

# The Fortitude of Faith (1 Samuel 26)

## 1. Details (v.1-5)

1 Samuel 26 possesses striking similarities with 1 Samuel 24:

- Saul receives reports concerning David's whereabouts (26:1; 24:1). The Ziphites inform Saul about the specific location where David is hiding (26:1; 23:19). Saul pursues David with 3,000 chosen men (26:2; 24:2). David has an opportunity to kill Saul and end the conflict (26:7; 24:3). David's men encourage him to kill Saul or offer to do it themselves (26:8; 24:4). David refuses to kill Saul because he is the LORD's anointed (26:9-11; 24:6). David takes a symbol of the kingship/kingdom (26:12; 24:5). Saul acknowledges his guilt (26:21; 24:21). Both depart from the scene, going their separate ways (26:21; 24:17).

Despite these similarities, they are separate accounts that are intentionally placed by the narrator(s) to demonstrate David's shortcoming, and growth. The grace of God has continually been demonstrated, most recently through His servant Abigail.

## 2. David and Abishai in Saul's camp (v.3-12)

- After David's spies inform him of the location of Saul's encampment close to the hill of Hachilah (v.4, 6), he plans to enter Saul's camp at night.
- When David and his men were hiding in a cave at Engedi (24:2-3), they were passive and fearful. Now, however, he is confident and bold.
- David extends the invitation of entering Saul's camp at night to two of his men: Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai the son of Zeruiah. It is a bold and daring move.
- Zeruiah is one of David's sisters (1 Chron. 2:15-16). Zeruiah has three sons: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. These would be David's nephews, who may have been significantly younger than him. Abishai, as David's nephew, most likely joined David when his family heard that David was living in the cave of Adullam (22:1) after fleeing Gath (21:10-15).
- Joab and Abishai are exceedingly violent. When David becomes king, Shimmei (a man from the house of Saul) curses David. Abishai calls him a dead dog and requests permission from David to cut off his head (2 Sam. 16:5-11). Joab and Abishai will eventually kill Abner (2 Sam. 3:30). The sons of Zeruiah are so vicious that David must eventually distance himself from them (2 Sam. 3:39; 16:9-11; 19:16-23).
- After sharing his plans with both Ahimelech and Abishai, Abishai agrees.
- Once David and Abishai enter the camp, they find the place where Saul is sleeping. Next to Saul's head is his spear, which is stuck in the ground.
- Abishai interprets this occasion as divinely orchestrated and believes that "The LORD has given your enemy into your hand" (17:46; 23:4; 24:4).
- Abishai may have been in the cave in Engedi, and thus familiar with the last opportunity David had with Saul. Instead of encouraging David to kill Saul (24:4), he offers to do it himself.
- Abishai is confident that he could kill Saul with one stroke of his own spear. The irony is that Saul has been unable to kill David or Jonathan (18:10-11; 19:10; 20:33) with that very spear. David again (24:7) does not permit anyone to touch the LORD's anointed. Both men depart from this daring adventure with the greatest heist of their wilderness wandering: Saul's spear and his water canteen.

## 3. Deep Slumber of Saul and his men (v.12)

- The heist is successful only because the LORD brought a "deep sleep" to Saul and his men. This "deep sleep" is a euphemism for placing someone under a divine anesthetic or stupor. Previously, only individuals had been put under such a state (Gen.2:21; 15:12; Dan. 8:18). This time, it is Saul and his 3,000 chosen men.
- David and Abishai are unaware of the LORD's providential working.

## 4. Discussion between David and Abner (v.13-16)

- Saul and his men are awakened, ironically, by David's shouting from a hill on the other side of the camp. David first addresses Abner, and secondly the soldiers. Apparently, David had been calling Abner for quite some time (v.14).
- Once Abner awakens from his deep stupor, he questions who it is, and who dares request a word with the king. He doesn't recognize David (v.14).
- David asks Abner three questions, which are all designed to demonstrate his lack of manliness, his competency to protect the king, and his merits of death:
  - Question #1: "Are you not a man?" (soldier)
  - Question #2: "Who is like you in all Israel?" (Saul's right hand man)
  - Question #3: "Why did you not protect the king?" (Abner is silent)
- Both Abner and the men (plural) deserve to die for not protecting the king (v.16). The spear is eventually returned to Saul, while David keeps the water canteen.

## 5. Dialogue between David and Saul (v.17-24)

- Saul overhears David's dialogue with Abner and addresses David as "David, my son." This time, however, David does not refer to Saul as his father (24:11) but only lord and king (v.17, 18, 19, 20, 22). In David's eyes, Saul is not his father, since Saul has given away his first wife (25:43). Even more so, "father" is a term of endearment. David no longer questions Saul's motives: he knows that Saul seeks his life.
- Previously, David was gracious in assuming that men were influencing Saul (24:9). David has already demonstrated that he was no threat to Saul (24:11-12).
- After their last encounter, Saul had acknowledged David's character as superior to his, and went back to Gibeah. Now, for the second time, Saul seeks David's life.
- While David likens himself to a flea again (24:14), he now resembles a partridge. The Hebrew root word means to "call out." David is not only as evasive as this bird, but he is also calling to Saul, like a bird, from a hill/mountain.
- Through the perspective of a Jew, the land is tied to the covenant promises and faithfulness of God (Gen. 12:1-4). David does not want to be driven from the land and from the heritage of his own people. There is a glory that is uniquely tied to the land, including all the festivals, sacrifices, and shekinah glory of the presence of the LORD in the tabernacle. If David has sinned against Saul, he will give a peace offering. If Saul's men are deceiving him, may they be cursed.

## 6. Displacement (v.21-25)

- Despite Saul's apparent confession of sin (15:24), David does not trust Saul and will not return to Gibeah. David views Saul's confession as deceitful and will not be fooled.
- Instead of entrusting himself to the safety of Saul, David comes to a place where he can confidently trust that his life is precious in God's sight. As a result, God will deliver him. This is the last time they will meet in person before Saul's death.