

June 26, 2016
Sunday Morning Service
Series: The Life of David
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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THE LORD REWARDS THOSE WHO WAIT ON HIM 1 Samuel 26

In Genesis 49:1-27, we read about father Jacob's blessing on his twelve sons. To each son, Jacob offered some insight regarding the future of the tribe of people who would descend from each of them. I believe his words were inspired from God. It is interesting, as Jacob went from son to son expressing what the future held for the nation that would arise from his and Isaac's and Abraham's loins, to see the vulnerability of so many of the tribes. Was it possible that God could or would ever establish a viable nation from such impulsive, yet needy, leaders?

Then almost in the middle of his explanation of future blessings and trials, Jacob blurted out, *"I wait for your salvation, O LORD"* (Genesis 49:18). That was a fitting cry as Jacob realized the trials his posterity would face. Would God indeed save His people from utter destruction? Would God finally bring to pass His promise of Abraham's people living in their own land as a mighty nation? It had to be pretty difficult for Jacob who was living in a tent in Egypt surrounded by the families of twelve impetuous, sometimes hot tempered, often dishonest sons to trust God with the future.

Have we learned yet to wait for God's salvation? It is tempting for us, especially when we face difficulties, to quickly tire of waiting for God to act in our behalf and strike out to solve the problem our own way. We are too often like King Saul who was under intense pressure as the Philistines were mounting an attack against his meager army (1 Samuel 15). He had sent word for Samuel the prophet to come and offer a sacrifice in which he would beseech God's blessing for the coming battle. That was Samuel's responsibility and only Samuel's responsibility.

Saul grew anxious at Samuel's delay and finally decided to step out of God's will and offer the sacrifice himself. That was the final straw in God's test of Saul's character. Saul proved to everyone what God already knew about him. He was not fit to be king over God's people. In response to Saul's refusal to wait on God's salvation, Samuel announced that God had torn the kingdom from him and given it to his neighbor, that is David (15:28).

David's story, in contrast to Saul's, reveals a man who was maturing in faith. Yes, he was often as impulsive as we are. But through the lessons God brought into David's life, he was learning to wait on the Lord's salvation. David's lessons are good lessons for us. We all have difficulties we beg the Lord to resolve. Can we wait for Him to resolve them? We all have longings we pray that God will satisfy. Can we wait on God to do that in His timing? Or can we trust God to never remove the Sauls from our lives, or to show us a different plan than our desires?

Good Citizens are Concerned for God's Ordained Leader (vv.1-12).

The pursuer was caught (vv.1-6). The pursuer was Saul and God led him right to David to get caught. Again the people of Ziph were culpable. *Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is not David hiding himself on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the east of Jeshimon?"* (v.1). We must wonder what the problem was for the Ziphites? This is the second time they revealed David's location. Maybe they sincerely thought Saul was a good king. Or maybe they were just insensitive to God's will. That David would be king was really was not a matter of opinion since God had already expressed His will through Samuel that Saul was done and David was his replacement.

When Saul heard the news about David's whereabouts, he responded in his typical double-minded way. He took his 3,000 crack troops down to the wilderness to seek David (vv.2-3). Do we remember how the last situation when the Ziphites ratted on David turned out? On that occasion, David exposed how easily he could have killed Saul, but that he had spared the king's life, and Saul responded in supposed repentance. *He said to David, "You are more*

righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil” (1 Samuel 24:17). He even confessed, “And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand”(1 Samuel 24:20). So why didn’t Saul tell the Ziphites to take a hike?

That Saul chose to go down the same road again proved his character. James described people like Saul—people like we might know—but hopefully not like we are. James said that such a man *is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways (James 1:8)*. He said to such double-minded people, *Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded (James 4:8)*. Saul either chose not to draw near God or could not draw near God.

Consider how the principles found in Saul’s life come to bear in our world. Human pride makes men foolish and terribly inconsistent. Why do politicians commit sexual sins, fraud, theft, and lie when so many of them have been exposed over the years? Because, as God warned, *pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall (Proverbs 16:18)*. Power is a frightening thing for sinners because it leads to pride and a haughty spirit. So the Chinese leaders continue to persecute the house churches in China which ignites a flame and the Church grows. Islamic leaders try with all their power to stamp out Christianity. And the more they murder Christians, the more we hear about Muslims turning to Christ. Sinners just have to sin—even when it doesn’t make sense!

Because God brought Saul into his neighborhood, David was determined to help Saul see his error. Rather than sit back and do nothing, he determined to learn what he could about the situation. He *sent out spies and learned that Saul had indeed come (v.4)*. He quickly went to check out the circumstances himself. *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 (v.5)*.

David went alone to the edge of Saul’s camp and assessed the setting. Abner was probably Saul’s cousin and should have been concerned to protect the king. Having returned to his men, David proposed an outlandish foray into the enemy’s camp. *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 to Saul?” And Abishai said, “I will go down with you” (v-6). This Ahimelech was not the priest who Saul killed (1 Samuel 21), or the son of Abiathar who became priest (2 Samuel 8). Whoever he was, we see from the story that he chose not to volunteer. However, Abishai was anxious to go. He was David’s nephew, son of David’s sister Zeruiah (father unknown). He was Joab’s and Asahel’s brother. Subsequent information about this man reveals that he was a gifted warrior, a real fighter. God uses warriors to whom He had given such ability. But He doesn’t need warriors to accomplish His will. It is because of His kindness He chooses to use people to help. Often people interfere with God’s will simply because we are sinners.

How would David respond to an opportunity to get at Saul? He taught us that in all circumstances, we do well to live by God’s principles (vv.7-12). In this situation, human wisdom saw opportunity for revenge. *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 Abishai said 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” (vv.7-8)*.

Observe Abishai’s character. He was truly loyal to David. Because of his loyalty, he was ready to kill David’s enemy who was trying to kill David. We relish such loyalty. He was also very confident in his ability as a warrior. He told David that he could easily kill his enemy. *“One stroke of the spear. That’s all it will take!” (v.8)*. But consider his conclusion. “God has given your enemy into your hands.” That is obviously the conclusion human wisdom would reach. Nothing could be more obvious.

We see this kind of response often. For example, in human wisdom, we learn some dirt about a fellow employee. A few weeks later an opportunity comes up to expose the employee’s faults to the boss. Should you or shouldn’t you? The guy did do wrong. He is a bit of an agitator to you. If he was fired, it would be most logical for the boss to promote you to his position. All you have to do is tell what you know and the your agitator will be gone and you get a raise. Obviously that is God’s will, right? Sometimes it is necessary to

expose problems in order to keep the company or church or school or whatever the organization from damage. But often potential damage is not the issue. Personal ambition drives the matter. Would it not be better for you to approach the errant employee, tell him what you know, and offer to help him become a better person?

God often has a better plan than the one human wisdom devises. But only Godly wisdom sees God's hand at work (vv.9-12). David relied on God's principle. That is why he thwarted Abishai's plan and said, *"Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?"* (v.9). This is the same conclusion on which David acted in the previous similar situation (24:10). He trusted that God was in control of and approved of the king over His people. He did not believe that Saul had ascended the throne through his own power. His was a wise conclusion for someone who God had anointed to be king.

Therefore, David spoke to Abishai like Jesus spoke to Peter when Peter did not trust God's control of the situation and whacked off the servant's ear. *"Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword"* (Matthew 26:52).

David's respect of God-ordained authority is the same principle we find in the New Testament that instructs us about our attitudes. Paul wrote, *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment* (Romans 13:1-2). Peter affirmed the same principle when he wrote, *Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people* (1 Peter 2:13-15).

Our leaders are typically in office only a few years, unlike Israelite kings who could serve for 40 years or more. Can we really trust that God is in control in America? Many followers of Christ sincerely believe that neither candidate who will be offered for the office of president this Fall will be good for the nation. But what if God's plan is to punish the nation because we have thrown Him out of our courts, our schools, and the public square? Is it possible that

either of the candidates will be instruments in God's hand to teach the nation that it is better to trust and follow Him than to trust failing human rulers and sinful judges?

Because David trusted God completely, he was able to articulate future possibilities to Abishai. *"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"* (v.10). David was not trying to determine what would happen to Saul. That would have been vengeance. He was simply trying to help Abishai understand what can happen when God is in control. Although it is uncanny how accurate David's prediction was. David's conclusion was also based on past experience with God's dealing with Goliath and Nabal. Experience is a wonderful teacher.

Consider David's conclusion in the will of God. David's conscience did not permit him to kill or strike out at Saul, the Lord's anointed. But he did take Saul's symbol of authority (his spear) and means for survival in the desert (canteen) to prove again that he was merciful. Surely David and Abishai realized that they were able to pull off this feat only because God caused a deep sleep to fall on Saul and his soldiers. *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.* The Hebrew word for deep sleep is the same word that describes the sleep God gave to Adam in order to do rib surgery (Genesis 2). Or it was like the sleep of Jonah while the ship was being thrown all over the sea (Jonah 1). It was obviously God's work.

Because David was learning to trust God's work, he expressed two conclusions. First, David taught us that God's people must never violate God's principles in order to benefit themselves. Second, he taught us that God's people must guard against helping out or forcing God's providence. Abigail taught David this lesson. While it would have been shameful for the future king of Israel to have the blood of Nabal on his hands, it would have been worse for David to take the throne having deposed the former king with sword in hand shedding blood. Waiting for God is always best. Learn what you can. Do what you can. But leave the final conclusion with God.

God Sees and Rewards (vv.13-25).

Someone was supposed to guard God's leader (vv.13-15). David pointed out that a negligent protector is guilty before God (vv.13-16). He had this opportunity because it was a time for confrontation. David went to a safe distance and then called Abner on the carpet. *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?" (v.14).* This is evidence that David was becoming the leader. Now he could confront the citizens of Israel with their responsibility and failure. This would be his God-given duty in a matter of weeks. God's plan was for the king of His people to continually lead the people to greater loyalty to God.

In the confrontation, David leveled a specific accusation against Abner. *"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 is and the jar of water that was at his head" (vv.15-16).* It seems a bit odd that David accused Abner and the bodyguard of dereliction of duty for not protecting God's anointed and, therefore, deserving death, but he never stated that Saul was worthy of death for trying to kill "God's anointed" (David). We call that humility.

When these confrontations come about, a confrontation with truth is necessary (vv.17-20). Saul responded to David's confrontation. *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" (v.17).* Was it respect or feigned respect? Saul proves to us that the problem with lying is that it becomes so much a part of the person's character that he does not recognize when he is being dishonest. In his heart he wanted to shout wicked threats to David. If he really saw David as his son, what was he doing in the wilderness with his army?

And why was Saul chasing after the "son" to kill him? *And he said, "Why does my lord pursue after his servant? For what have I done? What evil is on my hands?" (v.18).* Three times in this confrontation Saul called him "son" (v.17, 21,25). Well, the "son"

confronted the dishonest, wicked man with truth. His opinion was, "Let's deal in truth."

"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.'" (v.19). We, along with David, know that Saul trying to kill him was not of the Lord. But David's question forced Saul to face the fact that he was out of God's will and responsible for making David run. The truth was that Saul was a jealous, proud man who was determined to have his way. The truth was that other wicked men kept stoking the fire. The truth was that Saul and his allies were responsible for driving David from the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant where David longed to worship the true God.

Having laid out the truth of the matter, David drew the line in the sand. He told Saul to change his ways! *Now therefore, let not my blood fall to 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 (v.20).* Saul would be responsible if David was killed. Saul was responsible for barring David from worshipping God at the tabernacle. Did the truth hit home? How would your adversary respond if you were so bold with the truth?

A convenient confession is not a sincere confession (vv.21-25). *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" (v.21).* The evidence of Scripture indicates that by now Saul's confessions come too easily (cf. 19:6; 24:16-20). But wait! He said all the right stuff. *I have sinned. I have acted foolishly. I have made a great mistake.* How could anyone ask for a more thorough confession? But they were only empty words, not confession from the heart. Saul's confession was like Pharaoh's confessions in which he admitted, "I have sinned." Twice he said this (9:27;10:16), but he kept on sinning.

David was confident in this confrontation because he trusted God's law of sowing and reaping (vv.22-25). He appealed to that law when he told Saul, "May the Lord reward me." He said, *"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” (vv.22-24).

Notice that David appealed to Yahweh three times in this statement (vv.16,23,24) while Saul never spoke of Yahweh. In short, David simply expressed the principle of Psalm 118:8-9. *It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes (Psalm 118:8-9).* If we really trust God, we are not afraid to say so. If we really trust God, we are willing to wait for Him. If we really trust God, we place our lives in His hands. We may not be able to explain the circumstances that come into our lives, but we are content that God knows what He is doing. We might not understand why people turn against us and relationships in family, work, or church are broken, but we trust God knows. When we are falsely accused like David was, we do not trust in our defense against the accusation, but trust God. When things are obviously wrong in our circle of influence, and we are not able to correct them, can we trust God to do what is right even with the people involved? And if it comes to the point that we are to be burned at the stake, can we trust God to deliver us through the flames to His own presence instead of from the flames?

Do we believe that God rewards righteous living? Some people think that righteous living is the means for eternal salvation. That is untrue and a lie from Satan. We are saved from the penalty of sin by confessing our sins to God and trusting the blood of Jesus Christ to cover our sins. When God forgives our sins, He gives us the righteousness of Christ. We then are able to live in a way that honors God by demonstrating His character.

David pointed out that God rewards His people for living like Him. Even unregenerate people understand this principle. *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 (v.25).* Saul admitted that David was blessed. This is more than “Bless your heart.” Rather, Saul had known since he sent David out to lead the army that God was blessing David. Therefore, Saul was convinced that David would succeed. That is

what bothered him. But Saul could not bring himself to admit that the future was in God’s hand. To come out and confess that God blessed David would be to admit that he was fighting against God. By the way, did Saul ever recover his spear, the symbol of his kingly authority?

People who barely believe God do think that God is the source of blessing for His people. Such was the man who is a notorious sinner who approached me at our forty-fifth highschool reunion recently. “Are you still a man of the cloth?” he asked. I assured him that I was still busy about the Lord’s work. “Good,” he said, “Say a prayer for me because I need it.”

We should order our lives in such a way that even ungodly people are forced to think about God. That is what being a light in a dark world is. God expects our good works to shine like light that glorifies Him. He is indeed the rewarder. The writer to the Hebrew Christians pointed out, *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him (Hebrews 11:6).* Paul told the Corinthian believers, *For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).*

As far as Scripture reveals, this was David’s last meeting and last words to Saul. His words reveal a maturing servant of the Lord who is learning to trust God more and more. David is quite contrasted with a foolish, double-minded sinner who has slipped deeper and deeper into slavery to his sin. How do we contrast with the people of our world who do not know God, do not trust God, and do not expect God to reward? If we believe God rewards our faith, we do well to trust Him.