

DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE

BIBLE TEXT : I Samuel 26:1-25; Psalm 54:1-7

LESSON 215 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:5).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Samuel 26:1-25

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

² 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.

³ 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.

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

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Saul's Oath and Its Violation

1 Saul took an oath before the Lord that he would spare David's life,

1 Samuel 19:6

⁶ And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul swore, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain.

2 Saul's oath was broken when he cast the javelin,

1 Samuel 19:10

¹⁰ And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.

3 It was broken again in his deliberate planning against David,

1 Samuel 22:7-8

⁷ Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, *and* make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds;
⁸ That all of you have conspired against me, and *there is* none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and *there is* none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

4 It was broken in his pursuit of David at Maon,

1 Samuel 23:25-26

²⁵ Saul also and his men went to seek *him*. And they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard *that*, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon.
²⁶ And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them.

5 It was broken when hunting David at Engedi,

1 Samuel 24:1-2

¹ And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David *is* in the wilderness of Engedi.
² Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

6 It was broken again, for the last time, at Ziph, I Samuel 26:1, 2;

1 Samuel 24:20-22

²⁰ And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.
²¹ Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.
²² And David swore unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

Psalm 54:1-7

¹ Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength.
² Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.

once, and I will not *smite* him the second time.

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

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² 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.

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

¹⁴ 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?

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ And Saul knew David's voice, and said, *Is* this thy voice, my son David? And David said, *It is* my

³ For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah.

⁴ Behold, God *is* mine helper: the Lord *is* with them that uphold my soul.

⁵ He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth.

⁶ I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for *it is* good.

⁷ For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen *his desire* upon mine enemies.

II David's Excursion into Saul's Camp

1 David's spies confirmed the fact that Saul had come again to destroy David, I Samuel 26:3, 4

2 David verified the report of the spies, I Samuel 26:5

3 Abishai volunteered to accompany David to Saul's camp, I Samuel 26:6, 7

4 Abishai, in his zeal, asked to destroy Saul, I Samuel 26:8

5 David's godly character as shown in his reply to Abishai, I Samuel 26:9-11;

Psalm 37:5

⁵ Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring *it* to pass.

Psalm 27:14

¹⁴ Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

6 God sent a deep sleep upon Saul's men to protect David, I Samuel 26:12;

Psalm 76:5

⁵ The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands.

Romans 11:8

⁸ (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

III David's Conversation with Abner and Saul

1 David bantered Abner, Saul's captain, I Samuel 26:13-16

2 David submitted his case to Saul, I Samuel 26:17-20

3 Saul acknowledged his wrongdoings, I Samuel 26:21, 25

4 David committed himself to divine protection, I Samuel 26:22-24

NOTES:

The Godly. and the Persecutors of the Godly

We have seen, in previous lessons, various incidents that testify to the godliness of David, the newly-anointed king of Israel; and we have seen also those incidents that demonstrate the extreme perfidy of Saul, the incumbent king of Israel. The incidents found in this lesson are similar to those in our last one, but they are especially valuable to us because they give us an opportunity to consider other godly characteristics in David and to observe again the ungodliness of Saul, that we may profit from their examples.

David is, unquestionably, one of the great "cloud of witnesses" who attest to the power of faith and the providence of God toward His children. On the other hand, there is no doubt but that Saul is a Biblical example of the fact that a person may receive some of the very best gifts Heaven has and then reject God and descend into the lowest depths of human degradation and be finally abandoned by God with no alternative but to sink into an endless hell.

Reviewing the history thus far studied, we see that Saul

voice, my lord, O king.

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

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ 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.

²¹ 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.

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

²³ 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.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ 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.

Psalm 54:1-7

took an oath before the Lord, at the request of his son Jonathan, that he would not kill David. But the words were hardly out of his mouth when he threw a javelin at David in an attempt to kill him instantly. Saul did not seek forgiveness for this act, nor ask God to help him keep the promise he had made; but he broke his vows repeatedly, even though he received a warning and another reminder of his own wickedness and of David's righteousness at the cave in the wilderness of Engedi. This lesson deals with the fifth recorded instance when Saul broke his vow; and so far as we know, it is the last time that he ever saw David or talked to him.

It cannot be said that the events of this lesson were accidental by nature. This was an incident, not an **accident**. It was one more time in which the love of God pled with the erring Saul, seeking to lead him to repentance. Saul admitted his guilt, but he did not repent of it. He did not seek the pardon God had for him.

There are many people who say great things, who speak well-phrased intentions, and who utter vows that could more than open the gates of God's pardoning grace, but who do not have the joy of salvation or the assurance that their sins are forgiven. Saul is an example of these. Saul vowed with his lips that he would not kill David, but he kept murder in his heart all the while.

When the Spirit of God leaves a man, an evil spirit comes into his heart instead. As a rule, David was careful to keep himself in the proper attitude before God so he could hear God's voice. David did not want to be separated from the favor of God for even a moment. He placed his all into God's hands and then uncomplainingly endured the consequences. Saul, on the contrary, paid no attention to the voice of God but continuously followed his own way and catered to his heart's desires. His way brought total ruin; but David's policy of following God's way brought a glorious eternal triumph.

Apparently the majority of the Israelites did not take too belligerent a stand with Saul, against David. They were obedient to their king, as they should be; but some of them must not have assisted him as he felt they should, for Saul complained that they must be allied with David. The Israelites were not wholly given over to the spirit of evil as was Saul. When Saul ordered his servants to kill the priests of the Lord because the priests had aided David in his escape, the servants refused to do so. They feared the consequences of lifting their hands against the Lord's priests more than the consequences of disobeying their king. Saul had to turn to an Edomite, one who was outside the called and chosen people, to carry out his command that God's priests be killed.

On the contrary, David had a group with him who recognized the right spirit in their leader and who obeyed him to the very letter, even though his orders were contrary to their own personal feelings. They were willing to undertake the most hazardous moves for their leader and obey him explicitly while on the expedition. They went through innumerable hardships for the cause they felt was right. They could do this because they saw that the right spirit was in David.

Abishai was one of these who served David faithfully. He willingly volunteered to go on the hazardous trip with David into the enemy camp, that David might see first-hand that Saul was there to trap and kill him. But the daring spirit of allegiance Abishai had for his leader was not greater than his obedience to that leader. He saw, in the success of their intrusion into the heart of Saul's camp, made possible by the fact that God had sent a deep sleep upon Saul and all who were supposed to be

¹ Save me, O God, by thy name,
and judge me by thy strength.
² Hear my prayer, O God; give ear
to the words of my mouth.
³ For strangers are risen up against
me, and oppressors seek after my
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them. Selah.
⁴ Behold, God *is* mine helper: the
Lord *is* with them that uphold my
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⁵ He shall reward evil unto mine
enemies: cut them off in thy truth.
⁶ I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I
will praise thy name, O LORD; for
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⁷ For he hath delivered me out of
all trouble: and mine eye hath
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guarding Saul, what he supposed to be God's will. To Abishai it looked as if God had delivered Saul to them, and David need not lift his own hand in self-defense. Abishai needed to strike the rejected Saul but once! All their troubles would be immediately over! And Abishai would even give God the glory for the deliverance!

In all this we see not only the measure of right that was in the faithful Abishai, but the godliness of humble David. David was educated in matters of war from his youth. His brothers had been professional soldiers under Saul. He had begun his own career as a guardian of his father's sheep, had come into national prominence by his duel with Goliath, and had led Israel's armies into battle, in various campaigns, under Saul. He had, also, during his years of exile, led a band of fighting men in numerous attacks on the enemies of Israel. Yet David lived close enough to God that the hardening influences of belligerence, as well as those of a life of such adverse circumstances as he had been forced into during his exile, had no effect upon him. He was tender in heart and able to hear the voice of God above the natural impulses that would spontaneously arise because of the training of his youth or because of his past hardships.

This quality in David reminds *us* that there is no environment or background that needs to influence us for wrong, if we will but keep our ear turned to the voice of God. Men are prone to make excuses, to blame their failures on their training, their heritage, their lack of education or preparation, or their environment. But the Spirit of God will lead those who want to be led. We need not follow our human nature; we should follow God.

Suffering for Christ

The hardest things a Christian has to face are the accusations that are brought against him, even though he is wrong and the accusations are justified in every way. Whether at fault or not, the first tendency of the flesh is to defend itself. So often the first reaction is to make an excuse or to give a reason instead of suffering for Christ, as He suffered for us when no guile was found in His mouth or sin in His conduct. (**1 Peter 2:19-23** ¹⁹ For this *is* thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰ For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God. ²¹ For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: ²² Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: ²³ Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously.)

Far too often, when a person has made some mistake he will cite the reason for doing that particular thing in justification of himself. He will attempt to place the blame upon the reason instead of upon himself. And if a person isn't guilty of committing the wrong of which he is accused it is likewise difficult for him not to rise in immediate justification of himself. It is very hard for many people to let the Lord be their vindication, and their defense, but tilt is what they should do if they would follow in the steps of their Savior.

David had been exiled and separated from all the worship of God — without a just cause. He had been driven from home, from his loved ones, and from the privilege of going with the other Israelites to the House of God three times a year to obey the Law of God — without a just cause. He might have felt that his prayers would not be heard by God, that he was forsaken by

God, and that he was unloved by man — without a just cause.

But this did not drive David to despair or to bitterness. He was willing to let the Lord work out His will. David was willing to follow in the way God indicated, to suffer whatever God permitted to come to him, and to let the Lord vindicate him. We can see, in the end, how fully God cared for His trusting child, how completely God vindicated the one who would not raise his hand to vindicate himself, how thoroughly God established the kingdom forever in the name of the man who had a heart that was perfect toward Him.

David honored God, and honored God's anointed; and because of that, David was a man whom God could trust in a place of great responsibility, and place in a position of great eternal reward.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Before whom, and at whose suggestion, was an oath taken by Saul not to kill David?
- 2 Was the oath kept? Cite the times when it was, or was not, kept.
- 3 What great Psalm was written by David in this time of trial?
- 4 What great Scriptural truth is given to us in the example of David writing Psalms in his times of extreme trial?
- 5 Tell the story of David's final encounter with Saul.
- 6 What godly virtues are suggested in the conduct of Abishai?
- 7 What obligations are included in discipleship of Jesus?
- 8 What defense did David put up for himself?
- 9 What was Saul's defense of himself?
- 10 Will a Christian suffer persecution? What attitude should he take toward persecution and those who give it?