

**David and Saul**

• *Confident David finds Saul unguarded*

• *Without harming Saul, he gets proof that he has been in the camp*

• *David's outstanding kindness towards his enemy works a change in his heart*

• *For the first time Saul says 'I have sinned' and seems to be sincere*

• *However David does not trust him*

• *It is too late for the kingdom to be restored to him*

• *From this time Saul never again makes any attempt to hunt David*

The Ziphites, whom we have met before, once again act the part of spies and betrayers<sup>□1</sup> and Saul goes off in pursuit of David<sup>□2</sup>. This time David is confident; he starts looking for Saul<sup>□3</sup> and finds him at time when he is unguarded. David wants to go to Saul's camp and offers the opportunity of accompanying him to two men, Ahimelech and Abishai. Abishai volunteers<sup>□4</sup>. He and Joab are David's nephews; Zeruah was David's sister<sup>□5</sup>. They will play a big part in David's life.

David reaches greater heights of generosity to Saul. He and Abishai creep into the camp and find Saul defenceless<sup>□1</sup>. Once again David has the opportunity and the temptation to kill Saul<sup>□2</sup>. Sometimes God lets us face an old temptation so that we can know that we have victory over it. David is now far from having any interest in killing Saul. Without harming Saul, he gets proof that he has been in the camp<sup>□3</sup> and then goes to a place of safety and shouts out his severe denunciation of Abner for not being awake to protect the king<sup>□4</sup>. David is actually concerned to protect the king and show him kindness. He is going as far as he possibly can go in showing loyalty and love to Saul.

Paul says if our enemy is hungry we are to feed him. If he is thirsty we must give him drink. David could have added, if our enemy is vulnerable we must take steps to protect him. In such a way we 'heap burning coals' on the wicked person. This phrase of Paul (taken from Proverbs 25:21, 22) seems to mean that our generosity gives our enemy the possibility of repentance and reconciliation. This is what happened to Saul. David's outstanding kindness towards his enemy works a change in his heart. David insists he is innocent<sup>□1</sup>, asks forgiveness if Saul is being used by God to punish him<sup>□2</sup>, mentions the possibility that others have stirred up Saul against David<sup>□3</sup>, and expresses his distress at being excluded from his inheritance, the land of Israel<sup>□4</sup>. He speaks of himself in the humblest of terms<sup>□5</sup>.

David conquers Saul by kindness. David's extreme love and humility has an effect on Saul. For the first time he says 'I have sinned' and seems to be sincere. He acknowledges the effect David's kindness has had on him, and for the first time confesses his folly and wickedness in pursuing him<sup>□1</sup>.

However David does not trust him. He returns the items taken, for he does not wish to be guilty of theft of these small items<sup>□1</sup>. He commends his cause to God's justice<sup>□2</sup>. Saul's last words to David are full of repentance and total acknowledgement of the rightness of David's cause<sup>□3</sup>.

It is too late for the kingdom to be restored to him; that has been taken from him without the possibility of restoration. But from this time Saul never again makes any attempt to hunt David. He goes back home and shows no further animosity towards David. His last days were concerned with the Philistines. He will never meet with David again.

□1 26:1  
□2 26:2  
□3 26:3-5

□4 26:6  
□5 1 Chronicles 2:16

□1 26:7  
□2 26:8-11

□3 26:12

□4 26:13-16

□1 26:17-18  
□2 26:19a

□3 26:19b  
□4 26:19c  
□5 26:20

□1 26:21

□1 26:22  
□2 26:23-24

□3 26:25

## David's lapse of faith

- David fails to believe God at the very point where God is about to answer his prayers

- Entirely unnecessarily he joins the Philistines!

## God's grace

- David's fit of despair does not make God give up on him

- God can distinguish between a fit of unbelief and long-term rebellion

- God's grace is bigger than we imagine

David becomes unready for victory. Sometimes the people of God fail to believe God at the very point where they are about to receive an answer to their prayers. Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, prayed for a son but when he was told 'your prayer has been heard'<sup>1</sup>, was not ready for the answer to his prayer. The church prayed for Peter when he was in prison<sup>2</sup> but could not believe Peter had been released as they had prayed<sup>3</sup>. Similarly David has now reached the point where he is totally victorious over Saul. Yet he does not see it this way at all. He ignores Saul's invitation ('Return my son'<sup>4</sup>) and keeps his distance from Saul<sup>5</sup>, not trusting his professions of repentance. We can sympathize! But actually David would never face any threats from Saul again.

It often happens that when victory is but a step away we collapse and are ready to give up altogether. David is actually at the end of his troubles with Saul, yet is at precisely this point that he falls into bleak despair. 'I shall be destroyed by the hand of Saul', he says<sup>1</sup>. At the very point of victory he does the most foolish thing he ever did in all of his wanderings and evasions of Saul. He joins the Philistines<sup>2</sup>! It was entirely unnecessary. Saul was told where David was but had given up his enmity towards David<sup>3</sup>.

Since David did not 'endure to the end' at this point one might think that he would have ruined his calling. Once before David had said 'There is only a step between me and death'<sup>1</sup>. Now he is again in dismal despair. But God does not withdraw his plans for us easily. David's fit of despair does not make God give up on him. God has called David to the kingship. When our wobbly faith is anchored to God's great faithfulness our weaknesses do not destroy God's call. David is not persisting in long-term rebellion (as Saul had done). He is simply at the end of his tether and God's faithfulness is not aborted by our fits of despair. 'He does not treat us as our sins deserve....' David wrote those words himself in Psalm 103:10. God had not treated him as his sins deserved. He had experienced God's forgiving compassion at times when he was at his worst! God can distinguish between a fit of unbelief and long-term rebellion. David was not ready when the kingdom became his, but God gave it to him anyway. God's grace is bigger than we imagine.

1 Luke 1:13  
 2 Acts 12:12  
 3 Acts 12:15  
 4 26:21  
 5 26:22

1 27:1  
 2 27:1-3  
 3 27:4

1 20:3



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