

1 Samuel 26

Once again, what did the Ziphites do (v. 1)? They betrayed David a second time by reporting David's whereabouts to Saul (cf. 23:19).

How did Saul respond to the news (vv. 2-3)? Saul promptly gathered a force five times larger than David's meager band and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph. We are not told what happened to incite Saul anew. When the two men had last parted, they seemed somewhat reconciled (1 Samuel 24). Maybe evil men had stirred up the king's hatred afresh (see v. 19).¹

When David discovered that Saul was closing in on him, what did he do (vv. 3-4)? He sent out scouts. David, as a wise and capable leader, constantly monitored the movements of Saul. David knew where Saul was, but Saul did not know where David was.

What was David's next move (v. 5)? David needed to recruit someone to go with him to Saul's camp. Abishai answered the call (v. 6)....**What do we know about Abishai?** He was one of David's mighty men (2 Samuel 23:13-19). He was David's nephew, son of his sister Zeruiah. His brother was Joab, the commander of David's army.

David next spied out Saul's camp. What did David discover at the camp (v. 5)? Saul (and Abner, his army commander) had lain down with the army encamped around him.

In the evening, what did David and Abishai do (v. 7)? They penetrated the camp and came to where Saul was sleeping. An unnatural slumber from the Lord made this possible (v. 12).²

What was Abishai's message to David (v. 8)? *"Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands."* Abishai wanted to strike the king with a quick death blow..... the same advice as on the previous opportunity he had to kill Saul (1 Samuel 24:4). Each time, David's associates pointed out that this circumstance was not an accident - God designed it - and the design was for David to take righteous vengeance upon Saul.

What was David's answer (vv. 9-11)? David forbade any such action because, although Saul was a wicked man, he was the Lord's anointed. It was the Lord's responsibility to deal with him. David knew that even a sinning Saul was still the anointed king over Israel (1 Samuel 10:1). David knew he would be guilty before God if he laid a hand on the Lord's anointed.

In the middle of his reply, David mentioned alternative ways by which God might terminate Saul's life (v. 10): He might die from some physical affliction, as Nabal had (cf. 25:38), or of natural causes, or in battle (cf. 1 Samuel 31). David reminded Abishai that God could deal with Saul without their help (cf. Deuteronomy 32:35; Hebrews 10:30).³

What was the significance of the fact that the Lord had put them into a deep sleep (v. 12)? Confirmation that God approved of their strategy. He was on their side. **What did they end up doing (v. 12)?** David took Saul's spear and jug of water and left.⁴

What action did David take next (vv. 13-16)? When David was safely outside the camp, he raised his voice and rebuked Abner for his carelessness in guarding the king. Such negligence was worthy of death. The jug and spear which David had taken were undeniable proof of Saul's second deliverance (24:11) from death at the hand of David.⁵

How would you describe David's appeal to Saul (vv. 17-20)? David asked his "lord" why he was pursuing "his servant," what had he done, and what evil had he committed? David said that if some violation of the Mosaic Law had prompted Saul to hunt him down, he was ready to offer the sacrifice that the Law prescribed to atone for it. But if David's enemies had stirred up Saul's hostility without cause, David prayed that God would judge them for that.

Saul's attacks had resulted in David's separation from the Lord's inheritance, for they had excluded David from the fellowship of God's people and from living at peace in the Lord's land since he had to live as a fugitive. David's enemies had, in effect, encouraged him to abandon Yahweh, by driving him out. To be expelled from the Lord's land was to be separated from the Lord's sanctuary (excommunication) and left to serve the gods of whatever land one may settle in (Joshua 22:24-27).

The common conception in the ancient Near East was that the various gods ruled their own particular areas.

David again compared himself to a mere flea, essentially harmless but annoying to Saul (v. 20; cf. 24:14).⁶ There was no need for Saul to pursue him so vigorously. Searching for David was like searching for a single flea, like hunting a partridge in the mountains. It was a whole lot of work with very little benefit. It was a futile, if not a dangerous task. Let the king forsake his pursuit and cease listening to those who pitted him against David.

How did Saul respond to David's plea (v. 21)? Saul apparently repented when he realized that David had spared his life again.

How did David answer Saul's confession (vv. 22-24)? David concluded his defense by asserting his righteousness declaring that it is the Lord who will repay each person for his righteousness and faithfulness.

David explained to Saul why he did not kill him. David wanted to fulfill his calling, to be the next king of Israel. But he wanted both the throne and the blessing of God. He refused to take the throne through murder or rebellion. He would wait until it came to him God's way.

How did this chapter end (v. 25)? Saul responded to David with a blessing and a prophecy of future greatness for his "son David."⁷ These are the last recorded words of Saul to David. The text does not record another meeting of David and Saul before Saul died. After this incident, David left "the territory of Israel" (27:1) and moved to the territory of the Philistines, only to return to Israelite territory after Saul's death.⁸

Lesson Learned: We have to establish moral convictions before temptation strikes. David had determined to follow God's way and not the way of what looked like common sense and this carried over into his decision making not to murder God's anointed king. He laid the moral groundwork before the temptation reared its ugly head.

¹ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 317.

² *Ibid.*

³ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Samuel*, 2024 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 190.

⁴ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 317.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Samuel*, 2024 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 192.

⁷ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 318.

⁸ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Samuel*, 2024 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 193.