

We come in chapter 26, to David's final encounter with Saul. This would be the last time David would see and/or speak with Saul. At the end of the chapter, David would go on his way and Saul return to his place. And thus, there's a unique soberness behind the events of this chapter. There's special importance in it. The chapter largely has three parts: David spares Saul (vv1-12), David speaks with Saul (vv13-24), and David departs from Saul (vv21-25).

- I. David Spares Saul (vv1-12)
- II. David Speaks with Saul (vv13-24)
- III. David Departs from Saul (vv21-25)
- IV. Observations

I. David Spares Saul (vv1-12)

1. It's important to notice at the outset, that the narrative of chapter 26 is similar but distinct from the narrative of chapter 24.
2. If you remember, two weeks ago, when we considered chapter 24, David refused to take the life of Saul (the Lord's anointed).
3. And because the events of this present chapter (26) are similar, some have suggested they recount the same events.
4. But surely brethren as we read these two chapters, it becomes evident that while they are similar, they are two distinct events.
5. Thus, the question that initially comes to mind is this—Why did God test David twice in two very similar ways?
6. Well, I suggest God wanted to teach David patience—it wasn't time yet for David to be enthroned over Israel.
7. And so, as a result God brought Saul within David's reach not once but twice, to teach him to trust God's timing.
8. This is really the main point—God wanted David to trust His timing and to patiently wait upon Him and His wisdom.
9. And so, it's for this reason, God repeated this specific lesson to David twice—He used Saul to teach David patience.
10. And thus, we learn an important lesson—all Christians have need of being taught to trust God over and over again.
11. Brethren, none of us learn this lesson from God in one session—we must all be taught this lesson over and over.
12. V1—"Now the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, 'Is David not hiding in the hill of Hachilah, opposite Jeshimon?'"
13. We saw the Ziphites back in chapter 23, wherein they again told on David, and gave his whereabouts to Saul.
14. And so, Saul arose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand men of Israel to seek David (v2).
15. V3—"And Saul, encamped in the hill of Hachilah, which is opposite Jeshimon, by the road. But David stayed in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness."
16. V4—"David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul had indeed come"—thus, David arose and came to the place where Saul was encamped (v5).
17. David asked two of his most trusted soldiers which one of them was willing to go with him into the camp (v6).
18. Abishai, who from subsequent chapters we learn was a great warrior, went with David by night, into Saul's camp.
19. We learn from v7 that Saul lay sleeping within the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. And Abner and the people lay all around him.
20. In other words, Saul was stationed in the middle, with all of his men sleeping around him—this no doubt was to protect him.

21. We find that Abner, who was Saul's trusted bodyguard was sleeping next to Saul, and Saul slept with his spear nearby.
22. It's important to notice, that according to the end of v12 that a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen upon them.
23. In other words, as we've seen in every other chapter, the LORD was providentially at work within David's life.
24. This was a test from God. God caused Saul and all his men to sleep in such a way that David could sneak-up on them.
25. Brethren, again it's very important to keep in mind, the LORD is orchestrating this as a classroom to test David.
26. Abishai sees this as the providence of God to kill Saul, v8—"God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day."
27. It's probable that Abishai remembered what David said back in ch.24, when he refused to take Saul's life in the cave.
28. Thus, he says, v8—"Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear, right to the earth; and I will not have to strike him a second time!"
29. In other words, "While you may have a conscience problem killing the king, I don't! Therefore, let me kill him for you."
30. V9—"But David said to Abishai, 'Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?'"
31. V10—"David said furthermore, 'As the LORD lives, the LORD shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish.'"
32. In other words, the LORD shall repay him for his evil, for one way or another, Saul shall die and pay for his sins.
33. Thus, David took the spear and the jug of water by Saul's head, as evidence that he could have done far more.
34. This was similar to what he previously did to Saul's robe—if you remember, David cut off an edge of Saul's robe.
35. Now, as we've been examining David's interaction with Saul, we've seen Saul's spear on a number of occasions.
36. If you remember, on several occasions, Saul threw this spear at David in an attempt to kill him out of jealousy and hatred.
37. Thus, Saul's spear is in some ways symbolic of Saul's power over David and his intense desire to see David dead.
38. And so, it taking his spear from him, it underscored the fact that the tables had been turned, and Saul's power was ending.
39. Just as Saul sought to kill David with the spear, David could have killed Saul with spear, but instead spared his life.

## II. David Speaks with Saul (vv13-24)

1. V13—"Now David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of a hill afar off, a great distance being between them."
2. V14—"And David called out to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, 'Do you not answer, Abner?' Then Abner answered and said, 'Who are you, calling out to the king?'"
3. Here's the scene. God had brought a deep sleep upon Saul and his men, and David has taken Saul's spear and water jug.
4. And then after David and Abishai left the sleeping men, he then goes to the other side of the hill and begins to call out (he first speaks to Abner and then Saul).
5. (1) David speaks to Abner (vv13-16)—here David rebukes Abner for not properly protecting king Saul from harm.
6. V15—"Are you not a man? And who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy your lord the king."

7. In other words, David was rebuking Abner for his failure to protect the king—this was his primary responsibility.
8. David even suggests that Abner deserved to die, v16—"This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, you deserve to die, because you have not guarded your master, the LORD'S anointed."
9. I think underscores David's respect for Saul's as the LORD'S anointed—the task Abner had was very important.
10. (2) David speaks to Saul (vv17-20)—having spoken to Abner, Saul heard David's voice and asks, v17—"Is that your voice, my son, David?"
11. David then asks, v18—"Why does my lord thus pursue his servant? For what have I done, or what evil is in my hand?"
12. In other words—"What evidence do you have that I've sought your harm? In fact, what I hold in my hand could have harmed you."
13. V19—"Now therefore, please, let my lord and king hear the words of his servant: If the LORD has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering. But if it is the children of men, may they be cursed before the LORD, for they have driven me out this day from sharing in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods."
14. In other words—"If God Himself has motivated you to kill me, then, by all means kill me as an act of service to God."
15. "But if it is the children of men"—that is, if it wasn't God who encouraged you to kill, but your servants—"may they be cursed before the LORD."
16. The reason why they deserved to be cursed is then given—"for they have driven me out this day from sharing in the inheritance of the LORD."
17. What does this mean? What was the inheritance of the LORD? Well, it was the tabernacle and the worship that took place in it.
18. This was Israel's inheritance? It was God's gracious presence among His people! It was access to God through worship!
19. You see, for any pious Hebrew, to be banished from Jerusalem and the tabernacle, was to be banished from God.
20. This was equivalent to saying, "Go, serve other gods"—that is, be banished from the service of the one true God.
21. This was no small matter for David! This was his biggest concern. It wasn't living as a fugitive and running for his life—it was being denied public worship.
22. A.W. Pink—"This was what pained David the most: not the being driven from home, but being exiled from Canaan and cut off from the public means of grace. No longer could he worship in the tabernacle, but forced out into the deserts and mountains, he would soon be obliged to leaven the Holy Land. By their actions, his enemies were saying in effect, 'Go, serve other gods.'"

### III. David Departs from Saul (vv21-25)

1. V21—"Then Saul said, 'I have sinned. Return, my son David. For I will harm you no more, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Indeed I have played the fool and erred exceedingly.'"
2. Again, we find that Saul in some measure regretted his behavior, and sought to appease his wounded conscience.
3. It's very evident that David failed to believe Saul was sincere in his confession, and he returns the spear to Saul (v22).
4. V23—"May the LORD repay every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD delivered you into my hand today, but I would not stretch out my hand against the LORD'S anointed."
5. In other words—"I'm willing to let God judge our hearts and actions, for I could have taken your life but I refused."
6. V24—"And indeed, as your life was valued much this day in my eyes, so let my life be valued much in the eyes of the LORD, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation."
7. If we didn't know better, we might think that David was being self-righteous, but that would miss David's point.

8. David is simply acknowledging the facts—he had been righteous toward Saul and he was willing to leave it with God.
9. Thus, we find that David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place—that is, David departs from Saul for the last time.
10. A.W. Pink—"Thus they parted, to meet no more in this world. Saul went forward to his awful doom; David waited God's time to ascend the throne."

#### IV. Observations

1. There are five practical observations that I want to spend the remainder of our time considering and in order to get to all five we have to move at a decent pace.
2. (1) A Christian understanding of tribulation—this observation is directly taken from David's words in verse 24.
3. V24—"And indeed, as your life was valued much this day in my eyes, so let my life be valued much in the eyes of the LORD, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation."
4. In other words, just as David valued Saul too much to kill, so he trusted that God valued his life in a much greater way.
5. This verse contains a great understatement—how important was Saul's life in the eyes of David? But brethren, I assure you, David's life was of far greater importance in the eyes of God!
6. Let me put it this way—as compassionate as David was toward Saul, what is this in comparison to God's compassion for David.
7. Perhaps I can put it like this—while David esteemed Saul's life, God esteemed David's life much, much, more!
8. And here's David's application in v24—"Just as I delivered Saul from his tribulation, so God will deliver me from mine."
9. Now, what tribulation do you think David's referring to? Well, I suggest he refers to his entire time in the wilderness.
10. And so, by "a Christian understanding of tribulation" I mean—enduring tribulations as a Christian who is valued much in the eyes of the LORD.
11. I really love this phrase—"so let my life be valued much in the eyes of the LORD, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation."
12. We have to put these two phrases together—"because we are greatly valued, He will deliver us from all tribulation."
13. And both of these phrases are essential to formulate a distinctly Christian understanding of the concept of tribulation.
14. (a) What God would do—"and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation"—the term "tribulation" means "distress" or "trouble."
15. It's a broad term that includes all forms of suffering, pain, and sorrow—there are inward and outward tribulations.
16. Here it refers to the various struggles David experienced throughout his time in the wilderness, hated by Saul.
17. When David says "God will deliver him out of all tribulation" he doesn't mean, God would remove all tribulation from him.
18. But David does mean—God would bring him through all tribulation—He would enable David to endure tribulation.
19. Thus, David didn't believe God would remove him from tribulation, but he did believe God would see him through every tribulation.
20. Remember, there was a rather difficult wilderness between David and the crown, and the Lord would see him through it.
21. This of course is similar to us, for as we've seen in previous studies, there's also a wilderness between us and our crown.
22. Acts 14:22—"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God"—or we must enter heaven through a wilderness.

23. Persecution, mistreatment, abuse, physical sickness, bereavement, relational hardships, and spiritual temptations.
24. These are the tribulations that make up our wilderness, and these are the tribulations through which we will endure.
25. (b) Why God would do it—"let my life be valued much in the eyes of the LORD"—David realized God esteemed his life.
26. This is why David was convinced He would endure his tribulations—because he was valued in the eyes of God.
27. (2) A proper respect for divine authority—twice David refused to kill Saul because he was the LORD'S anointed.
28. Brethren, whatever we can learn from these two incidents, surely we can learn, to properly respect divine authority.
29. Man today doesn't like authority, but more than this, man by nature never likened authority, we are by nature rebels.
30. Do people misuse authority? Yes! Should they be called out? Yes! Will God deal with them eventually? Yes!
31. But brethren, this doesn't deny the fact, that we must respect all God-given authority—to dishonor God-given authority is to dishonor God Himself.
32. What is God-given authority? Well, there's three realms in which authority exists—social, domestic, and ecclesiastical.
33. All of these are embedded in the fifth commandment—"Honor your father and your mother"—that is, all divine authority.
34. And so, David not only reminds us to have a proper respect of authority but also instructs us why—because it's from the LORD.
35. V9—"But David said to Abishai, 'Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?'"
36. The reason we should have a respect for divine authority is because it has been established or ordained by God.
37. And so, you should honor your elders in church, your parents at home, and all governing authorities in your country—because they have been placed there by God Himself.
38. (3) An appeal to God for justification—this is actually a very important lesson David learned both in chapter 24 and now 26.
39. Simply put, he had to learn to trust God to fight his battles—he had to learn to trust God's righteous judgments.
40. This was the great temptation David faced both in the cave in chapter 24, and now in the camp in chapter 26.
41. To say that Saul wronged David would be a great understatement—David was tempted to take matters into his own hand and avenge himself.
42. He no doubt was tempted to repay evil with evil, hate with hate, and kill the man who wickedly sought to kill him.
43. It's not easy to trust God and leave matters with Him—to merely know that God knows and God Himself will judge.
44. Ps.7:8-10—"The LORD shall judge the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to my integrity within me. Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just; for the righteous God tests the hearts and minds. My defense is of God, who saves the upright in heart (Ps.35:22-25)."
45. David isn't claiming to be sinless, but he is claiming to be innocent of wrong-doing with regards to a specific incident.
46. He knew that God tested the heart and mind, and he was willing to let God defend him and let God avenge him.
47. And again, we find this perfectly true in David's greater Son, who refused to repay evil with evil, but trusted His heavenly Father.

48. Thus, we mustn't feel like we have to justify ourselves in every case or situation, it's enough to know God knows.
49. God knows we've been dealt with unfairly at work or at school, God knows we've been maligned by our neighbor.
50. 1Pet.2:23—"who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteousness."
51. Our Savior, like David, was hated without a cause, and our Savior like David, trusted God to defend His case.
52. (4) An example of false repentance—since we talked about this back in chapter 24, so I can briefer about it here.
53. As you know, at the very heart of repentance is the confession of sin—the acknowledgment of our sin before God.
54. I have sinned! Not, I have sinned, but, but I have sinned period. There are no commas after true Biblical confession.
55. And yet, we know that Saul was not a saved man. He did not have saving repentance which is a gift from God.
56. Thus, my question at this point is this—What is the difference between Saul's confession and true saving repentance?
57. Well, before I seek to answer that question, let me quickly point out Saul is not the only non-believer who confessed their sin.
58. For example, Pharaoh said in Ex.9:27—"I have sinned this time The LORD is righteous, and my people are wicked."
59. Achan said in Joshua 7:20—"Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done."
60. And finally, Judas confessed in Matt.27:4—"I have sinned by betraying innocent blood"—in all of the cases we have confession of sin by non-believers.
61. How could these four men confess they have sinned and yet remain in their sin, and eventually die in their sin?
62. Or, perhaps put another way—what's different between these men's confession and David's confession in Psalm 51:4—"Against You, You only, have I sinned."
63. Well, let me just say, there are a number of differences, so don't misunderstand me to say there's only one thing.
64. But what I want to do is suggest one major difference between the confession of these men and the confession of David.
65. David's confession, perhaps I can say, true and evangelical confession always lays hold of the mercy of God in Christ.
66. Saul, Pharaoh, Achan, and Judas all confessed their sin, but none of them looked for the remedy in the blood of Christ.
67. This of course is very different from David, Ps.51:1-2—"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin"
68. Put another way—true repentance always ends in Christ—true repentance always finds forgiveness and cleansing in Christ.
69. Thus, true repentance is not merely confessing your sin or turning from sin, it's confessing and forsaking your sin and turning to the mercy of God in Christ!
70. The Baptist Catechism (Q.92)—"What is repentance unto life? Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience."
71. By "repentance unto life" is meant "repentance that leads to life" and, let me ask you, where or in whom is life found?
72. Life is found only in Christ, and thus, at the very heart of repentance is "the apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ."

73. Thus, poor sinner you must confess your sin—You must from the heart own yourself as guilty and filthy before God.
74. But this is not enough! This will never lead to life! This will never result in salvation! You must confess your sin and turn to God's mercy in Christ!
75. Christian, when you sin you must confess your sin! But this is not enough! You must confess your sin and return to God's mercy in Christ!
76. William Taylor—"True repentance is simultaneous with the reception of Christ, and is not to be regarded as a preparation for coming to Him."
77. That is, repentance is not—Go and prepare yourself for Christ—it's not—Go and clean yourself up for Christ.
78. No—it's turn from yourself to Christ—it's know your need of Christ—it's confess your sin and find forgiveness in Christ!
79. Dear friends, to merely know your sin against God and not His forgiveness in Christ, leads to despair and misery.
80. (5) A display of self-control—both chapter 24 and 26, provide us with a beautiful picture of Christian self-control.
81. Temptation was placed right before David, and yet, he was enabled to restrain himself from giving into that temptation.
82. Prov.16:32—"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city."
83. The person who rules his own spirit, shows more power than a person who takes a city—a patient person is more powerful than a warrior.
84. Perhaps I can say, we not only find a display of self-control in David, but also an amazing display of patience!
85. Even though Saul hated him without a cause and David twice had his life in his hands, David graciously spared him.
86. Dear brethren, what is this in comparison to the patience shown by God towards them who hate Him without a cause.
87. He not only has had their lives in His hands twice, but their very existence is in His hands every second of every day.