

1st Samuel Ch 26

Once again we come to another lesson in the life of David whereby Saul is on the prowl. The enemy just never gives us does he? He never slumbers or sleeps, but as Peter tells us, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*” 1 Peter 5:8 He’s always on the lookout for his prey, that’s why we’re to never let our guards down but rather we’re to, “*Resist him, steadfast in the faith.*” 1 Peter 5:9 And in another place, “*Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*” James 4:7 And isn’t that what we’ve seen David doing over and over again throughout his days in the wilderness, those his training grounds from God? Saul is seemingly ever after him, looking to devour him in a moment, but David is steadfastly resisting him, and as he does, Saul turns from him and returns to his place.

But what we’re seeing here is the flipside to that coin that to us seems so unfortunate. (Though to God it’s opportunity to train us, and to teach us, to mold and shape and refine us in the refiners fire, making us the men and women He would have us to be.) Even as Paul was able to identify the fact that when a messenger of Satan was given to buffet him, it wasn’t because God didn’t care for him, nor did he take the mentality of, “God, I thought you loved me? How could you let these things happen to me? I’m seeking to serve you, and you’re not hedging me about, there’s trouble on every side.” But Paul was able to learn from his experiences through his buffeting, his time of weakness whereby he was (for lack of better words) pigeonholed into depending on God to see him through his hour of need. But isn’t that where God would have us to be all the time? In that place of total dependence upon Him, and so Paul could say, “*Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*” 2 Cor 12:9-10 He came to that place where he understood and received from the Lord the words, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.*” 2 Cor 12:9 All that to say that in this life the enemy is never going to let us rest. As long as we’re his enemy, we’re going to be in the throws of the battle. And this is the side of the coin that seems so unfortunate to you and me, because we love the vs, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” And we’ve seen David resist his enemy, (Saul), and watched as his enemy pulled back from him and went away, and so we can see the type there at work for us. But what we also see at play is that though he will flee from you as you resist him, there’s never a guarantee for how long. So that he flees because the Word of God places him in a position of no choice, but then at time he’ll immediately circle back once he’s done as God’s Word has commanded him to do, and then he’s right back on us. And sometimes the rest we get is only a minute, or 30seconds, and then those thoughts flood us again, or that temptation is before us again, other times it may be an hour or a day. But the point is, that as long as you serve the Lord, you can count on enemy confrontation. Why, because he’s hoping to break you down, and he’s banking on the fact that you might resist him once, or twice, or fifty, or 150 times, but eventually you’ll grow weary of resisting and give in.

He's banking on catching you with your guard down so that you *don't* resist him, and he snares your life and drags you into sin, and if he hooks you good enough, then maybe he'll drag you right on out of your relationship with God and just destroy your life altogether. And he'll never weary of fighting you as long as he sees you as a threat because all he's got is time, and there's not much of it left, and so rather than giving up, he'll increase the heat and bombard you all the more.

But here's the good news, "*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*" 1 John 4:4

Turn to Rom Ch 8 (Vs 31-39)

The point being that come what may, we're to abide in Christ, because in Christ nothing shall overcome you and separate you from the love of God. So as the bible says, we're not to be overcome with evil, repaying evil for evil, justifying sin for sin, but rather we're to overcome evil with good. And David's life during these years is just a phenomenal example of this principal at work in practical ways.

Vs1

Around and round she goes, where she stops nobody knows. This is like a bad dream for David that he just can't wake up out of. I mean, talk about déjà vu, does this sound familiar to you? Remember back in ch 23 where we read these words, "*Then the Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, 'Is David not hiding with us in strongholds in the woods, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand.'*" 1 Sam 23:19-20 And now here they are again wanting to betray David into the hands of Saul, they're like David's perpetual thorn in his flesh, and I have to commend him for not coming upon them like a whirlwind and just wiping them all out. Because I might be able to overlook the 1st betrayal, but after the 2nd time these Ziphites would mean about "*Zip-ite*" to mean and I'd end these guys, or at least give all I had trying.

But David doesn't do that, and quite frankly neither are we to do that when we see people siding with those who are against us. The natural inclination is to tear them up and shred their reputation or belittle their persons so as to disarm any potential threat to you that they may be. But Jesus said, "*I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*" Matt 5:44-45

In other words God extends common grace to everyone, good and evil alike, not just the believers, or those who love Him. That's why Jesus went on to illustrate this principal by saying, what good does it do to love those who love you? I mean that's right to do, but it doesn't demonstrate anything special, people in the world do that. But if you're good to those who aren't good to you, and bless those who speak evil of you, then you exude those Christ like qualities that testify that you're sons and daughters of God. David doesn't rise up and do these guys in; he patiently endures their coming against him, (probably wags his head a bit and thinks, what are these guys thinking?) But he doesn't do them in, but it's always frustrating you see people side with the person or persons that you know have done something they shouldn't but they've purposed it to make you look like the bad guy and people buy in on it. But like David we're not to run out there and say, "Hey, they've done this or that, and you don't know what's really happened and you should be on my team, not betraying me!" "I'm the good guy, I'm innocent in this deal, they seek my life with out a cause!" But you can't do that, you have to simply say nothing, walk in integrity, and let God be your defense knowing that He will one day vindicate the situation, if not here, then when we get there the motives of peoples heart will be laid out for all to see. Meanwhile, as you've heard me say before we're to reside in that Ps 26 position and let God deal with the fallout.

Vs2-4

So here comes Saul, with 3,000 chosen men of Israel, which is to say these guys are the best of the best. They're the special forces of Israel, the Seal team, or Rangers of the armies of Israel, and they're out there with one express purpose, not to defend Israel, or to fight the enemies of God, but rather to kill David.

And David catches wind that Saul is out for him once again and knowing the terrain really well, (not to mention it's hard for any group of men 3,000 strong to advance in any sort of stealth mode) David sends spies to see if in fact the news is true. And as they take their reconnaissance positions, looking out toward the horizon they see the massive dust cloud of 3,000 men with horses and supply wagons and all advancing in their general direction and they tell David, "The news is true."

And you almost wonder if when David got the news his heart sank with in him? I mean you would think that all the thoughts of their last encounter would just come flooding back in at this point. Remember there in that cave at En Gedi? David had Saul with in his very grasp and could've ended him in a moment, but he let him go. Saul and his 3,000 were on the hunt for David and as David and his men were there hiding in a cave (what would be the odds) but the very cave that they were in Saul and his men stopped for a rest; Saul needed a bathroom break. And as Saul came in from the daylight into the blackness of that cave to tend to his needs there was David and his men pressed and barely breathing against the back of the cave. And David crept up towards Saul and rather than taking off his head, he just sliced off a corner of his robe. Because he understood that God placed him where he was, and since it was God who placed him there, it was going to have to be God that removed him.

(Now God had told David that He had great plans for his life, and that he would be king of Israel, “But not like this” David thought, not by murder). And so when Saul went out of the cave David followed him out and when Saul made his way to the camp David lifted up his voice and showed Saul that portion of robe (that spoke of his royalty and authority) that had been taken from him and was now in his hands. And he said, “I could’ve killed you Saul but I didn’t because I want you to know I’m not your enemy, I mean no evil towards you and yet you pursue me.” And when David did that Saul’s heart broke and he realized (seemingly) his wrong and he wept and cried out to David, “Forgive me, you’ve been more righteous than I; for you rewarded me with good whereas I rewarded you with evil. And now I know you mean me no harm so I’m calling this search off and I’m going home.” And he basically called a truce, said he was going to stop doing what he was doing which was seeking to kill David.

And now as David looked out over those hills and heard Saul’s troops approaching, if he was anything like me you wonder if he thought, “Well that was obviously real sincere wasn’t it Saul? That promise really lasted a long time.” Then somewhere way back there you kind of wonder if even for a second he thought, “I guess I should’ve killed you when I had the chance, maybe those guys were right telling me that that was a God send of a situation and now we’re going to reap the fact that I let you live.” Why, because Saul’s going back on his word, it’s like someone who’s trying to quit smoking, or they’re a salt-o-holic, or they love chocolate and they say, “I’m not going to do this anymore.” And for a day or a week, or a month it goes ok but then comes that day when the craving seems to be more than you can bear and “Boom” you’re right back at it, and it’s a vicious cycle that never seems to end. And David is like that vice for Saul, he just can’t leave him alone, he knows it’s wrong yet as soon as he feels threatened he’s right back out there hunting David down. And David’s there thinking, “Man, you’re a liar Saul, you sounded so sincere, yet here you are.” But again unfortunately repentance isn’t found in regret even as sincere as it may be, repentance is found in change, a forsaking of a former way in order to now head in an altogether new direction. But here’s Saul following that same old path, and how easily we can fall into that same snare; so as the tension mounts we read in vs 5.

Vs5

So you can see the picture. David gets the news of Saul’s coming and he heads that direction as the night falls and takes that reconnaissance (spying out) type position up on the hill overlooking Saul’s camp. And he sees all the men bedding down there and they’re laid out in a circle form with Saul right in the middle of these 3,000 men and Abner (sort of his chief bodyguard) the best of the best of the best at his side, who really turns out to be sort of an Ab “nerd” falling down on the job, or better stated, falling asleep on the job, not protecting Saul like he’s supposed to. But even still, if you were going to get to Saul you’d have to tiptoe through 1,000 men or so and not stir any of them. And so he seems quite invulnerable, pretty unreachable, safe and secure there in the middle of the army. But with God nothing will be impossible, and here we see sort of that “God can do anything” type attitude that was kindred between David, and Jonathon, notice what David says.

Vs 6-7

Now often times we sort of read scripture and never really allow the veracity, or the reality of it to really hit home. Picture this, David makes an offer, Abishai takes him up on it and here are these 2 men sort of tiptoeing through 3,000 men with the express purpose to kill David and anyone who supports him. And they're just sort of stepping over this guy, and sliding between those guys and before the know it they're right in the middle and there lies Saul. Now I sort of see this in a movie type seen where it's showing fairly tight close ups of these guys trying not to bump the soldiers and stepping stealthily throughout the troops, and as they close in on Saul and find him lying there they pause for a moment and the camera pulls back, and there's these 2 guys standing right in the middle of 3,000 men who have only one agenda, to kill them. I mean this has to be an intense, heart pumping, adrenaline flowing type moment and situation, if a pack of dogs start barking, or if one of them sneezes or coughs, and so much as one soldier is alerted as to their presence it's all over. And in one respect they're acting in a holy boldness, but I can't help but think that in another respect that at some point they didn't think, "Man, this is crazy, I can't believe I'm out here." But then there they find themselves and here's Saul, out like a light, completely vulnerable and at David's mercy and what's in the ground by his head? His spear, the last time David got a good look at that thing it was when Saul was seeking to make a "point" with it by pinning David to the wall.

Vs 8

David, you don't even have to do the dirty work, we let this guy get away once but God has brought him back to you again. He's tried to pin you to the wall with this thing, talk about poetic justice, David you just give me one shot and I'll guarantee you I won't have to strike him twice. He's saying, "David just let me pin him to the ground like a stuck hog and this whole thing can be over right here and now." "You give me one shot and he'll never even know what hit him." And if possible I believe that David is more tempted now than he was the 1st time because now he has Saul's lies to justify his position. "You promised you wouldn't pursue me and you lied, you've made your bed now it's time for you to lie in it, you had your chance." It's that whole you fool me once, shame on you, but fool me twice, and shame on me mentality. "I maybe loving and merciful but I'm no fool, and you've blown life for the last time." And his friend is encouraging to go for it, and isn't that the way it is sometimes? It's not always our unspiritual enemies that pose a threat to us, but sometimes it's our over zealous friends that encourage us to follow the emotion of the moment. And they're all, "Yeah, go for it man!" "This is a total God thing!" And it's not that they're not sincere, but sometimes in people's over zealousness they want to see us launch out into presumptive sins because I can rationalize the justification of the moment not even stopping to consider the ramifications or the heart of God in the matter.

Be careful to weigh *all* the council in the balance of God's Word, because sometimes enthusiastic friends or family members can get you in a lot of trouble.

Vs9-11

See the scene, here they are debating back and forth over Saul right there in the hush of the night, I'm sure it's whisper to whisper. And once again David exudes tremendous grace and mercy towards Saul, and he tells Abishai, "Look, forget it God doesn't need me to do this. God can take him out, he can die of natural causes, or in a war, but we're not going to touch him." How often we make the mistake of thinking God needs our help. But David is saying, "God's not pacing the halls of Heaven wondering how He's going to remove Saul since David won't do it. He's got it all figured out, and He'll take care of it when He's ready." Notice vs 12

Vs12

Notice David grabbed the spear, Abishai was a bit too on the edge and overly restrained and so David knew that if he let him grab the spear he might just go ahead and kill Saul anyway, so David took it and they high tailed it out of there.

Vs13-16

So David takes off, gets a safe distance away and then he starts calling out to Saul's chief adviser and bodyguard. "Abner, Abner, rise and shine sleepy head!" And Abner starts to pull out of the fog and wipe the sleep from his eyes and he shouts back, "Who are you to speak out to the king like that?" And David continues to mock him, "I thought you were a man, Israel's top dog, why is it then that you were asleep on the job? Someone entered your camp like a thief last night and had it with in his grip to kill the king." (Interesting the bible speaks of another, the Son of David who will come as a thief in the night one day and catch many unprepared and sleeping). And David says, "You should be put to death for not guarding the king and not being alert thinking that because you were out there in the middle that you were untouchable." And all these soldiers are waking up and hearing this, and Abner is just being humiliated. And apparently the sun was just breaking and you could see the silhouette of David on the distant hill, because he held up the spear and the water jug and said, "Just in case you think I'm somehow playing mind games with you, take a look around you, see what's in my hands?" and They can see him holding up a spear and Saul's jug, and I have no doubt that a knot rose up in Abner's throat as he thought, "Ugh, we could've been killed last night, I've really blown it.."

Vs17-19

Do you guys see what he's saying here? He's saying, "If God has purposed on your heart to pursue me, and He's using you to chasten me, then I can receive that. and I'll go and make a sacrifice because I want to be right with God, but if you're just buying the lies of men, then may they be cursed because they're keeping me on the run and pushing me out of the land telling me to go and serve other gods." Or to understand it another way, "Their lies are keeping me from being able to go to church." This is David's heart, he's saying the worst thing about this whole ordeal is that I've been unable to share in the inheritance of the Lord, I haven't been able to go to the tabernacle and worship with the people of God. I'm out here in fear for my life and all I want to do is get back to church and enter into corporate worship with God's people. Isn't that awesome? David's tired of being on the run; he just wants to be able to worship the Lord freely.

Vs20

The humble plea in this vs is simply, “Saul please don’t kill me, I’m getting tired of all this running and I don’t know how much longer I can keep it up.” And if you know about partridge hunting then you get that.

They don’t really fly long and hard they just kind of stay on the ground in coveys and only fly when they’re spooked and even at that it’s just for a short distance. And so what they would do would be to kick this covey up and they’d chase them right up the mountain side until they got so weary that they couldn’t fly and then they’d just club them on the head or whatever and pick them up. And so David is saying, “Look if you keep pursuing me, you’re going to catch me, because I’m getting tired of all this running, so I’m just asking you not to kill me.”

Vs21

This is the epitaph and autobiography of Saul, “Indeed I’ve played the fool and erred exceedingly.” And how unfortunate, yet true that was, Saul was a man that God had given so many natural talents and abilities, he could’ve been used tremendously by God. But he got puffed up with pride and instead of being busy about the call that God placed on his life; he was consumed about building and safeguarding his own kingdom wasting his time on completely irrelevant issues. Focused on the here and now at the expense of the eternal, God help us to learn from his mistake.

But even in this these words just somehow come cheap for Saul, there’s no real passion in this statement. Last time we read where Saul wept and was grieved, but this time not even a guilty emotion surfaces in him. He just basically says, “Sorry David, I really screwed up.”

Vs22

You see David doesn’t trust him. You can have your weapon back, but send one of the young guys to come and get it, the rest of you just wait right there.

Vs23-24

Why was David so merciful to Saul? Because he wanted God to be merciful to him, he hadn’t read Jesus’ sermon but he understood the principal, “*Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.*” Matt 5:7. And again, “*For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.*” Matt 7:2. And David wanted to secure mercy from the Lord, that God would be delicate with him and gracious towards him. And so he was delicate and gracious towards Saul, he was willing to let God be his vindication and lay his life in the palm of His hands.

Vs 25

And David and Saul will never meet again...