went by night. They were not seen by the sentries nor by any of the others. They walked and talked among Saul's 3000 sleeping soldiers.

It was not hard to find Saul, for his spear was stuck in the ground near his bolster (or whatever he was using for a pillow).

second time.

<sup>9</sup> And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?

<sup>10</sup> David said furthermore, *As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish.*

<sup>11</sup> The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that *is* at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

<sup>12</sup> So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw *it*, nor knew *it*, neither awaked: for they *were* all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.

<sup>13</sup> Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off; a great space *being* between them:

<sup>14</sup> And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who *art* thou *that* criest to the king?

<sup>15</sup> And David said to Abner, *Art* not thou a *valiant* man? and who *is* like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord.

<sup>16</sup> This thing *is* not good that thou hast done. *As the LORD liveth, ye are* worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD'S anointed. And now see where the king's spear *is*, and the cruse of water that *was* at his bolster.

<sup>17</sup> And Saul knew David's voice, and said, *Is* this thy voice, my son David? And David said, *It is* my voice, my lord, O king.

We are told that it was customary in such an encampment for the leader to occupy the center, and his position would be indicated by his spear stuck in the ground.

### Asleep

When David and Abishai slipped over to Saul's side, they were surrounded by all the sleeping soldiers. Abishai asked David to give him permission to slay Saul. Perhaps Abishai had been with David in the cave when David cut Saul's garment. Very likely he knew that David would not slay Saul even though he did have a chance. Abishai probably reasoned with David that the first time it might have just happened that David had had a chance to slay Saul; but this time, surely God had delivered Saul into David's hand. This was no ordinary sleep that had come upon the soldiers of Saul, for even the sentries and Saul's captain, whose business it was to protect the king, were asleep. The Lord had caused this deep sleep to come upon Saul and all his 3000 soldiers.

### In God's Hand

Abishai did not encourage David to slay Saul. Abishai asked that he be permitted to do it. But David was loyal to his king. Even though David had been anointed to be king, he was willing to wait God's time. David did not want to rush ahead and force his own way to the throne. David put into practice the words of one of his Psalms: "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:5).

David was content to leave his case in God's hand. David told Abishai that he would be held guilty before God if he put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed. Besides, David reasoned, the Lord will smite Saul, or he may perish in a battle, or his day to die will come. David knew that sooner or later Saul and every other person had to die, but David did not want to be responsible for Saul's death. He said, "The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed." Thus David spared the life of Saul, his enemy.

### A Spear and a Cruse of Water

David instructed Abishai to take Saul's spear and his cruse of water, as proof that they had been in Saul's camp. Saul's spear was to protect him when he was in danger; the vessel of water was to refresh him when he was thirsty. He lost both. Thus may a person lose both his spiritual strength and comfort by being careless and off-guard about spiritual things. He must "watch and pray" constantly (**Mark 13:33** <sup>33</sup> Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.).

David and Abishai slipped quietly and safely out of Saul's camp. When they had gone a distance where they could be heard and not reached, David called out. Saul recognized David's voice as David accused Abner, the captain, of being unfaithful and neglectful, because he had left the king unprotected. In such a case a person is considered worthy of death.

David pointed out further that while Abner slept one of the people had gone to Saul to destroy him but David had not permitted it. For proof, David called their attention to Saul's spear which was missing from Saul's side and was now in David's possession. David probably reminded them that he who took the spear could also have slain Saul. David said that the spear would be returned if Saul sent one of his young men for it.

Driven from Home and Worship

David insisted that he was the one who had been wronged. David was driven from his home and his business and his

<sup>18</sup> And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil *is* in mine hand?

<sup>19</sup> Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if *they be* the children of men, cursed *be* they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods.

<sup>20</sup> Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

<sup>21</sup> Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

<sup>22</sup> And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it.

<sup>23</sup> The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into *my* hand to day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed.

<sup>24</sup> And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation.

<sup>25</sup> Then Saul said to David, Blessed *be* thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great *things*, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

worship. His inheritance was taken away, and he was told to "Go, serve other gods."

In David's humility, he likened himself to a partridge, a game bird said to be harmless, which flies when it can but has no other defense.

Saul was forced to confess his sin and mistake. He invited David to return, and promised to do him no more harm. Perhaps, at this time, Saul meant what he promised; but his confession and promise were not prompted by true repentance.

### God, the Judge

David reminded Saul that God will "render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness." The Lord is judge and "shall reward every man according to his works" (Matthew 16:27) and according to his deeds.

David never gave any other reason for sparing the life of Saul except that he was the Lord's anointed. So far as David was concerned, that reason was enough. That should have been reason enough for Saul, too, because David was also the anointed of the Lord (**2 Samuel 23:1** <sup>1</sup> Now these *be* the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man *who* was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said,). That should be reason enough today to cause a person to be careful what is said or done against one of God's ministers. God said, "Touch not mine anointed" (Psalm 105:15). Without a doubt, God meant all His children, not only the ministers who are anointed to preach. The Bible tells us that there is an anointing that comes (**1 John 2:27** <sup>27</sup> But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.), which teaches one and leads him into all truth (John 16:13). God takes note of those who harm, by words or deeds, His people — the followers of the Lord. This was God's promise to Abraham and to all the Children of Israel: "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (**Genesis 12:3** <sup>3</sup> And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. **Genesis 27:29** <sup>29</sup> Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed *be* every one that curseth thee, and blessed *be* he that blesseth thee. **Exodus 23:22** <sup>22</sup> But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. **Numbers 24:9** <sup>9</sup> He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed *is* he that blesseth thee, and cursed *is* he that curseth thee.). It has been proved that God is good to those Who are kind to His people, and that God permits reverses to those who mistreat and injure the followers of the Lord.

With these words of Saul, "Thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail," David and Saul parted as friends. So far as we know, this was the last time that David ever saw Saul. Until Saul's death, David remained in exile, depending upon the protection of God rather than relying upon Saul's promise.

### QUESTIONS

- 1 Who stirred up Saul to seek David again?
- 2 How many were with Saul?
- 3 Why was it that David and Abishai could get into Saul's camp?
- 4 What proof did they have that they had been there?
- 5 What can happen to a Christian who does not "watch and pray"?
- 6 What reason did David give for not slaying Saul?

- 7 How was Saul's spear returned?
- 8 How had Abner, Saul's captain, failed to do his part?
- 9 In what way was David wronged?
- 10 To what did Saul confess?
- 11 What did Saul prophesy concerning David?
- 12 How did David and Saul part?