

November 5th 1Sam 23:1–5

It seems strange that those who were being hunted should bother to save others. Some of the men with David saw the foolishness of the exercise, but David was certain it was God's will for them. Now he is seeking God's will! To save those in danger David had to attack those who threatened them.

November 6th 1Sam 23:7–13

David turns to God for advice. He is now a man relying on God, and from now on he begins to taste success again. Note how he learns from God that he cannot trust those of Keilah whom he has saved. We might think that their gratitude could have been more fittingly expressed, but they feared Saul more than they trusted David.

November 7th 1 Sam. 23:14-18

“You are now the one who will be King of Israel, and I will be next in rank to you”. The friendship between David and Jonathan is one of the most touching in the Bible. Here we see it in one of the finest moments. Jonathan was the King's son, and had every right to expect to succeed his father. As heir apparent he might have seen David as a rival and threat to his own future. Instead, he accepts that this is God's will, and is content to be next in rank.

November 8th 1 Sam 23:19–29

In earlier days David was very popular. Now his very hiding place is reported to his enemy. There was no one he could trust. Life must have been extremely hard in the desert. David's life seemed near its close, when, quite unexpectedly, a message forced Saul to abandon the hunt and return home immediately. Was this just a lucky escape for David, or was God's hand protecting him, even in this indirect way?

November 9th 1 Sam 24:1-7a

God saves David and his men by diverting Saul's attention. Now God places Saul where David could easily slay him, or at least capture him and hold him to ransom. David did neither of these but spared the king's life. In spite of all he had suffered, he still recognized Saul as the lawful king of Israel, appointed by God. He would not lift his hand against the Lord's anointed, even though so urged by his followers.

November 10th 1 Sam 24:7b–22

After Saul left the cave David uses the torn garment to convince the king how close he had been to capture. He uses the opportunity to emphasize his own innocence. Saul started crying, and acknowledged his guilt. In spite of Saul's words David and his men still remained in hiding in the desert. He obviously did not trust Saul's word. Note also the promise Saul extracted from David - a promise that David was later to fulfil.

November 11th 1 Sam 25:1

Sometimes the Bible has a single verse that almost seems an intrusion, yet is so full of significance. Samuel was an old man; his death could not have been unexpected. What thoughts filled his mind in those later years of his life? Saul, whom he had anointed was now quite irrational, while he had anointed was now quite irrational, while David, whom also he had anointed was but a fugitive barely able to survive in the desert. Everything that Samuel had done in obedience to God seemed to have been a disaster. In worldly terms Samuel's contribution to the nation seemed to have been so ineffectual, yet all the Israelites mourned for him. In spite of his failure he still carried the respect of his people.

November 12th 1 Sam 25:2–13

David and his men were running what could be called a “protection racket”. In those days settled communities were much at risk from marauding raiders. While David was no raider he did remind such communities that with him around their property and goods were safe, and so maybe they might wish to make a goodwill gift of some kind! Some might see this as a form of moral blackmail.

November 13th 1 Sam 25:14-31

We have seen that Abigail was beautiful and intelligent – so unlike her husband. What must life have been like for two such diverse characters? She heard of what passed between David and her husband, and immediately realized what retaliation David might make. She met him and his men on their way to seek revenge. With gifts and winsome speech she turned their anger aside.

November 14th 1 Sam 25:32-44

Abigail softened David’s anger, perhaps more by beauty and intelligence than by generosity. One cannot but be sorry for poor Nabal – rising after a great feast, no doubt with a sore head, to learn what his wife had done. It is little wonder he had a stroke! We might think Abigail was just a little too ready to accept David’s proposal, but perhaps life with Nabal had been like a prison sentence to such a gifted woman.

November 15th 1 Sam 26:1–12

Once more men from Ziph reveal David’s hiding place to Saul. Although Saul had 3,000 of his best troops with him, David now feels able to take some initiative. In a dawn raid he and Abishai penetrate Saul’s camp and take articles as evidence of their incursion. In this, God’s hand was with David and his men and against Saul and his followers. Note also that David had again to resist advice to kill Saul. It seemed good advice, but good advice is not always in accordance with the will of God.

November 16th 1 Sam 26:13-25

David reveals himself to Saul. He also chides Abner for failing to protect the king! Again Saul confesses guilt and expresses remorse. He knows Saul is now quite unreliable. But what of men like Abner and the other officers? They must have known of Saul’s mental condition, yet they stayed loyal to him. Saul had 3,000 of his best troops with him, David now feels able to take some initiative. In a dawn raid he and Abishai penetrate Saul’s camp and take articles as evidence of their incursion. In this, God’s hand was with David and his men and against Saul and his followers. Note also that David had again to resist advice to kill Saul. It seemed good advice, but good advice is not always in accordance with the will of God.

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November 17th 1 Sam 27:1–28.2

David knew that Saul, in spite of fine words, could not be trusted. His followers were now so numerous that a more settled existence was necessary. David was living dangerously; raiding and plundering desert tribes while telling the king of Gath he was raiding Jewish settlements!

To succeed it was essential that no witnesses survived, so the entire community had to be massacred. David so deceived Achish that he was appointed a permanent bodyguard.

November 18th 1 Sam 28:3–10

Here we see Saul in deep despair. Up to now the Philistines had kept to the hills. Now they were fighting on the plains where their superior weapons could be used to advantage. Militarily Israel was finished. Saul sought spiritual peace but found none. In spite of prayer and spiritual exercises he could make no contact with God. In desperation he turned to spiritism. Priests and prophets alike had consistently denounced the practice of necromancy in all its forms. However, mediums still existed, though in secret through fear of persecution. Saul disguised himself and visits a medium at Endor.

November 19th 1 Sam 28:11-25

Saul asked the medium to raise Samuel from the spirit world, which she did. Three points to note: first, in spite of his disguise the medium recognized him. We are here dealing with powers that go beyond human logic or reason. Second, Samuel was raised. Spiritism is real. It is not to be played with. Third, Saul did not find the comfort and reassurance he sought – in fact, his condition was worse. Spiritism is not only real, but is also very dangerous. For this reason it is consistently condemned in Scripture. Saul is now an utterly broken man.

November 20th 1 Sam 29:1-11

The philistines now amass their troops for the final assault on the Israelites. However, some of their leaders objected to David and his followers. They feared that he might turn and attack them from behind in the conflict. David protested his loyalty, but they were adamant

November 21st 1 Sam 30:1–16a

From his disappointment David returned to Ziklag to discover it had been raided and he and his men had lost all their families and goods. In frustration his men turned on him and blamed him. They forgot that they were suffering only what they had done to others! Note how David sought God's assistance and found it – something denied Saul.

November 22nd 1 Sam 30: 16b-31

David recovered all that he and his men had lost, and more besides. Note how he insisted that those who had been too exhausted to go with them should nevertheless receive their share of the booty. Note also how he shared the booty with those Judean towns he had himself raided. Was this a form of recompense, or did David realize that the time was near when he would require their support?

November 23rd 1 Sam 31: 1–13

The Philistines attack and the Israelite army is completely routed. Saul and his sons were among those slain. Would it be true to say that Saul and his army were psychologically lost even before the battle began? How tragic that a kingly career which began with such promise should end with such ignominy. Even the brave and good Jonathon was not spared.

November 24th 2 Sam 1:1–12

We might have expected that news of Saul's death would bring joy to David. Instead he was plunged into deep sorrow. Naturally he grieved for Jonathon, whom he loved dearly, but grieved no less for Saul at whose hands he had suffered so much. Saul was the Lord's anointed. In spite of all that he had suffered David could never forget that Saul was king by God's decree and, as such, must always be honoured.

November 25th 2 Sam 1:13–16

No doubt young Amalekite expected a rich reward for David for bringing what he thought to be good news. He had also safely delivered the royal crown and bracelet, yet his only reward was to be slain on the spot. David was appalled that any should lift his hand against the Lord's anointed. Yet he had only done what the king ordered him to do! Are there occasions when even a royal command must be disobeyed in deference to a higher authority?

November 26th 2 Sam 1:17-27

David's reaction to Saul's death is strange. Apart from his personal vendetta against David, Saul clearly showed signs of faulty judgement. His mental balance was seriously impaired, and it could be argued that he was no longer fit to be ruler over a nation. For many his death must have seemed a relief, if not a judgement, yet David's lament for Saul and Jonathon could not have been in more generous terms.

November 27th 2 Sam 2:1–7

David's reign begins, but at first he is king only of the part known as Judah – the area south of Jerusalem and west of the Dead Sea. It was the area in which he had spent his years in exile, and in which he was already the virtual uncrowned king. He established Hebron as his capital city. Note David's gratitude to the men of Jabesh Gilead for giving Saul and his family a decent burial.

November 28th 2 Sam 2:8–11

The division that was apparent during Saul's reign now becomes clear cut. The southern tribes unite under David, while the northern tribes support Ishbosheth. Although he was a mature man he does not seem to have had a strong will. He is a puppet ruler under Abner his father's commander. Though Saul is now dead, seeds of discontent sown during his reign will be harvested for some considerable time yet.

November 29th 2 Sam 2:12–24

What a waste of life and resources is caused by war. So often we become embroiled in a conflict without considering fully its final cost. Pride makes us blind to the inevitable folly. Did Abner call for peace because he was essentially a man of peace, or because he knew he was defeated?

November 30th 2 Sam 2:29–3.1

Though one particular battle has now ceased, still there is bickering between those loyal to Saul's family and those supporting David. Is peace merely the absence of war and fighting, or is it something more? Throughout this period support for David grows, while his opponents grow weaker.

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