

EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**THE DEATH OF
SAUL AND THE LIFE OF DAVID HIS
REPLACEMENT
(LEADERSHIP IN CONTRAST)**

BY

DR JOHN C McEWAN

Revised 2 January 2022

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER 16	2
CHAPTER 17	8
CHAPTER 18	18
CHAPTER 19	25
CHAPTER 20	28
CHAPTER 21	34
CHAPTER 22	37
CHAPTER 23	43
CHAPTER 24	47
CHAPTER 25	51
CHAPTER 26	56
CHAPTER 27	60
CHAPTER 28	62
CHAPTER 29	67
CHAPTER 30	68
CHAPTER 31	72

INTRODUCTION**SAUL'S REPLACEMENT ENTERS THE STORY****DAVID ENTERS THE SERVICE OF THE MAN GOD WILL REPLACE**

As we enter into the second half of the account of the beginning of the reign of the kings over Israel we read stories that have parallels to those of Homer, from the same time frame. Pagan commentators often refer to these as "legends" and dismiss most of the stories of David and Saul as later "mythic history" that are told here to bolster the position of the house of David over the other claimants.

Just because a story has similar elements to one from a similar age does not mean both are consigned to the category of "legend" or "myth". Homer's stories are becoming more accepted as based upon real historical events and a growing array of evidence backs this. The fact that we have in the behaviour of the Philistines many parallels to the heroes of the Homeric stories would ring true for this period, as the Philistine's origins are in the Aegean area and they enter Palestine around the time of the real fall of Troy, which has been discovered to be most likely just as Homer described it.

The story of Goliath of Gath, and the champion fighting for the entire army, is one we are all familiar with from these early proto-Greek stories. I accept the rest of this book named first Samuel as real history, written close to the time of the events, not later myth, and I see no reason to doubt anything written here. It is a wonderful account of some remarkable, and yet also very human men and women. We have the sadness of Samuel, the tragedy of Saul and his sons, and the victory of David, who is as flawed as each of us, and the men he replaced. It is a story of God's grace and mercy!

This is no myth written to elevate David to sainthood, for we meet the real man here; we see his strengths and his weaknesses. This balanced view is unlike all other stories of kings from the ancient world, for most omitted anything that was negative. The writer here tells all, for this man David stands in the power of God alone, and has victory because God is with him. This is biblical history giving the spiritual viewpoint, and so it covers the sins and evils of men and tells us how good men recover and foolish ones destroy themselves. It is not a moral tale/fable, but real and powerful history.

As David enters the scene, Saul's power and majesty starts to seriously decline as the quality of his decision making deteriorates. Since the great victory over the Philistine army described in chapter fourteen only a few years pass before David is anointed by the dying Samuel, and then he enters the palace of Saul for a time as the harpist for the king's madness. The actual time frame of the rest of the book is uncertain.

David may be around fourteen when he first appears, and would appear to be still under twenty when he slays Goliath and enters the king's service as a soldier. He will be thirty when he becomes king himself on the death of Saul upon Mt Gilboa. His path to the crown is roughly the same time frame as that of Joseph to becoming second ruler of Egypt, the Lord taking around sixteen years to train his men in the furnace of affliction before they are given power to wield safely.

The rest of this book contains the account of this path to kingship and in it we will see many examples of God's great grace towards David, in teaching him and in preserving him. We also see God's amazing grace towards Saul, for this man could have received blessing and dying grace but he had chosen the path of desperate self centeredness and his tragedy runs its inevitable course. Personality Disorders left to run their course can only produce tragic outcomes.

God works upon those who would lead His people and brings them to the place of dependence upon Him, or they are replaced. Saul never learns to fully trust the Lord and obey His will and so he leaves the pages of history. David learns to love the Lord with all his heart through these years, and learns to trust God through the deep despair at times that he must walk through. We see his weakness revealed here regarding both anger and sexual lust, but we see his character emerge as one of the greatest men of history. David gives hope for us all – for if this man can be lifted up, then we all can be. Psalm 103:10-18, 1 Peter 5:5-10.

CHAPTER 16**1 SAMUEL 16:1-23**

16:1 And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons. **2** And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD. **3** And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee. **4** And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably? **5** And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice. **6** And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD's anointed is before him. **7** But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. **8** Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this. **9** Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he

said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this. 10 Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these. 11 And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. 12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah. 14 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. 15 And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. 16 Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. 17 And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. 18 Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him. 19 Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep. 20 And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul. 21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer. 22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight. 23 And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. The mourning of Samuel for Saul may have gone on for a considerable time. It was not uncommon for mourning to go on for up to two years and so it may even be some time past this that Samuel is challenged by the Lord to stop his grief and arise and anoint the replacement king. We do not know the time delay between the events of the last chapter and this one. The Lord breaks His silence and orders Samuel to ready the anointing oil, and go to Bethlehem and find Jesse there, and anoint one of his sons as king to replace Saul.

The last incident between Samuel and Saul was a very public one, and Saul's reaction to the old prophet is now made clear; he seeks Samuel's life. From the brief words here it appears that he may even be under guard in his own home town and moves about the land by permission only. Samuel has been banned from leaving his town of Ramah for anything other than "official business", and to achieve the plan of God Samuel will need to use the excuse of offering a specific sacrifice to cover his real errand. Samuel is to lie to the servants of the king in order to do the Lord's work. Once again we are challenged that evil men are not entitled to the truth if they would use it to destroy good men. 1 Samuel 10:14-16, 11:8-15, Jeremiah 38:24-28.

Saul has been told he is to be replaced, 1 Samuel 13:13-14, 15:22-29, but he is determined to hold onto power as long as he can rather than work with the prophet Samuel and hand over power as soon as he can. He seeks his own will, not God's will; he desires his life in the palace rather than the eternal rewards of the true Lord's servant. John 3:30. The great truth that he and so many who fall into Narcissism ignore, is that, "here we have no continuing city". Hebrews 13:14

We must all be thoughtful about this matter, for when the Lord moves us on from a certain ministry we ought to be keen to move and ready to hand over to our replacement, with all things in good order. To cling to a position one day longer than the Lord wants us there is to place ourselves under divine discipline. We see what this means in the subsequent years of Saul's reign. If we do not take the Lord's orders and move on to our next posting in His plan for us, we will be in the wrong place, and that means eventually that we will suffer the "Sin Unto Death".

Verses 4 – 5. Samuel is obedient to the Lord and does all he is commanded. He heads for Bethlehem, and it is no short journey of a man in his eighties. As he approaches the town gate the elders meet him and they do so trembling in fear. This also underlines the serious falling out between Saul and Samuel through these last years. Samuel has been seriously restricted in ministry through these years, and he has likely been restricted to writing or editing earlier words from the Lord. I suspect in heaven we will discover that it was he that kept the text we have as the first five books intact, and that he began the story of his own ministry to be passed on to later hands to finish. He was not "robbed" of ministry by Saul; it was Saul who robbed himself of blessing.

There are two possible explanations of the elders "welcome question" to Samuel. Firstly, that the people have been threatened with death if they even associate with the old prophet, or secondly, that Saul has spread the story that Samuel has become an unbalanced man and brings evil to a town rather than God's Word now. From the elder's response and the later statement of the elders I suspect that Samuel's open ministry has been closed down through the last few years, either by the direct orders of Saul, or the lies he has spread concerning Samuel. The elders fear for their lives with Samuel entering their town. We will see later just how homicidal Saul has become. He acts exactly like Henry VIII of England, and with the same demonic influence over him. The fingerprints of evil are here.

It is a serious thing for any one to spread rumours about a servant of God, and an even more serious thing is to try to close down his ministry, for you attack not the man, but God who anointed him. Saul is on very unsafe ground here, for he resists the will of God, and is trying to frustrate the work of God. He thinks that by controlling Samuel and having everyone fearful of him that he can stop Samuel anointing the new king, but God is not mocked by foolish men trying to

hold on to their own power. Galatians 6:7-10. Saul will fall, as all do who fight against God, and his judgment will bring down his entire family as a result. Psalms 2:1-5, Acts 5:39, 23:9.

Samuel greets the elders with the announcement of a sacrifice to the Lord and calls them to set themselves apart for this worship time and join him at the place of sacrifice. He specifically ensures that Jesse, David's father, is present, and asks that all the sons be brought to the sacrifice so that Samuel can listen to the voice of the Lord and select the right one to rule in Saul's place.

The action Samuel takes here is technically treasonous, and to accept this anointing is to accept the will of God rather than any duty and sole loyalty to Saul. This entire action is one of active rebellion against the authority of King Saul, but it is a rebellion that the Lord has sanctioned, and it will not involve the actions of any godly man to overthrow Saul. David will still be expected to be loyal to Saul until the end, not slay Saul, as he will have opportunity to do, but hear what the Lord requires of him, and do that alone.

David will be challenged every day to hear the Lord's will and do it alone in order to stay safe and within the plan of God for himself. The biggest danger for David will be that he will play court politics, or walk in his own wisdom, and so die with Saul and his house. David must walk in the Spirit, in absolute obedience to the will of God, or he will not reach his own coronation. He will walk with God's will, but Saul will not, but God's perfect purposes are still worked out.

Verses 6 – 11. Samuel is a great prophet, but he also sees things initially as a normal man sees them, and he must be corrected by the Word of God, just as we do at times. Let us be corrected and challenged by this fact ourselves. We are never spiritually mature enough to ignore the Word of God and not hear the Lord's correcting voice within our heart. Samuel sees the first sons of Jesse and he immediately thinks that they are the ones, for they are like Saul was, tall, handsome and strong. As we will see in the next chapter they lack the moral fibre and the close walk with God that will be required for the replacement of Saul.

Each of the seven sons pass before Samuel and all are rejected. David has not even been considered as a full son by Jesse, and he is tasked to stay out on the hills and care for the sheep. He has been written off by his father as ever being noble enough for great work, but is sent out to do what the servants did, and sleep in the open fields with the sheep. He is also the family errand boy. It is faithfulness in these ordinary and servant level jobs that prepares David for spiritual leadership. God takes his choicest servants from the humble places of obedience. Psalms 78:70-72, Amos 7:12-16.

Samuel sends for David and they all sit down and wait for his arrival. We need to be very careful when we assess people, for God does not use the people that men initially think are the great ones. Often it is the least likely person who leads the people of God to the greatest victories. Do not judge by outward appearances, but by the strength of the heart that is fixed upon the Lord alone. Psalms 147:10-11, Isaiah 55:7-9, Luke 16:15, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, 2 Corinthians 10:7.

Verses 12 – 14. David arrives at the place of sacrifice. We are given a description of him and it is of a beautiful young man, with red hair and beautiful eyes. He is young but very strong and handsome. As he walks towards Samuel the Lord speaks to the old prophet and he anoints him. The anointing is done in the presence of his brothers and father, but there is no indication that they fully understand the reasons for it or the significance behind it at this point.

Samuel may not have explained the significance of the anointing to any other than David, and that must have been secretly. My belief is that there was some form of teaching for David, but the writer does not record any teaching session with David as he did with Saul, 1 Samuel 9:25-10:1. To anoint and proclaim David publically as king was to make him a target for Saul, and he needs to learn many things before he is ready to face that level of hatred and persecution.

God will slowly reveal to all the people the truth about Samuels' actions this day, but at this time few understand the significance and meaning of them, and even though it was done before them, the brothers certainly do not, as we will see in the next chapter. Just as Saul's initial anointing was private, so David's is also private, and this will give him a few years to grow in stature and character, so that he is ready to deal with the pressures that will come upon him.

Samuel immediately returns to Ramah, and we hear no more of any dealings of David or Saul with Samuel, and the Holy Spirit comes upon David, and an evil spirit troubles Saul. Evil does not stay static when God's plan is unfolding, it always launches the demonic counter attacks. Satan will seriously try to kill David, as he knows he is central to God's Plan in some way. Remember Satan is not omniscient and so his actions are not based on full knowledge, and the Spirit led/filled believer can always be one step ahead of the devil. His malice and arrogance also means he over estimates his power and influence. David must walk carefully and prayerfully however to live, and so must we! Ephesians 5:15-18.

Verses 15 – 18. The Holy Spirit comes upon David to strengthen and teach him, and the Holy Spirit leaves Saul, for his work within the Plan of God is done. His servants note that he is troubled, as if by an evil spirit. The Lord God is able to use the servants of Satan to discipline believers at times and this is apparently what occurs here. Saul also clearly suffers from a depressive disorder, but also has paranoia at times. It appears to be a demonic force that is allowed to oppress him at times, and a believer only gets to this point by hundreds of persistently wrongful choices.

Mental illness is not often caused by demons, but by a variety of reasons, some controllable by the person and some not. The chemistry of our mind is fragile, and if we are relaxed and focused on the plan of God for our lives we will have mental stability, even in the most difficult places and situations. If we have lost our spiritual discernment and power

however and face great difficulties, we can mentally unhinge, and that is what occurs with Saul. He has gone against the plan of God and is actively resisting the work of God. In addition to this mental breakdown due to stress, he also experiences demonic oppression at times. Stress alone does not do this, but arrogance pride filled actions, and self importance does open people to the demonic, for that is the heart of their power over man. His pride and self-centredness has opened him to evil forces.

This man is a believer, although a carnal one at this point. I do not believe personally that any believer can be permanently demon possessed, for that implies ownership, and the Lord "owns" a believer, but the scriptures clearly teach that believers can be demonically influenced and controlled at times. Demons can get control of a believer at times if they have, by grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit within them, placed themselves into the hands of evil forces. Sadly this is where Saul has got to at this point in his life. Refer to the reflection on this topic at the end of this chapter.

The most common cure for mental illness and demonic torment was to use music to sooth the soul of the person afflicted. David is known as a great musician by all around the Judah-Benjamin area. He is also referred to at this time as a "mighty valiant man of war/weapons". This is a surprise, for he is still apparently a teenager at this point, but in this day children were taught the use of all basic weapons, as they still are in Africa and Arabia if they are herdsmen's children. 1 Samuel 17:33-35.

Now since the days of the anointing by Samuel a number of months or even years may have passed. Saul's mental illness and demonic affliction take time to get established and David has the time to grow further and deal with the lion and the bear attacking the sheep and build a double reputation as a fighter of wild animals and also as a musician and a skilled one in both areas. It is not unusual to see children as young as eight in the open savannah of Africa guarding their family sheep and goats from wild animals, and these children can use their sword/spears and clubs to good effect.

David's isolation from his family has produced a spirit of courage and also self reliance, and has also driven him deep into the creative nature of his soul, and music is the outcome. Some people cannot be alone without losing the plot, and being driven to seek the company of others or fill the silence with any form of noise. Such people will not be able to be used as any sort of leader. Leaders need to be comfortable in their own company, and able to recharge their inner batteries without anyone else being required. David has learned to creatively recharge himself with poetry and music and he has learned to fight for his life and for the sheep. He takes responsibility and has the courage to stand up for his job even if his life is at risk in the process.

Verses 19 – 23. David is still young when he receives the call to serve in the palace of Saul. He enters the palace as the man who has been anointed to replace the king, and he must serve the king and never betray the truth about his anointing. He must honour, obey and serve Saul as his king, even though he knows God has replaced Saul with himself. David is now grown older and Saul loves him and makes him his armour bearer for a time, and that indicates that he is of military age now, and that means older than sixteen.

David is called from the sheep, and he is sent by his father with the gifts of food that were correct to offer to the king in response to such a call for service. All called to serve as David was were expected to feed themselves until invited to the king's table once they had proved their own worth as servants. Payment was on the basis of performance only! David stays with Saul for some time as his armour bearer, and also as his musician when he is troubled by the demonic forces. David serves in the palace for some time, but when we next meet him he is back home and tending sheep again.

We are not told by the writer how this change in circumstances occurs. Court officials, officers and companions of kings were changed often as men fell in and out of favour with the king, but also simply to reward other families some of the court roles were rotated, with each person serving only for a few months. The only thing people could be sure of in a kingly court was that their position might change tomorrow. All was uncertain and kings kept their servants and their families on their toes by constantly changing roles and responsibilities just as rulers do within their governments today.

At some point David is not needed and Saul forgets his "love" for him, and he is dismissed back to his home. It may even be that the demonic force loses its power for a time and Saul is free of torment, and so dispenses with David's services. God is training David through all this, and a big part of the training process is to teach him not to rush quickly to the goal he knows is set before him. He also must not expect great things too early, and not expect promotion and start to dream about being a courtier. He must be focused only upon doing what God wants, when and as he wants. Being made redundant a number of times is often the Lord's training method for later powerful ministry. Take nothing personally!

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. To serve the Lord we must be ready to take actions that other men will consider "disloyal" or "wrong". Samuel was called to secretly oppose his legitimate king and government, and he was prepared to lie to the officials of Saul's government to achieve God's specific purposes. We must be ready to stand against authority when called to do so by the Lord, but this means we must be very sure of the Lord's will, and that means we must walk closely with the Lord through each and every day. There is no path of safety through this world other than a close and obedient walk with God. Let us walk in the filling of the Holy Spirit through each day and so fulfill our destiny.

2. God calls us to greater service in the plan when we have been obedient in lesser and even despised areas. David served in a servile and despised role. He slept in the open fields as a teenager, but in so doing he learned all he

needed to learn to be king. It is in the humble places that we learn the most powerful lessons. Let us not despise any opportunity for service in the Lord's house, but readily take all opportunities and learn obedience within them.

3. We are to walk carefully through this world, for the enemy is ever seeking to destroy the sanity, blessing and the very lives of carnal believers. Saul falls into divine discipline and suffers demonic control at times. He is tortured by Satan rather than being blessed by God. This occurs because of his wilful walking away from the plan of God for him and his nation. Let us be very scared of falling off the path of God for us.

4. Let us focus upon the plan and path of God through this life and so walk in the light of God's Word and the blessing that comes from God's presence in the life. Let us warn our fellows of the dangers of walking away from God and into the hands of the enemy of mankind, for he delights in causing great suffering to the disobedient servants of the Lord.

5. Let us cultivate the ability to recharge our batteries without needing any other person, but through fellowship with the Lord alone. Let us also cultivate the recharge of our batteries with solitary activities so that we are not dependent upon others to survive and prosper. If we depend upon people, we are vulnerable to all difficult circumstances, and only if we learn self reliance (or rather Holy Spirit reliance) will we be stable enough to lead God's people, and deal with extreme pressure situations.

God wants to train all of His leaders as He trained David and Joseph. If we are called to leadership, then let us be willing to suffer, and to deal with the loneliness that is a fundamental aspect of all leadership.

THE SIN UNTO DEATH

1. There is a sin unto death (1 John 5:16, 17, 1 Corinthians 11:31,32)
2. The sin unto death is the physical death of a believer, where ultimate discipline is administered to the Christian due to unconfessed sin of a serious nature.
3. Confession of sin under the promise/command of 1 John 1:9 is the way to forgiveness.
4. Examples of "sin unto death" are:-
 - (a) The Corinthian Pervert - (1 Corinthians 5)
 - (b) The Corinthians who habitually came to the Lord's Table in an unworthy manner. (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)
 - (c) Moses (Deuteronomy 32:48-52)
 - (d) Achan (Joshua 7:16-26)
 - (e) Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)
5. Whilst there is a sin unto death there is no condemnation to them in Christ Jesus - all believers (Romans 8:1).
6. The effect of the sin unto death is to reduce the time which a believer can spend on earth accumulating good of eternal worth. The gold, silver, and precious stones of 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

OBEDIENCE

1. Obedience is better than offerings (1 Samuel 15:22; Proverbs 21:3; 28:9). If we are not in God's will, any "worship" we offer is unacceptable.
2. Obedience is something you have to learn. The basic training in obedience has to start in childhood. As it says in (Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16) "Honour your father and your mother." (Proverbs 4:3,4; 22:6; 29:15-17; Hebrews 5:8)
3. Teaching your child obedience is an act of love (Proverbs 3:12; 19:18; 23:13-14).
4. We have to obey those who are in authority over us (Exodus 20:12; 22:28; Leviticus 19:3; Deuteronomy 5:16; Romans 13:1-5; Ephesians 6:1-5; Colossians 3:18-22; Titus 3:1).
5. Those in authority have been put in that position by God (Romans 13:1).
6. Obedience to those in authority is obedience to God (Proverbs 24:21; Ephesians 6:7; Colossians 3:23-24; Romans 13:5).
7. Disobedience to those in authority is disobedience to God (Romans 1:30; 13:2).
8. But when we are ordered to do something that is against God's Will we have to disobey (Acts 4:19; 5:40-42).

9. The fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16) is the only commandment with a promise (Proverbs 10:17; Ephesians 6:1-3). Social life in a society is only possible when the people in it have learned to obey.
10. If this commandment is ignored, if the authority of the family is denied or not exercised, society will quickly slide into anarchy (Isaiah 3:12; Proverbs 29:21; 30:21-23; Romans 1:30).

REFLECTION UPON THE MEANING OF "EVIL"

1. **DEFINITION:** Evil is Satan's policy in opposition to God's doctrine. Evil is therefore a collection of beliefs and practises that back up Satan's viewpoint rather than God's.
2. Evil is not necessarily bad, it is simply a policy that will take you away from the path that God prepared for you.
3. False religion may be very moral and even ascetic (and therefore look "holy"), but if it is leading people away from God's revealed will it is evil.
4. Often evil can masquerade as "good". People who believe that their "good works" can satisfy God's holy demands are deceived by evil doctrine. Romans 7:19,20
5. Only God's Word, Bible Doctrine can help the believer distinguish between true good and evil, Hebrews 3:13,14.
6. Only a soul saturated in God's Word is truly protected from the subtlety of Satan's policy of evil. Proverbs 2:10-14, 3:7, 19:23.
7. Only applied knowledge of God's Word negates and neutralises evil. Psalms 54:5, Romans 12:21, Isaiah 45.
8. The issue for the believer is the daily choice to accept God's Word and therefore protect oneself against evil. God watches for our choices. Proverbs 11:18,19, 22:3, 24:1-4, Ephesians 5:16, 2 Thessalonians 3:2,3.
9. The company of evil people will distort the thinking of the believer and confuse his/her witness. Isaiah 5:20, 1 Corinthians 15:23.
10. There is no evil in God at all. Psalm 5:4, 1 John 1:5, 4:4.
11. God judges evil and will condemn it to the lake of fire for ever at the final judgment. Psalm 34:16, Isaiah 13:11, Revelation 20:11ff
12. In spite of evil still existing in the world due to Satan's on-going presence throughout the Church Age, the Lord is still on the throne, and his hand is on all things.
13. Satan only does things by "permission" and we are in the Lord's hands and so are, in Christ, safe. Job 1:6-12, Proverbs 16:3, 4, Isaiah 45:6, 7

Notes

CHAPTER 17**INTRODUCTION**

This story is so well known from abridged Sunday School telling of it that it is easy to rush the reading of this chapter and miss the key points that the writer is emphasising. The challenge of Goliath of Gath is a turning point in the lives of Saul and of David. Saul has had victory over the Philistines, but this champion was missing in previous battles, and has only emerged on this occasion to mock the army of Israel.

Goliath is not an old man, as often has been portrayed, or otherwise he would have been in earlier battles. He has been in training since he was young, but not fought Israel before as the champion of the Philistine Army. He may have been overseas gaining fighting experience as the proto-Greek peoples were apt to do, or been practising until this point in single combats at home. The Philistines fought amongst themselves for sport as often as they fought others, and his reputation is gained from killing men in combat, but this may be in single contests between the champions of other Philistine cities. He has brothers, and David will take enough stones from the brook to deal with them if they join him in the valley. All the brothers are here in the Philistine army, so there is not just one giant to deal with here.

Gigantism is a genetic abnormality affecting a certain percentage of all populations, but running strongly in some families. Goliath's height and the dimensions and weight of his armour are given specifically, indicating the armour was held by Israel as an exhibit, and seen by the writer. The armour described is similar to that of Homer's heroes from the Iliad so we have the date of this encounter set in the right time period. Recent attacks on the text by "scholars" refers to anachronisms but that is only because they reject Homer's work as reasonable history also. Archaeology is uncovering Homer's accuracy by the day on digs at the vast site that is Troy – not the small city citadel excavated 100 years ago.

David has been away from Saul for some time now and he does not obviously recognise David when he is presented to him. In the last years of growth in late teens a man can change a great deal. It may be that several years have passed since David served Saul as a harpist to sooth his mental turmoil. Saul will get to know David more fully again after this encounter with Goliath, and he will enter the army as a captain permanently, not as Saul's occasional armour bearer this time. David's father Jesse has kept him away from the army for this battle, and given that David had held the position of "Armour Bearer" to the king before, it indicates that David is either not welcome, or was no longer required at the palace at this time.

While it is a possibility, it is wise not to jump to the conclusion that David was rejected from Saul's service after a short time as harpist and "Armour Bearer". The position of "Armour Bearer" was both a practical and ceremonial function, and the sort of position that could be given in turn to a series of young men to show their families favour, so David being replaced in this role would not be unusual. To speculate, as some commentators do, that he went to and fro as shepherd and courtier is without precedent in the ancient world, and is to be rejected as an explanation, for had he been going to and fro he would have been recognised immediately and entered straight away into service again.

He is clearly physically mature and now ready to take his place in the army, and yet his father specifically sends him out to care for the sheep again rather than join his three older brothers in the battle line, or even volunteer his services as "Armour Bearer" again. It may be that Jesse now understands the anointing and is keeping David away from the notice of Saul. We cannot be clear on these things. The attitude of the brothers to David is not warm at all. They are rough to him and turn away from him when he calls them to stand up to Goliath. Family dynamic has possibly been affected by David's anointing by Samuel. David does not appear to come from a close and loving home.

1 SAMUEL 17:1-25

17:1 Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephesdammim. **2** And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. **3** And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them. **4** And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. **5** And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. **6** And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. **7** And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him. **8** And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. **9** If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. **10** And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together. **11** When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid. **12** Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name was Jesse; and he had eight sons: and the man went among men for an old man in the days of Saul. **13** And the three eldest sons of Jesse went and followed Saul to the battle: and the names of his three sons that went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next unto him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. **14** And David was the youngest: and the three eldest followed Saul. **15** But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem. **16** And the Philistine drew near morning and

evening, and presented himself forty days. 17 And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp of thy brethren; 18 And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge. 19 Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. 20 And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle. 21 For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army. 22 And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren. 23 And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard them. 24 And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid. 25 And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. The Philistines have moved quickly to place themselves between Shochoh and Azekah on one side of the valley of Elah. From the language here the Philistines have taken the two towns named and put their inhabitants to the sword. The flanks of the Philistine Army have the burning ruins of these two Israelite towns as their ends. They are drawn up in battle array and stand on the hill line with the Israelite army hastily called together and standing on the hill line opposite. The Valley of Elah is between the two armies.

The army that first enters the valley and tries to attack the other up hill is at a major disadvantage and so neither well matched army moves. The first to move in such situations would normally be defeated. It is an impasse. The Philistines decide to use the device of the champion to fight for their army. This was a common device used by the proto-Greek peoples, but where no blood ties existed between the peoples it would rarely lead to any lasting peace treaty. The probable death of all the people of Shochoh and Azekah also mitigates against any deals with the Philistines. They want absolute domination of Israel, with the Israelites their vassals, as they were before Saul's first victory a few years before.

The Philistine Army is determined to conquer Israel and its direction of march this time is straight towards Bethlehem, and that makes it incredible that Jesse has not sent all his sons to the front, for a loss in battle here means his house and land is taken and his family is wiped out. Is he holding back the majority of his sons as reserve soldiers to fight in the local area perhaps?

Verses 4 – 7. The sheer size of this man Goliath is impressive. He stands, even if the short cubit measurement is used at around eight feet high. He is dressed exactly as we see the proto-Greek heroes in Homer's day, with bronze helmet, bronze greaves protecting his shins, and a great round shield of beaten bronze. He would shine like the sun itself when he faced the East, as he does here. He speaks each morning, and the light from his shield facing the rising sun would allow his shield bearer to blind the Israelites on the opposite ridge, and effectively "spot light" them. Each morning he could shine the reflected light from his shield and hit the face of every man in the opposite army and force them to turn their heads away. In the evening he could get the sun shining directly into the eyes of the Israelites so they are forced to squint into the sun as they listen to him.

Psychologically this man has them appearing like cowards before they even decide what to do. His armour also has an Assyrian touch, with the scale armour of his long shirt, which like chain mail, covers his chest and back down to the knees. The Philistines have likely picked up this variety in armour plating from their contacts with the Assyrians, when they invaded what is now Turkey and fought their way down the Mediterranean Coast around 1200 BC. Its weight is set at the round figure of 3000 shekels of bronze. This would place it at around 38.5 KGs. A man who has incredible strength with his eight foot height would have no trouble wearing this and fighting in it, and anything but the largest spear, thrown at the highest velocity would not even dent this armour plating.

His spear head weight is set at around 17 pounds, or 7.7 KGs, and the shaft of the spear is like a weavers beam. He is carrying a small tree with a serious axe type spear point on its tip! This is a very frightening man-mountain! Humanly speaking he cannot be beaten, except by one who has god/demonic-like qualities like a Ulysses, Hector, or Achilles, but he can be felled by one who listens to the real God, and David will see this immediately.

Verses 8 – 10. Goliath sets his feet firmly on the ground and drawing himself up to his full height he lets the sun hit his gigantic frame and he speaks defiantly to Israel. The purpose of the champion was to insult, abuse, and challenge his enemies to surrender. It was a game of psychological warfare and the winner was meant to take all. He is the best warrior the Philistines have had in over 200 years and they are proud of him. They are relaxed in his ability to over-awe and cover the Israelites into surrender. He is their answer to Samson of older days. Judges 14ff.

The Philistines are however too relaxed in their trust in this man, for he is just a man, even though he is the biggest and the strongest ever seen. He deliberately defies the Army of Israel, insulting them for their cowardice in not fighting against him. In doing this he has not attacked and defied Israel alone, but he has insulted Israel's God. He does understand this, for he is a pagan, and they believed that the defeat of a people was also the defeat of their god. He has forgotten the events surrounding the Ark, as he would have been a youngster at the time, but he forgets history to his detriment here, for he insults the God of history. Psalms 2:1-5, 11-12, 8:3-4, 33:10, 46:10, 135:13-18, Jeremiah 10:2-11, Acts 4:24-30.

Verses 11 – 16. The words of verse eleven are sad to read for they betray just how far from fellowship with the Lord Saul and the Army of Israel truly is. Instead of being righteously angry at the insult to God given, and then prayerful, they lose their minds with fear. This illustrates a vitally important doctrinal principle; in places of great pressure, we are either stabilised in our minds by Bible doctrines, or we lose our minds with fear. If we are not constantly taking the Word in and applying it we forget the truths that alone will stabilize when pressures come. We are called to live with Christ in the filling of the Holy Spirit, firm and secure in our doctrine saturated minds, in the power and plan of God, not spend our time in “panic palace”.

Panic in the soul is caused by temptations and testing situations overwhelming the truth that holds us stable within. If we do not have the truth as our strength, we will be knocked about by every wind of adversity. James 1:6-8. We are called to STAND for truth, and stand upon the secure foundation that is Christ, not bend under pressure. Romans 5:2, 14:4, 1 Corinthians 16:13, Ephesians 6:11-14, Philippians 4:1, Colossians 4:12, 1 Thessalonians 3:8. The soldier only stands in the strength that he has within his soul, and in the armour provided by his Lord. We must have our armour on and be in prayerful contact with our Lord. Saul has been away from the Lord for some time now and he has lost his spiritual discernment.

We are now reminded that David is not with the army at this point and that Jesse is very old by this time and has kept five of his eight boys back home with him, even though his area of the land is directly threatened by the enemy. It may be that the older boys are home to defend the farm and town against cavalry scouting and raiding attacks by the Philistines. But to have David still out with the sheep at such a time is inexplicable, especially given that a hired servant is easily found to do the work once Jesse decides to send David to see what has taken so long in the battle field.

Goliath has been challenging the army of Israel for forty days now, and it is still stalemated, with neither army prepared to place itself at a disadvantage and attack first. Each army does daily posturing and advance and retreat manoeuvres but neither commits to the full attack, and neither can outflank their enemy or seize the initiative with a night attack. Neither side appears to have the will to execute any serious assault upon the other. This weakness is the clue to the mental attitude of the Philistines as well as to the Israelites; both are in fact very psychologically vulnerable. It is psychological warfare, and Saul is keeping his army active each day with skirmishing. They have not lost, or gained the initiative, and although mentally they are succumbing to the threats of Goliath, they still have good discipline and reasonable morale.

Verses 17 – 21. David is sent to his brothers with a few bags of wheat for preparing meals, and with ten baked loaves for immediate consumption. Ten cheeses are also sent to the captain of the Judah forces as a payment for good treatment of Jesse’s three sons. This is a wonderful glimpse of the favouritism and payment system for promotion that operated in most armies through until the nineteenth century of our own era. Men were promoted by bravery and also by gifts received by their commanders. David is tasked with gathering news and with receiving his brother’s pledge/assurance of good behaviour to uphold the family’s honour. David heads to the battlefield, which is under a day’s walk away from the family farm.

The writer speaks as if battle is joined each day, and it was common for skirmishes to develop at different places on the field, but for each army to hold its line and be looking for a break in the line of the other to exploit. Both armies skirmish and men die daily, but both armies hold good discipline. Saul is still a great commander to hold his army’s morale still intact after forty days of this level of psychological pressure. The men are fearful but not beaten, and while Saul has run out of ideas he is still ready to fight, and holds his men ready and disciplined. The Philistines know Saul is a great commander and do not risk a full attack either. Sadly Saul is still not praying, nor seeking the counsel of Samuel!

David arrives at the trench/ditch defence behind the army’s position at around the time the army is surging forward for their daily skirmish and posturing. All the soldiers are crying aloud their battle cries trying to entice the Philistines to move forward far enough for Israel to have the initiative and finish the battle with a defeat of their enemies. From the two points made in verse twenty we can see the good leadership of Saul, in that he has a defensive trench dug behind his army to hinder any outflanking cavalry movement of the enemy, and that his men are still energised and ready for the fight after forty days of psychological pressure from Goliath.

Psychological studies of the effect of battlefield pressures and their impact upon men began in the American Civil War, but Psychiatrists became involved in World War 1 and 2, and studies from both conflicts indicated that an army that is passively kept on the receiving end of constant pressure in the field will have up to 90% psychological casualties after fifty days of constant pressure. This means 90% of their men are in no mental state for fighting. It was this fact that determined the strategy used in the first Gulf War in 1991, when “Desert Shield” kept the Iraqi Army under pressure for 51 days and then the assault, “Desert Storm”, was unleashed upon them. Few soldiers of the Iraqi Army fought after 51 days on the receiving end of that level of psychological pressure.

Saul has however kept his men active, not passive, and he has kept morale up; this man is a great general, but he is out of ideas on how to deal with Goliath, and he still has not yet tried powerful and persistent prayer, nor called for God’s prophet and he will not, nor seek the priest’s advice! **Psalms 4:4-8, 5:8-12, 9:9-10, Proverbs 3:1-7, 1 Peter 5:5-9.**

Verses 22 – 25. The posturing takes a few minutes and then the two armies settle into their day long vigil waiting for the other to break their line. The men are standing at ease now in their lines, and so David enters the battalion of Judah and greets his brothers, who stand together in their company. After a few pleasantries are said Goliath begins his daily speech and his insulting words reach David’s ears.

David will have entered the line from behind, and will be towards the back of the men when he hears the Philistines words, and so he won't see him initially until the other men around his brothers open their line a little to let him see this man. The sad fact recorded here is that the line doesn't open to let David through; the army of Israel actually recoils from Goliath and falls back a few paces leaving David exposed at the front looking directly at Goliath. The word "fled" here doesn't mean falling back in disorder, but moving backwards, for had they panicked and fled the battle was lost and the Philistines would have surged up the slope and slaughtered them all.

The Israelite soldiers around David then speak to him as he watches the show that Goliath puts on. The soldiers report that anyone killing Goliath will receive great wealth, marry the king's daughter, and have his family exempted from all taxation. The stakes are very high indeed, and it is very likely that such a rash promise was made by Saul. This was the equivalent of a prize at the Olympic Games, and so was not an unusual "prize" for kings to offer for a great task. A champion of a people was set up financially for life after one great deed. David doesn't see the reward however; he sees the insult to God in Goliath's actions and words. David is focused on God's purposes, not human success.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Military preparedness and tough training are essential for all successful armies. Saul is a great commander and his army is tough, and well disciplined. They have not broken after forty days of constant pressure and fear. They are fearful of Goliath but still have hope that they can win. They lack only confidence in God, and that is the only confidence that upholds us in the hard places. Let us be challenged by Saul's Army in two things. Firstly let us be challenged to be as physically fit and strong as we can be in an age appropriate manner. Secondly let us be strong in Bible doctrine, because with physical and spiritual strength we will achieve all the Lord wants us to.

2. David is positioned in the palace and then loses this position to another. He is not dismayed, but simply heads back home and tends sheep. He learns humility and waits until the Lord lifts him up to greater things. Let us learn from David and be servants of the Lord in all things and places we are led into. If we are cast down at times, let us relax and seek the work the Lord has called us to until lifted up again. Let us relax in the plan and learn and serve in every place we find ourselves.

3. At times we meet "Giant Despair" in our life. There are Goliaths at times on our path through life. These are troubles that no human agency can handle. In such situations we are to trust the Lord and rest upon prayer, as we see David doing in the Psalms. David's greatness is seen in this part of his mental attitude. He saw things God's way and dealt with things through prayer, not human wisdom alone.

THE BELIEVER'S CORRECT MENTAL ATTITUDE

1. Definition: Attitude or Mental attitude is the state of mind where the mind is set on a course of action on the basis of the whole function and thinking of the soul.

2. Every believer faces the inner conflict of divine versus human viewpoint. These two attitudes are at war in humanity in human history from the time of the fall. (Isaiah 55:7-9)

3. We are commanded to have divine viewpoint in our souls not the viewpoint of Satan (worldliness). 2 Corinthians 1:7, 10:5. (Via Doctrine in the Soul)

3. Attitude determines both the life and character of a person - what you think is what you are (Proverbs 23:7)

4. As Christians we are commanded to have our thinking in tune with the mind of Christ. Gods plan for our lives calls for a new attitude in our souls, a new viewpoint, without any human viewpoint or mental attitude sin (1Corinthians 2:16, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 Romans 12:2, Philippians 2:5, 2 Timothy 1:7)

5. Fellowship within a church is based on believers all being in tune with what the Bible teaches. Philippians 2:2.

6. Knowledge of the Bible (the mind of Christ, 1 Corinthians 2:16) and control by the Holy Spirit renews the mind of the believer, giving divine viewpoint. (Romans 12:2)

7. The right mental attitude produces joy (Philippians 2:2), confidence (2 Corinthians 5:1,6,8), stability (Isaiah 26:3-4, Philippians 4:7, 2 Thessalonians 2:2), true giving (2 Corinthians 9:7), love (1 Corinthians 13:5)

8. Human viewpoint is called worldliness. (Romans 12:2, Colossians 3:2)

9. Evil is what you think as you are following Satan's policy. Matthew 9:4, Galatians 6:3. Mental attitude sins produce self induced misery. (Proverbs 15:13)

10. Without clear thinking there is conflict in the mind of the believer. Isaiah 55:6-9, James 1:7-8.

11. True stability of Character comes only this way. Philippians 4:7, 2 Thessalonians 2:2.

12. Giving is a mental attitude. 2 Corinthians 9:7. Love is a mental attitude. 1 Corinthians 13: Deuteronomy 6:5,10:12.
13. Worldliness is also a mental attitude: It is all non-grace thinking i.e. Anti Gods Plan, Colossians 3:2.
14. Confidence in service and living generally flows from having "Divine Viewpoint" which has other advantages such as:
 - [a] Stability in life - James 1:8
 - [b] Prosperity of soul - Philippians 4:7
 - [c] Giving to the Lord - 2 Corinthians 9:7
 - [d] Spiritual rather than worldly - Romans 12:2, Colossians 3:2
 - [e] Purity rather than evil - Matthew 9:4
 - [f] No arrogance - Galatians 6:1-5.
 - [g] Inner beauty - 1 Timothy 2:9,10,15.

STABILITY

1. God is able to keep us and bless us (Ephesians 3:20, Hebrews 7:25).
2. Stability comes when we know God; when we have grown up in his Word. Maturity brings with it stability (2Peter 3:18, 2Timothy 1:12).
3. The alternative to a stable life of faith is to be tossed about by every pressure; this occurs when there is no doctrinal application in the life (James 1:6, Ephesians 4:14, Revelation 3:8).
4. Believers need stability to stand fast against the wiles of Satan who is a danger to those with no doctrine: We are told to:
 - a) Stand fast in the word 1Corinthians 16:13.
 - b) Stand fast in our liberty Galatians 5:1 cf. Romans 14:1ff, 8:9-13.
 - c) Stand fast in one spirit (no pettiness) Philippians 1:27.
 - d) Stand fast in the Lord (in fellowship) Philippians 4:1.
 - e) Stand fast in doctrine 2 Thessalonians 2:5, 16,17.
5. Strength and stability comes in a close relationship with the Lord. By faith we stand: 2 Corinthians 1:24, Psalm 59:17, 62:7, 144:1.
6. God has supreme power at His fingertips for us. Isaiah 59:1.
7. Our faith should stand secure in this power, for we are kept by it in all things, therefore we should be confident. 1Corinthians 2:5, 1Peter 1:5, John 16:33.
8. God is able to make us stand through the work of the Holy Spirit upon the word in our lives. Romans 14:4, Jude 24.
9. Strength and stability come from the impact of the Holy Spirit's work upon the word in our life as we believe and apply it, e.g. Sarah Hebrews 11:11, Paul 2 Corinthians 12:8-10.
10. Profile of the stable believer under pressure 2 Peter 1:3-16.

Notes

1 SAMUEL 17:26-58

26 And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God? 27 And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him. 28 And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. 29 And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause? 30 And he turned from him toward another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner. 31 And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul: and he sent for him. 32 And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. 33 And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. 34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: 35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. 36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. 37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee. 38 And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. 39 And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him. 40 And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine. 41 And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him. 42 And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. 43 And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field. 45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. 46 This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. 47 And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands. 48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came, and drew nigh to meet David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. 49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. 50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David. 51 Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled. 52 And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou come to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron. 53 And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they spoiled their tents. 54 And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent. 55 And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell. 56 And the king said, Enquire thou whose son the stripling is. 57 And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. 58 And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 26 – 29. David specifically asks again what will be given to the man who kills this Philistine. He makes sure the nature of the reward so he can see what Saul is offering, but then he dismisses this from his mind. The key concern of David emerges after he is clear what the stakes are; that this Philistine “reproaches” Israel and Israel’s God. He sees that Goliath is insulting the army of the living God. The men around about David repeat that Saul will reward the man slaying Goliath with great rewards.

David keeps emphasising aloud the great insult to God that Goliath represents. His oldest brother hears his words and tells him to “shut up”. Eliab’s words indicate great resentment towards David. He clearly believes David is too big for his boots! He believes that David has an inflated view of his power and destiny. His attitude is similar to Joseph’s brothers regarding his destiny. Genesis 37. He directly accuses David of pride and arrogance, and then despises his work as a shepherd, indicating that in his opinion David is not good for anything else other than caring for a few mangy sheep. There is no loving bond between brothers in this family of Jesse. It is an example of 180 degree logic – it is true of Eliab.

David is an encouragement to all who have been bullied in their childhood, for clearly the older boys did not respect, value or protect this youngest son of Jesse, and possibly he was sent to the sheep to protect him from his brother's abuse. Eliab's words indicate that he believes that David has just come to see good men killed on a battlefield, and David rightly resents the accusation, for that is not his aim, nor the purpose of his errand. He was sent, and he knows God would have him here, and he stands on the truth of his words; Goliath is insulting the God of Israel.

Verses 30 – 32. David turns from Eliab to others around him and repeats his observation. David is speaking from a spiritual perspective, but the men of the army are thinking as carnal men and do not see his point and tell him to be quiet also. David is not put off and keeps voicing his concern that God is being insulted. His words are reported to Saul and he is taken before the king.

Well before he is taken to the king David has formed the settled belief, based on Holy Spirit leading, that he ought to place himself in the battle and fight Goliath. God has been reminding him of his previous encounters with a lion and a bear in the open fields. He has been led quietly within his soul to the belief that he is here for this reason, and that in God's strength he will be victorious, just as he was with the animals. He sees Goliath as simply a large annoying talking animal, and he knows that he is here at this point in history for a reason – and God's reason he believes is to kill Goliath.

David has been listening to the enemy of God, but far more importantly, he has been listening to God within his heart. He bluntly tells Saul that he will fight this Philistine, and he has the settled calm of a man who knows his destiny, and he impresses Saul enough to be given the opportunity to do this thing.

Verses 33 – 40. Saul is unwilling to let David stand against this Philistine because of his age. David is still in his late teens, and this Philistine has been a fighter since his youngest days. The greatest Samurai Miyamoto Musashi fought his first bout and killed his opponent at age fourteen, and Alexander the Great was just over seventeen when he rides out to defeat the Persian Empire, so age is no barrier to performance, or to excellence. The pilots of the Battle of Britain in 1940 were mostly around 19-21 years of age when they fought the German Air Force to a stand still. We often over estimate the importance of age, and while experience is vital to performance, it can come in a range of areas, and teen age sporting "combat" can and does often prepare for the real thing. Rugby, and running prepare for battle.

David is ready to face Goliath, and it is without any arrogance that he reports this to Saul and tells him of the bear and the lion. Note that he killed the bear with the sheep still in its mouth by attacking it when it wasn't ready for him, but he killed the lion by grabbing the animal by its mane, and this takes great strength and power, as well as courage, to achieve this and walk away. Notice that the Lord allowed him to kill the bear in an easier way than the lion, and so built his courage and his skills in the process.

David then finishes his initial talk with Saul by rehearsing the central point that has so infuriated his brothers and some of the other soldiers. He is offended at this Philistine's attitude towards God, and he sees him as an evil pagan ready for hell, not a threat to God to all. He expresses total confidence in God's ability to rescue him out of the hands of the Philistine, just as he did out of the hands of the bear and the lion.

Saul is impressed with David's courage, and perhaps is challenged spiritually by the truths David has spoken. He gives him permission to attack the Philistine, and this was potentially placing the kingdom and the morale of the army in David's hands, so it was no small matter. To lose the combat of champions in a challenge like this one was to lose the battle itself and the kingdom with it, so Saul was placing his own destiny upon David's shoulders.

He offers his own armour and weapons to David. Firstly this is for David's protection, but secondly so that he can share in the renown if David is successful for his weaponry can take some of the credit for victory. Saul also knows he cannot use his armour if David loses, for the battle is then lost, and with it Saul's own life is forfeited, or he becomes a slave or client king to the Philistines again. Some have argued that he casts David into the champion role as an expendable youth, and wouldn't honour the champion agreement, any more than the Philistines would have. This may be true, for he has not even bothered to know his name before he sends him out. (Verse 55 below). We are best not to jump to a false conclusion here for Saul's motives and actions are at best "mixed".

David tries on the armour, which he knows from his days as the "Armour Bearer", but the armour is far too heavy and large for his frame and height. Saul is a very tall man and David would find either the chain mail dragging along the ground or his movements restricted by the weight and shape of the breastplate. He also has not practised in this armour or with this weaponry, and he knows that victory goes to the one who is used to their weapons. You cannot just pick up a sword and wield it; it must become an extension of your own arm. Weapons must be a part of you, or they will be useless to you, and even work against you. David understands the importance of balance and familiarity and tells the king that he cannot use his armour or weapons, but that he will trust in what he is an expert in. David has a sling shot, and these weapons were lethal in the hands of an expert. David has become an expert with this weapon over many years.

The Greek armies all had slingers who worked ahead of their main heavily armed "hoplite" troops, armed as was Goliath. These men could throw a stone at great velocity with extreme accuracy into the forehead of an enemy soldier and bring him down. This is what David has been practising to do for over ten years and he knows he is good with this weapon. He does not doubt his expertise with his weapons. God is using a well prepared young man here.

He takes his staff in his hand to fend off any blows should he need to, and distract Goliath, and he takes his sling and his shepherd's leather bag, into which he places five well chosen stones for slinging. There are five members of Goliath's

family in the battle line up and David is ready for each one. He is not concerned about missing Goliath, but takes one stone for each male member of Goliath's family. He is ready to kill them all, and when we face evil men we must be **ready to take them all out** when one falls. In any battle against the satanic it is total victory that is required.

He takes these stones from the brook at the bottom of the valley in the sight of both the armies. None will guess at this point that he is the challenger of Goliath, but probably believe he is a demented shepherd who has wandered onto the battlefield. He has the element of complete surprise over the enemy who initially ignores his approach. David also must express absolute faith in God here, for an archer amongst the Philistines could easily have loosed an accurate arrow and killed him outright. David is unprotected from arrows. David is walking in faith and so he is safe, for he is where God wants him and he is doing the Lord's work.

Verses 41 – 47. The Philistine now knows that David is the challenger and he draws closer to see him clearly. Some considerable distance separates the armies and Goliath also may be short sighted. Those with gigantism often have eye sight problems, and in days before glasses, all short sighted men would need to close with their enemies to really clearly see them. Goliath needs to get quite close before he sees David clearly, and when he does he despises him and insults and curses him in the name of the pagan gods. He tells the young man before him that he will feed his body to the buzzards. Goliath sees a young man, handsome, almost pretty, and red headed and sunburnt. From the outside appearance there is nothing to indicate a warrior, just a country boy, used to the farm life.

It is dangerous to judge by outside appearances. The bravest and most experienced soldiers I have ever met were not big men, and if you met them on the street you would not have said of them, "there goes a mighty warrior". The greatest commando I have ever met, who completed over sixty jumps into pitched commando battles in Africa and personally killed over forty men in close combat, was of small stature, and would not have been picked for a rugby team except as the half back, yet I would have followed him into battle anywhere he went. He was a mighty warrior, just like David.

This was the man that Goliath saw in David, but he didn't value him, for he thought in terms of thuggery, and not true bravery and skilled fighting. It is of interest that when archaeologists found the skulls of the kings of Mycenae, and had them taken from their tombs, they got a surprise. The heads of these great men of the days of Homer were rebuilt using the physiological knowledge of the muscles of the face, and their appearance was that of the criminals of today. Each of the great kings of Mycenae looked like a rogue from the criminal records of the modern police. These kings were of the same stock as the Philistines. The men of Homer's world were evil thugs who valued nothing but murder and what it brought them by way of booty. David will speak, probably in Akkadian, the common language of trade of the day.

Goliath is a thug and an evil violent man. He hated God and all that was good, and has the arrogance of one who sees nothing other than his own strength. Satan is the originator of narcissism, and has a total self centred arrogance. Ezekiel 28:1ff. This was his weakness, for he under valued David and left his armour bearer carrying his shield and possibly his helmet also, behind and advanced foolishly upon David to deal with him with his spear, and so his face was uncovered.

David makes it clear what the real issues are behind the battle here this day. He explains to the pagan, and his entire army, that it is God he has insulted and it is God who will deliver him into his hands. David tells him that in God's power and name he will kill him, behead him and deliver the entire Philistine army to the birds of the heavens to eat. David makes it clear that **this battle is about who God is**, not who he and Goliath are. David tells all the assembled armies that he will fight in God's strength alone and the victory he will receive he will obtain from the Lord alone.

The purposes of God will be accomplished and all there present will know that the Lord does not deliver with spear and sword but with His mighty power in accordance with His plan. The Philistines, like all pagans, ancient and modern, have a great weakness in this area of their belief system; they believe in the "fates", and this means if their champion falls they feel it is an "omen" of bad tidings for them all. Their morale is tied up in their champion's fate, not in any real and stabilising faith in their gods. Only faith in the true God gives stability in such places as David finds himself this day.

Verses 48 – 53. David has the right approach which is to move quickly and nimbly, making himself a difficult target for a spear throw and closes with Goliath quickly. As he runs forward Goliath moves forward well past his armour bearer and tries to work out what David is doing, while David quietly fits a stone to his sling and circles it around his head faster and faster, and lets it go at the right range, striking Goliath dead centre of his forehead and causing a depressed fracture of his skull. He falls to the ground in a heap and in a second more David is on top of him. He does not have a sword himself and so draws Goliath's sword and beheads the giant and holds the head up by the hair to the enemy army and then to his own people.

At this point the Philistine's false pagan belief in the "fates" fails them, and no archer kills David with a single arrow, as he could have. They all cry aloud and panic, and the Israelites surge forward to pursue their enemies, who now flee for their very lives. All the stragglers are cut down by the side of the road to Ekron and Gath. The Israelites pursue the remnants of the army to the very city gates, which are slammed shut on the last stragglers, who are cut down within sight of their own walls. The Israelites spoil the enemy tents of all their goods, but also, and more importantly, every dead Philistine presents them with one or more iron weapons for the army of Israel.

Verses 54 – 58. These verses are strange at first sight, for they tell us that Abner, who must have seen the young David play the harp, and kitted him out as the honorary "Armour Bearer" at that time, does not recognise him at all now. It also tells us that Saul has not even sought his name before sending him out to fight the Giant. It is only as he sees the young man victorious that he asks Abner to discover who the young man's father is and so identify him. It may

be that something about David makes Saul remember the young harpist. Young men through their late teens grow significantly and change face and body shape, and often the changes in them in one year can shock you, so it is not that unusual that David has changed, but it tells us that Saul is self focused and people around him do not rate his attention. Saul is a narcissist and to such people others are just "wall paper" in their world, as only they are important.

David meanwhile has carried the head of the giant back to camp, and taken the armour of Goliath back to his tent. The head will be eventually taken and set up outside Jerusalem, which is still at this time in Jebusite hands, probably as a sign of what awaits these people when they are defeated by Israel. Prophecied to be taken. Exodus 15:17-18.

The armour will be placed firstly in his brother's tent, and then their home in Bethlehem, although the sword will later be presented to the tabernacle and kept by the priests there where the treasures of the nation are stored once more. I can only imagine the thoughts and actions of the brothers when they receive the shock of their young brother being the hero of the war.

Saul's reference to David as a "stripling" indicates that David is in his late teens, but also that Saul does not want to give too much credit to this young man for his great feat. It is the next sign that this man's character is spiritually and morally unchanging, and he will go back on his promises of great reward to the slayer of Goliath. This failure to reward David is truly sad for his house, for had he rewarded David fully and allowed him to be his replacement his descendants would have stood amongst Israel, even today, rather than be eliminated from history. Choices = consequences....

Abner brings the young man into Saul's tent, and the Philistine's head is still in his hand at this point. Saul asks him for his full name and David tells him that he is Jesse's son. Now the king will know that this is the boy who played the harp for him and was his armour bearer at that time, and that he has grown into the saviour of Israel on this day. Like all narcissistic men however Saul will be threatened by David's expertise rather than utilize him fully. The character of leaders is shown when their underlings excel, for good leaders reward and promote excellence, but personality disordered leaders/managers will undermine and eliminate all excellence beneath them, so they are not threatened by it.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. When an enemy attacks the work of the Lord and insults God's people he or she attacks God. Learn to see things God's way, rather than man's way. The Lord will bring all His enemies into derision in His good time. Rest in the Lord's plan and seek only one thing for yourself; that is the right place to stand to obey the Lord in that test. David has been hearing Goliath, but more, he has been quietly hearing God and he listens to God in all things. He is sure of himself when he meets Saul. Let us be with God in prayer well before we are presented before men to do any great thing.

2. David is safe from early death by positioning himself exactly where he is meant to be in the Plan of God. By standing against the Philistine he is standing for God as the Lord wants him to. David is safe from any other form of attack while he does this, and so are we when we stand for God against the enemy forces of Satan. Let us be where we need to be and relax in the Lord's care.

3. Beware Narcissism, for it comes directly from Satan's throne. Beware of any self centeredness in others for they are dangerous people and will destroy all organizations they lead. Also beware of any traits within yourself that blind you to other's excellence within the organization, for if you let jealousy get hold you will lose the precious reality of God's person, plan, and power for you. It is in God's plan alone that there is security and stability for the mind and body. David rests in the certainty that, "the battle is the Lord's". Let us be always thinking about our position in Christ, so that we stand where God wants only, for then we stand in the place of David.

4. David is sure of himself and his ability with his weapon. He is not hesitant, but boldly attacks. When the battle starts it is best to head into action with speed as soon as your direction and goals are clear. Hesitation allows the enemy to out think you, but confident action will lead to victory if you walk and run with the Lord. Let us move with confidence in anything we do, and if we lack the confidence of the Lord, then let us not move at all, but pray for certainty. God calls us to act boldly, and we can always do that if we have been listening to God and know His Word and thereby His will for us.

REFLECTION UPON SPIRITUALITY-CARNALITY

1. All Christians have the Holy Spirit indwelling them. When we allow Him to control our lives, we are said to be "filled with the Spirit" or "walking in the Spirit".

2. The filling of the Holy Spirit can be lost by
a) Grieving the Spirit - by sin
b) Quenching the Spirit - by not submitting to His leading
c) This is called being carnal, or controlled by the flesh, the old sin nature.

3. The filling of the Holy Spirit can be regained by
a) confessing sin, (1 John 1:9)
b) surrendering your life to God, (Romans 12:1-2).
c) This is called being spiritual, or controlled by the Holy Spirit.

4. Only the Holy Spirit in us can produce good works acceptable to God - anything in our own strength is unacceptable (Romans 8:8-9, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

5. The spiritual believer

a) Imitates God. (Ephesians 5:1, 1 John 3:9)

b) To glorify Christ. (John 7:39, John 16:14)

c) Fulfills the Law. (Romans 8:2-4, Romans 13:8)

6. In the Bible the human race is divided in three Categories:-

[a] Natural Man - A person born physically alive, but not regenerated. He may be highly sophisticated, civilised, gentle and kind, but is completely ignorant of any spiritual phenomena. (1 Corinthians 2:14) Equivalent to the cold person in the church in Laodicea.

[b] Carnal Man - A person regenerated or born again but living his life under the power of his old sin nature. Prolonged activity in this area produces a Christian who is still a baby. (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). Equivalent to the lukewarm person in the church of Laodicea.

[c] Spiritual Man - A person regenerated and living generally in the power of the Holy Spirit. He discerns the difference between the things of God and man. (1 Corinthians 2:11-13) He has fellowship with God in his daily life. (Ephesians 5:18-20) Equivalent to the hot person in the church of Laodicea.

7. Carnality

[a] The believer possesses an Old Sin Nature after salvation (1 John 1:8, Romans 7:14,15).

[b]. The Old Sin Nature is desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9).

[c]. The believer under the control of the Old Sin Nature is called carnal (1 Corinthians 3:1-3, Romans 7:14).

[d]. The Old Sin Nature frustrates bona fide production in the life of the believer (Romans 7:15).

[e]. The Old Sin Nature is acquired at the point of physical birth (Psalm 51:5).

[f]. We are therefore considered spiritually dead at the point of physical birth (Romans 5:12).

[g]. The Old Sin Nature has several facets: areas of weakness produces sins, areas of strength produces human good. It has trends towards asceticism or lasciviousness. In many cases asceticism is considered to be spirituality.

[h] The Old Sin Nature is not found in the resurrection body.

Notes

CHAPTER 18**INTRODUCTION**

Friendship is a rare and special thing. I say it is rare advisedly, because a deep friendship where the souls are “knit together” is a rare thing indeed, and a person is blessed if they have a hand full of such friends in a life time. Today the term is “soul mate” and refers to both male and females with whom we are “knit together”. This means we share common values and desires, and we can share all things of the heart without effort or danger with this person.

This sort of friend knows our heart, for good and bad, and they love us as we are. Such a friendship between two great men is unusual, especially when there is a difference of age of possibly ten or more years, and when they are rivals for the kingship. Jonathan is the next king after Saul by lineage, yet the words of Samuel recorded in 1 Samuel 15:28, tell us that Jonathan is not to rule, and 1 Samuel 16:13, tells us that David is to rule. Gradually Jonathan sees this, and it does not affect his attitude to David, indeed I believe from his later words and actions that he would have passed the kingdom over to him had he the opportunity.

Jonathan is loyal to his father and will die with him upon Mt Gilboa, but until the last day of his life he loves, admires, and respects David, and he does all he can to protect him from the evil thoughts and actions of his own father. This chapter describes the start of one of the great friendships of history, and we know it goes into eternity. If David has an XO for the Millennium I pick it will be Jonathan. This is a very sad chapter however, as Jonathan would have given his crown to David, but his father's evil brings the entire house of Saul down, and the other members of Saul's family will conspire later and all surviving males, bar one, will be eliminated from history.

1 SAMUEL 18:1-30

18:1 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. 3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. 4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. 5 And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants. 6 And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. 7 And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. 8 And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? 9 And Saul eyed David from that day and forward. 10 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. 11 And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice. 12 And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul. 13 Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. 14 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him. 15 Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. 16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them. 17 And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD's battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him. 18 And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king? 19 But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife. 20 And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. 21 And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son in law in the one of the twain. 22 And Saul commanded his servants, saying, Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king's son in law. 23 And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son in law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed? 24 And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David. 25 And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. 26 And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son in law: and the days were not expired. 27 Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son in law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife. 28 And Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal Saul's daughter loved him. 29 And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually. 30 Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 5. As Saul and Abner speak with David, they do so in the presence of the entire army faction within the court, and one of those present is Jonathan, the king's oldest son. As Jonathan watches this younger man he identifies strongly with him as a man and as a fellow believer in God. He loves him as a brother, and so David finds a brother who is true to him to replace his natural brothers who are unworthy of the name. Many of us face this.

It is a principle of life in Christ Jesus, that God provides for all we need, and often that is an alternative family to our family of origin. David has a dysfunctional family and he must grow beyond it or they will hold him back from the path God has for him. At times believers find themselves in this situation and must move past their own family and find a new one within the church. It is not wrong to walk away from old friends and genetic family, and at times we must do so, or they will hold us bound to our old lives rather than our new one in the Lord.

God provides His chosen people with real family in their relationship with Him. We will find over time that the closest friends we have are those of the Lord's provision within the family of God. Few natural brothers and sisters will be as close to us as are those who share our eternal values and destiny. Your true brothers and sisters are your family in the Lord Jesus. Jesus affirms this and so do we need to. **Matthew 12:46-50.**

Do not be led astray by some of the nonsense that is around today about families. Some preachers teach that we need to have great fellowship, and spend most of our time with our family of origin. In David's case, and perhaps in your own, this may not be possible without spiritual compromise, and without being side tracked from your life path before God. Follow the example of David and quietly walk away from the old pagan, or carnal, family home and find God's path for yourself and walk it faithfully where ever it takes you.

Saul enters David now permanently into his Army and court. 1 Samuel 10:26, 13:2. He is not now to return home again, but has his adult path as a soldier and courtier set before him. Youth or old age was no barrier to acceptance in the ancient world, for they looked at the person's natural ability and the power of the presence of God's Spirit upon them, never the chronological age. 1 Timothy 4:7-15. Jonathan has proved his generalship, and he is possibly only in his thirties at this time, and David at under twenty becomes a captain and exercises Holy Spirit empowered leadership and wins all skirmishes he is asked to fight. His men trust him because they can see that he walks with the counsel of God and all he does prospers. Once again in World War 2 many "Captains/Majors/Commanders" were 21 or 22.

Men in war seek the leadership of men they consider "lucky", and they are very good at spotting such people, because their lives depend upon it. David's men love him because he leads them to victory and he keeps them safe. Jonathan loves him because he sees in David the nobility of character that is lacking in his own family, and David loves Jonathan for his steadfast character and loyal love. Both find in each other the nobility and character that is lacking in their own siblings.

Jonathan provides David with all he needs to stand before the court as the nobleman he is in his soul. With Jonathan's help he leaves the sheep skin wearing shepherd behind and becomes the nobleman. We must be ready at different times in our life to cast off the comfortable and familiar past and embrace the future direction into which the Lord is propelling us. Let us be always focused forward on where we are going, rather than ruled by nostalgia and always be looking backwards.

We are to heed the words of the Lord and embrace the exceptional life we may be asked to live, not ever be comfortable in the ordinary and pedestrian. Too many believers will not allow the Holy Spirit to lead them out of their comfort zone. The Lord seeks His servant's total obedience, and that means being ready to go to places and do things that we may not have dreamed of before.

Verses 6 – 11. David has not been long in Saul's service when his reputation as a slayer of the Philistines outstrips Saul's own reputation. Saul is a great warrior, but since David's entry into his service he is outshone by his young captain. A really great commander rejoices when his junior officers replace him and stand in his place in renown, but Saul clings to earthly power and the temporary fame it brings. He cannot accept the word of the prophet Samuel and embrace his replacement in peace and joy, but resists the Spirit of God. The fruit of this is both his growing hatred of David, and his total rejection of the old prophet in what should have been his final years of ministry.

The women sing of David's praise and make it clear that he is their new, young, and handsome hero. David is no threat to Saul's life and kingship because of his great loyalty to Saul and his obedience to God, but Saul does not see this. He is mad with jealousy, and the danger of mental attitude sins is that they rot the mind over time. Saul literally goes mad with his jealousy and opens his life to evil thoughts and actions, but do not excuse him, nor feel sorrow, for he works hard in evil to destroy his entire family through these mental attitude sins. The Lord allows an evil spirit to afflict him as part of the divine discipline upon him to try to get him to accept David as his replacement. 1 Timothy 1:20.

Saul becomes obsessed with the thought that David will seize the kingdom from him, when the truth is God will give David the kingdom after his death. Saul's only spiritual option was to call the prophet Samuel and place himself under the will of the Lord, and accept his replacement for the benefit of the entire kingdom. Thousands will die as a result of Saul's refusal to accept the truth. He cannot stop thinking about David being better than he is and replacing him as king.

Saul is demon afflicted and when the demonic force comes upon him he "rants" like a pagan prophet. The word here in verse ten, "prophesied", is best translated "ranted and raved", or "pretended to prophesy". This is not godly utterance but

meaningless nonsense, and this is proved by his later actions of trying to pin David to the wall with a javelin twice. Jesus words are to be remembered here, "By their fruits shall you know them". Matthew 7:15-20. Satanic fruit is hatred filled. Galatians 5:16-21. When men hate and try to kill, steal, or defraud, you can be sure they are **not** spiritual!

Ecstatic utterances and fine words that sound "holy" are evidence of nothing in them selves. It is the fruit of the life of the person that proves the origin of their words and utterances. 1 John 4:1ff.

David avoids the thrown javelin twice as he plays to soothe Saul's evil and culpable madness and he returns to court each time to play again. He is loyal to this man, and he trusts in the Lord's protection of him, and he is very alert and agile. Remember, faith is never blind faith; it is always alert and utilises all the evidence that exists. David is trusting the Lord to keep him safe, as he remains alert to the javelin speeding in his direction. Prayer, alertness, training, physical fitness, and preparedness, all go together; they do not exclude one another. Nehemiah 4:4-18.

Also note that those who are afflicted by madness, and/or demonic possession, as Saul is here, are not blamed for their state by the people, but God will blame and judge him. The ancients had a very forgiving attitude to those afflicted by mental illness or demonic forces. They saw that there was something far bigger at work than just the volition of men, and they trusted in the power of the Lord God rather than abusing the people. Mental attitude sins and uncontrolled depression can drive a person quite mad, and the remedy remains the same through history; we are to draw closer to God through confession and walk with Him as David does, and so banish the thoughts of sin and eliminate depression.

Verses 12 – 16. Saul is afraid of David and his fear betrays the fact that he knows God is not with him any more. He has but one safe path, as noted above, he must send for Samuel and confess his sin and hand over the kingdom. He will not however take this godly path and save his family and nation from disaster, for he loves the trappings of the palace and seeks to live as a king all his life. He will get to do this, and then die in battle in his sixties. His family and nation suffer greatly but the Lord does not punish him too badly given his actions, but deals with him graciously, for David will himself die at not much older an age than Saul is upon Mt Gilboa.

Fear dominating a life is one sign of unresolved sin in the life, for it betrays the heart of one who does not wholly trust the Lord. Let us deal with fear whenever it crops up in our life, for it shows we have walked a little off the path of faith and are straying away from the truth of God.

1 John 4:16-19. *"16. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

17. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

18. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19. We love him, because he first loved us."

Saul now places David in charge of a thousand men and posts him away from the palace so that he doesn't have to see him often. He also posts him to the place of hottest action where he hopes that the Philistines will kill him, rather than he have to kill him, for he fears the opinion of the people. David accepts the new posting and trusts the Lord in all he does there, and he is guided into many successful skirmishes with the enemy. David wins therefore more renown and serves the people in keeping them safe from any Philistine attacks. Whenever a Philistine raiding party heads for Judah or Benjamin David intercepts them and eliminates them.

David is now really famous for his exploits and the people of all the tribes love him. Joshua 6:27, Daniel 6:3-5. David takes no risks, and serves with wisdom beyond his years, because he is Holy Spirit filled.

Verses 17 – 19. Saul's lying over the matter of his oldest daughter is an indication of his on going deceit in dealing with David. He cannot deal in a straight forward manner with David and the root cause is his rejection of God's path. When we serve the Lord with whole hearted fervour, we must remember, that those who have rejected the Lord's path for them will hate us at times. There is nothing personal in this; it is just a sign of their state of carnality or evil. Luke 6:22-27, John 15:18-25. Our response is to be David's response; we are to trust in the Lord and keep moving forward in the Eternal and Perfect Plan of God. Psalms 37:3-7.

David has humility when it comes to being son-in-law to the king. He does not believe he is worthy of such a high position in the land. He also feels more than a little nervous of being in this family, and being that much closer to Saul, and easier then to kill. To be in a king's family was to be in danger of palace plots, and David keeps away from them.

Within months of Merab's marriage to another man David faces the plotters and spies of the palace. Merab marries a nobody. This is not a dynastic marriage to a great kingdom, but marriage to a man of which nothing is known at all other than this reference. Saul has treated her like a pawn in his power game with David and has condemned her to an ordinary life when she was born to be a queen. How do all their lives change for this evil and stupid act by Saul?

Verses 20 – 23. Saul's youngest daughter Michal truly loves David with all her heart. The knowledge of the love of Michal for David reaches Saul's ears, and he is very pleased to hear of it. The reasons however are not good ones. Michal possibly has a "difficult nature". From her later actions some have argued that she was a narcissistic personality like her father, or maybe even a Borderline Personality. She is certainly a woman that Saul thinks will be able

to unhinge David and distract him enough to make him lose his concentration with the Philistines, and so they will be able to kill him. Reflect upon this logic for some will think this way, even in the church leadership team; even to delighting in the collapse of a ministry!

The commentator's who argue this may be too harsh on Michal, and given her later action in saving David I suspect she may have been misjudged by history. Two explanations are possible regarding Saul's words here. The first, is that it could simply be that Saul believes sexual pleasure in marriage with Michal, will cause David to lose his fighting edge. Some soldiers can fight well while they care for no-one, but not when they care for someone and want to be with them. As a result they can lose their heart for the battle, and loss of absolute concentration in hand to hand combat means you die, and make no mistake, Saul intends David to die, not become a loved son in law...

The other explanation of Saul's words could be that he intends to trap David into a task to pay the bride price, and that to complete the task set will kill him. Whatever the exact meaning behind Saul's proposition in giving Michal to David, he intends it to lead to David's death, not a happy family. As I reflect with maturity upon events here I now believe both Michal and Jonathan are great people, and their character is far better and more noble than their father's. Let us be corrected by the writer here, and not consign Michal to a negative place in history at this point.

Saul gets his servants to speak with David and entice him into marrying Michal. David answers cleverly, and emphasises the fact that he is poor and despised by the king at times, and doubts that such a marriage could work, or is even right. He speaks in veiled terms that indicate he is concerned about the "bride price" or dowry expected, for he would be unable to pay the expected price for such a bride, and he will not bankrupt his family to achieve this. Sadly many believers do not think correctly over such things, and marry without counting the cost first. A marriage ceremony that bankrupts the family is foolishness indeed. David will not ask anyone to pay for his bride, he will be able to do this himself, or he will not go ahead with the marriage.

It is clear from the writer's emphasis upon Michal's love for David, that he does not fully return her love. He may understand that Saul intends to use this marriage to do him mischief, but he also knows that he cannot refuse to marry the king's daughter, for that sort of insult would lead to his immediate execution. David starts to play the politician here himself, but it is hard to see that David has any alternative other than flee for his life at this point. I suspect he enters this marriage hoping for the best, but his attitude to Michal will not reflect well on his character.

Psychologically people hope for the best more often than they face the bitter truth, and especially with episodic demonic affliction it is common to have the false belief that the crisis is over. He may be hoping the worst is past and that Saul may be mellowing, or as things are quiet and pleasant at this point, that he may have been healed. Sadly there will be great distress for Michal and for him as a result of this, but she will be loyal to him, at least initially. He will not be sexually loyal to her! David is certainly wrong in his actions, and Michal may be, but let us be patient and kind in our assessment of them both, for few of us face their challenges and the pressures and threats that surrounds them.

Verses 24 – 27. David is apparently quite happy to be the king's son-in-law at this point, as he sees Saul's answer about the matter of a dowry is easily fulfilled. He is possibly thinking that the danger is past and the path to acceptance in the family and eventual kingship is now going to be smooth. The task is so easy for him that he jumps to the wrong conclusion. He errs in his thinking here. When a man has rejected the path of God for his life he will not change over time and soften his stance against a genuine servant of the Lord. If an evil or a carnal man "mellows" it means nothing other than that he is pausing to plot deeper things. If an enemy of the truth, who has a proven track record of rejecting God's path, starts to speak kindly to you, be very scared! There are only two paths in life, and each of us is either on one or the other; we do not walk both. Ensure people claiming "born again" status actually are!

Saul is pretending friendship as evil women and men often do, that they may destroy the good person that much more thoroughly. We are to be wiser than the serpents we are up against, not self deceived in our own arrogance or hopeful thinking. We are not to believe the good words of bad people, for we are to judge them by the fruit of their lives, and so be ready for their tricks and deceptions. Matthew 10:16, Romans 12:16, 1 Corinthians 4:10, Ephesians 5:15.

Verses 28 – 30. There was a time limit to the offer of marriage. Verse 26. In fact King Saul can take credit for being the first one to say, "this offer is for a limited time only". He is happy for David to take up the offer of marriage for it means he places himself in the firing line of the Philistines and has to secure one hundred dead Philistines and their foreskins before the bride price is paid. It is a particularly gruesome price, but David has his thousand men to assist him if he needs them and eagerly accepts the challenge.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Friendship between believers is of greater value than any genetic family connections. The relationships we have within the second birth are more important to us than those from our first birth. Let us embrace the people we are to spend eternity with and walk with them into eternity. David had to grow up and move on away from his earthly family. He didn't abuse them, although they had clearly abused him, but he just got on with the life God had called him to. Let us grow up in Christ Jesus and move forward to serve the Lord, and if that means moving away from our natural family, then let us do that without weeping and wailing for something that was not working spiritually anyway.
2. Let us focus ourselves forward to where the Lord wants us to be, rather than be staying with the familiar and the comfortable. When the Lord moves us forward into a new area of work we are to cast off our old clothes and habits and

embrace the new path. Do not carry the remnants of where you were, and who you were, into the new place the Lord has called you to stand within. Be a constantly renewed person. How ready are you today believer to leave all that is familiar and comfortable behind and head into a new field to serve the Lord? He may not call you to do this, but if He does, you must be ready to move house, job and friend circle, and serve in the unfamiliar area. Are you ready to hear the master's call?

3. Ecstatic utterances are not evidence of anything godly or spiritual unless there is evidence in the life of the person that God is with them. Saul babbles away in ecstasy and it means nothing other than that he is demon influenced at the time. He counterfeits genuine prophecy, and Satan is master of this. Remember Jesus words in Matthew 7 and be protected against satanic deception. The fruit of righteousness in the life of the speaker is required to prove the presence of God in the person, and in their words. Let us not be fooled by so called "spiritual phenomenon", for without godly fruit in the people's lives these things are nothing but satanic counterfeits. Refer below to the BTB study of this.

4. Let us be very scared of the pleasant words of evil or carnal men. Those with a proven track record of deception will not change their tune except by total conversion to the truth. Anything short of being "born again" is to be watched closely. Do not trust the enemies of the truth, for they lie in order to destroy good men more thoroughly. Jesus did not trust evil men, neither ought we to! John 2:24-25.

REFLECTIONS UPON FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES AND OUR OWN GODLY EXAMPLE

1. In Titus 1:5-6, we read of the importance of a holy and spiritually active family behind all who wish to lead in Christian work. The principle here is important; for the first area of witness for a man is his family, and if they are not right he can have no greater ministry. If a man cannot run his family properly then he cannot run the church. 1 Timothy 3:1-13.

2. The father must take the responsibility for setting the standard of godliness and love in the home. To fail at this point is to fall short of God's standards that we see in Christ's love for the church. Ephesians 5:21-29.

3. The man must be worthy of the loving, respectful, and responsive love of his wife. When children see this sort of love they will learn about love, about God and about respect themselves. Ephesians 5:31, 1 Peter 3:1-12.

4. Children respond to consistency of discipline from loving, stable and respectful parents. Yelling and screaming, and other disgraceful behaviours only guarantee that the children will follow the parent in disgraceful behaviours. Proverbs 13:24, 23:14, Ephesians 6:1-4, Colossians 3:20-21.

5. Sexual life between the husband and wife should be healthy, robust and regular, with no frustrations for either that might open the door to the enemy's temptations. 1 Corinthians 7:1ff.

THE REAL "BROTHERHOOD" OF BELIEVERS

1. All believers are referred to as brothers (Gk adelphos), the Greek word used indicating family relationship with both male and female included. As members of the same family who will rule throughout all eternity together it is of the greatest importance to have a special attitude towards our fellow believers. (1 Peter 2:5, 9-10, Revelation 5:10)

2. This attitude should be one of agape love or caring for the ultimate well being of others. (1 Peter 2:17, 3:8, 1 John 3:23, 4:12)

3. We are our brother's keepers, not by way of interference but by being active and alert for their good. (Genesis 4:9 cf. James 5:20, 2 Thessalonians 3:15)

4. Because of family closeness there is a danger that one member may lead another astray, so discipline is required. (1 Corinthians 5:11)

5. In our family there must be a readiness to forgive. (Matthew 18:21)

6. The world has its own brotherhood of evil and sin. (John 15:19)

7. The soul and fruit of a person shows the family to which they belong. (Matthew 12:33)

8. All of us were born into Adam's family. (1 Corinthians 15:22)

9. We either stay there in sin or become a member of the Lord's family. (John 8:42-44)

10. Our attitude towards other believers is given in 1 Peter 3:8-9

[a] Be of one mind. -To be of one mind means to avoid any behaviour that would create an argument leading to a church split, or violence of any kind. Mindless unity is not called for, it is to be a unity of the mind, based on well thought through positions, rooted and grounded in apostolic teaching.

[b] Show compassion. - Compassion is rooted in the mental attitude that sees others as Christ sees them. The heart that shows compassion, shows it because they see the others needs and short-comings, and feels sorrow for the lack in the life of the other rather than arrogantly despising them.

[c] Love as brethren. - This fruit of the Holy Spirit is demonstrated in life. The word used is philadelphos, the word for brotherly love; the caring practical love for those within the same family. It looks for a practical thing it can do for the much loved brother or sister. It is the reminder that we are in the same family as these fellow believers, and we are being watched by our heavenly father, who looks to us to behave as blood bought brethren.

[d] Be tender hearted to each other. - The Greek word here is a great one; eusplagnos, which literally means, "good intestines". It catches what the Greeks meant by the word. It refers to deep feelings in the stomach, the emotional feelings towards one we love that we can literally "feel deep within". This is the level of the deep tenderness we should feel for our brethren.

[e] Be courteous. - The word here, almost another synonym, brings further encouragement to love in practical ways our fellow believers. Act in such a way that others looking on would know you are friends.

[f] Do not render evil for evil. - This instruction reminds us that believers are not perfect, and at times a young or disobedient believer will verbally attack us, and practice, even 'evil' against us. What is to be our response? It is not to be in accordance with the Mosaic Law (Exodus 21:23,24, Leviticus 24:19-22), which gave the right to all Jews to demand justice and reparation for every blow or insult. Peter is saying to all believers that we are NOT TO DEMAND our rights under the old law of lex talionis, but to place ourselves under the higher spiritual laws, the Law of Love, the Law of Supreme Sacrifice. We are now under the "Law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2), and the demands of that law are the ones Peter makes here.

[g] Do not give verbal abuse for verbal abuse (railing). - When we are verbally abused, or lied about, we are not to respond in kind and lash back. We are to treat them as Christ has by showing a love and care that shames the sinning brother rather than copies them.

[h] Give rather blessing. - The Lord's words come back to us here. "Ye have heard that it has been said, (Leviticus 19:17,18, Deuteronomy 23:6), 'thou shalt love thine neighbour and hate thine enemy'. But I say unto you, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (in order that) ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, . . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect'" (Matthew 5:43-48, Luke 6:27- 36). These commands are clearly our Lord God's standard of behaviour.

They are the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ to us all. If we would be his disciples we are to obey, and if we would be called his friends, then we are to be following these commands daily (John 15:9-17, 1John 3: 11-24).

DEPRESSION – BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR DEALING WITH IT

Proven Biblical techniques which you can use to successfully deal with depression in your life, REGARDLESS OF THE CAUSE:

1. CONFESSON OF PERSONAL SIN

Make it a spiritual habit to confess sins the moment that you become aware of them. This step toward recovery from depression is absolutely critical!! 1 John 1:9

2. THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit fills you and controls your life when you have no unconfessed sin in your life. You can trust the Holy Spirit to reveal sin to you when you commit it, or even before. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is given in Galatians 5:22-23 it is: Love, Joy, Peace, Longsuffering, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control. These 9 virtues replace depression

3. LIVING IN THE WORD OF GOD:

Make it a daily practice to read and study the Bible each and every day. By living in the Word of God you are constantly reminded of GOD'S viewpoint, of His Plan, of His provision, of His awareness of our spirit of heaviness; and we are reminded of what He wants to accomplish in us with the tests or trials that we are going through.

A Christian's response to the Word of God should be:

- [a] READ IT - Deuteronomy. 31:11; Isaiah. 34:16; Luke. 4:16; Ephesians. 3:4; Colossians. 3:16; 4:1; 1 Thessalonians. 5:27; 2 Timothy . 4:13; Revelation 1:3.
- [b] HEED IT - Psalm 119:9; 1 Timothy. 4:16.
- [c] SEED IT - Matthew. 28:19, 20.

- [d] DESIRE IT - 1 Peter. 2:2.
- [e] PREACH IT - 2 Timothy 4:2
- [f] RIGHTLY DIVIDE IT - 2 Timothy. 2:15.
- [g] LIVE BY IT - Matthew. 4:4
- [h] USE IT - Ephesians. 6:17.
- [i] SUFFER FOR IT, AND IF NEED BE, DIE FOR IT - Revelation 1:9; 6:9; 20:4.

THE CHILD OF GOD IS TO:-

KNOW IT in his HEAD
STOW IT in his HEART
SHOW IT in his LIFE
SOW IT in the WORLD:

Deuteronomy 4:1-10; 12:32; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 33:6; Proverbs 30:5, 6; Mark 4:24; Luke 8:12; John 12:48-50; Romans 8:7; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:1-4; Revelation 1:1-3; 20:12; 22:18; 19.

4. APPLY THE PRINCIPLES OF GRACE:

Depression is often caused by PEOPLE, and most of the time by people we cannot escape, or people we love, or people we cannot confront, or people we trust.

By applying the principles of grace we will develop the ability to look at people and see them as GOD sees them.

This includes the ability to let them live their lives as unto the Lord, and trusting God to make His way clear to them. This technique lets people make mistakes without your judging them. Matthew 7:1-5

5. FOCUS ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST:

When we focus on Jesus Christ it helps to cure depression because it gets our eyes off our spouse, our children, our neighbours, our friends, ourselves and our problems. Hebrews 12:2

Instead, as we move through the day, we are thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ, His plan for our life, the Father's provision for each incident in our life, and His provision of wisdom for each decision we must make.

6. TRUSTING AND APPLYING THE PROMISES OF GOD

When we trust and use the promises of God we then enter into the "REST" phase of Christian living.

We need to have a good grasp of just who God is so that we will not hesitate to believe that He can do what He has promised to do. Hebrews 4:1-11 [see topic PROMISES]

We need to know Him as He reveals Himself in the Bible. We need to believe Him when He tells us what He will do for us. Cast your burden on the Lord because He really does care for you!! 1 Peter 5:7

7. RELAX – TAKE IT EASY – BACK OFF AND LET GOD DO HIS WORK.

A relaxed attitude is based on knowing God personally and intimately as His special child that you are. A relaxed attitude is one of the results of living in the Word of God, walking in fellowship with Him, trusting in and using His promises to you, and being focused on Jesus Christ.

If you are a Christian, YOU are His personal gift to His Son, who categorically stated that no one can ever snatch you out of His Father's hand, nor out of His. John 10:27-29

You are personally being trained and groomed by God Himself to rule this entire universe with Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. God already sees you seated in heavenly places perfectly sanctified and glorified.

To have the glory, you must also have some suffering for a little while on this earth. This is part of your training. Ask what God is doing around you and be part of what the Holy Spirit leads you into.

8. STRIVE FOR INNER HAPPINESS IN YOUR LIFE:

Inner happiness is not possible for the Christian who is occupied solely with himself and his own needs. It is also not possible for the person who occupies himself solely with his own problems, his own circumstances and his own efforts.

It is a state of happiness and joy based on knowing that God is everything He claims to be and that He can do ALL that He has promised. It is expressed by worship, works, and fellowship – all of which pump up our Serotonin.

Inner happiness is the joy of living where every provision for physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being is being made by God in the life of a Christian who is walking in daily fellowship with Him. It is the focused joy of the believer who knows that their life has purpose, direction, power and a legacy for eternity.

CHAPTER 19**INTRODUCTION**

David is protected by the loyalty of Jonathan and of Michal from the madness of Saul. God's hand has been upon him all through his time in Saul's court and he has been kept safe. David flees the court after the most serious and consistently malicious attempt on his life, with the help and bravery of Michal, and heads to the right place; to the home of Samuel. It would appear that Samuel is under "house arrest", but David's arrival brings him back into political action to protect and guide the man who is to be the new king after Saul and Samuel's death.

The Lord works through the agency of men and then directly to protect David and hold back Saul from murder. Saul still receives God's grace and mercy at this point, and we see again in this chapter that judgment is indeed God's "strange work", for the Lord seeks always to bless. Each determined unsaved person must work hard in evil to be judged eternally, for God prefers to forgive. **Psalm 103:8-16, Isaiah 28:21.**

1 SAMUEL 19:1-24

19:1 And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David. **2** But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself: **3** And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee. **4** And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good: **5** For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause? **6** And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain. **7** And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past. **8** And there was war again: and David went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him. **9** And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand. **10** And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin: but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night. **11** Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, to morrow thou shalt be slain. **12** So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped. **13** And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth. **14** And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick. **15** And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him. **16** And when the messengers were come in, behold, there was an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster. **17** And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee? **18** So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth. **19** And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah. **20** And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. **21** And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also. **22** Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold, they be at Naioth in Ramah. **23** And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah. **24** And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 7. Saul speaks now openly to all his closest servants and to his son Jonathan, and gives them the order to kill David. This is a strange order just after he has married his daughter to David as a reward for his bravery in action against the enemy. All his men understand that this order is demonic in origin and none act upon it immediately. Their hesitancy allows Jonathan to warn David.

This action by Saul's men brings up what has become known as the "Nuremburg principle". This means that any illegitimate and wrongful order is rightfully rejected by a loyal officer, and that any order to murder, counter to the rules of war is to be rejected. It also recognises that if an officer obeys a wrongful order and murders others, that that officer is held personally responsible for that action; she/he cannot argue later in their defence that it was just "following orders".

Jonathan takes no chance that one man may murder David, just to win renown, so he tells David to hide himself until the following day. David immediately hides in a place where Jonathan can find him but no-one else knows of. With David hidden and safe, Jonathan joins his father in the open fields the next day, and quietly, without others overhearing, recounts David's great deeds and urges Saul to rescind his order for David's murder.

Jonathan argues that the Lord has used David to save Israel, and that he himself was happy in what David did, and that killing him would make Saul look very bad to the people. His entreaty to his father is successful this time and Saul reverses his order. Jonathan takes David from hiding and he is welcomed back again into the court and family. Things are quiet for some considerable time, and there is peace in the family and in the land. Saul's affliction was episodic and so the long times of peace mask the deep problems in his heart and mind.

Verses 8 – 10. The next season for fighting came about and the Philistines head up towards the land of Israel in raiding parties. It does not appear to be a major pitched battle this time, but significant raiding parties and multiple actions over a wide area. David heads out and fights against them with his men, and he slaughters large numbers of them by selecting the right places to fight, and using brilliant, and Holy Spirit inspired tactics. He becomes even more famous for this season's campaigns. When he returns to the palace this time the evil spirit that afflicts Saul is even more active and malicious. David is alert however, and so is able to be kept safe; God's Plan works for those who walk in the filling and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, no matter the demons attacking us.

This is a sad fact about sin and evil; it never stays stationery in a person's life. If we do not resist the devil, his power over us will grow. James 4:7-8. Notice this passage of James carefully; resistance to the devil's attacks is coupled with deliberate confession and cleansing of the life from all known sins. Saul can eliminate the evil from within him only by dealing with his deep mental attitude sins of jealousy, envy and hatred. He will not face his sin and so the power of evil over him grows. Last time, possibly a year before this incident, Jonathan was able to persuade his father to relent and reverse his order to murder David, but this time Saul is possessed by the evil spirit and deliberately tries to run him through with his javelin.

Commentators have speculated that the javelin here is the royal sceptre and is held by the king as a badge of office. There is some evidence from the ancient world that javelin's were used this way in the court, and also would double for the punishment and execution of enemies. David is literally holding one of the king's hands when he tries to run him through with the javelin held in the other hand. David wriggles out of Saul's now tightened grasp and the javelin embeds itself into the wall behind where David was standing. He escapes and flees the palace that night with Michal's help. Verse ten is a summary and the next verses explain how he escaped.

Verses 11 – 17. Saul sends his "messengers" to find David. These men are his servants (hit men) with a mission to carry a message in the form of their swords! They are sent as killers to execute the enemy of the king; in this case David. These men are ready to kill David now, for their obedience to the king is total. There is no hesitancy this time and Michal must work hard to ensure he escapes alive. These men wait outside the house/apartment and watch it all night ready for his trying to escape.

Michal spots a way out of the palace through a window and down into an unwatched place. She lets David down by a rope and ensures he is away. She does not report him missing until morning and so ensures he is able to get well away towards Ramah before the pursuit can start. She not only fails to report him gone, she places a man sized statue or manikin in his bed and pulls the covers over it so that it looks like a man asleep.

This may be a clue to the decoration here, and indicates that their apartments are in a palace with significant pieces of art set up in the various rooms. The other explanation needs also be given; that the statue was a manikin upon which armour was set up ready for putting on before battle. The term "teraphim" can also mean the statue of a god. Either way it tells us that Michal is no slightly built wilting violet! She has to be strong indeed to manoeuvre a statue (be it a hollow bronze statue or wooden manikin) into bed and cover it.

Michal is a cool headed thinker all through this episode, and her cool as ice actions here, mitigate against her being a personality disorder. There is also a little glimpse of the furniture and bedding of the palace, for they had pillows of soft goat's hair and woven Egyptian linen for their bedding. She quietly sets out to deceive her father and ensure there is maximum time for David to escape.

Saul waits for some time and then sends his men to the apartment directly to ask for David to be brought out so that they can kill him in the street. Michal calmly says that he is sick and unable to get out of bed at this point, and they should come back later in the day when he might be feeling better. There is great humour here, for she is trying to keep him alive and well, and why worry about the flu or tummy bug, if you are about to be murdered!

Saul gets really angry at that point and orders the bed to be brought so that he can kill David in the bed. The men burst into the apartment and pull the linen off the figure and discover it is a trick. They take Michal before the king to explain. Once again she is quiet, calm and clever in her answer to them. She pretends that David threatened to kill her and that she had no choice. Saul may have planned to kill his own daughter at this point, but her answer deflects him back to hating David and she escapes for a time, but his plans for her now will use and abuse her as he did her older sister.

Verses 18 – 21. David arrives in Ramah and reports all that has happened to the old prophet Samuel. He leads David to a place by Ramah referred to here as Naioth, where he awaits the next manifestation of the malice of Saul. Samuel knows that David will be sought in Ramah and that Saul fears these two joining together. Further escape is hopeless however, for too many spies exist who are probably paid to watch Samuel's every move, and so he waits the coming of Saul's men at the "Naioth".

It appears to be a gathering place of the prophets, and may be the primitive name for an assembly point, a raised area of land which all can look up to and see their leaders clearly. If this is the case, it means Samuel is placing himself in the easiest place to be found and is deliberately putting David and himself into the Lord's hands alone to be delivered. Saul hears exactly where Samuel and David are and sends his killers there to execute David, and probably Samuel as well.

The first group arrives at the place, and from a distance away they can see clearly Samuel standing amongst other prophets and leading them in worship. As they draw closer they are overcome by the Holy Spirit and lie upon the ground at Samuel's feet and prophesy and worship also. Saul sends two other groups of killers to execute David and the same thing happens to them; as they draw near the Naioth they are struck by the Holy Spirit and are unable to do anything except worship God. Isaiah 45:23, Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10.

There are times to flee, and there are times to stand and see the deliverance of the Lord. Exodus 14:13-14, Nehemiah 4:14, Acts 9:25, 14:19-20, 17:10, 14, 21:10-14. Spiritual wisdom and/or prophetic words reveals the correct times to flee, fight, and stand, and Samuel hears the voice of the Lord. We need to daily practise listening to the Lord through our prayer and Bible study that we also may know when to do the various things that may be required.

Verses 22 – 24. Saul himself now goes to Ramah with his army and court. He arrives at the well of Sechu and asks where Samuel is to be found. He is told that he is at the Naioth of Ramah. He sets off in that direction, for it is clearly known to him, and arrives in the vicinity, but before he sees Samuel, and all his men in the company of the prophets he is overcome by God's power. Even as he draws near to the place the Holy Spirit comes upon him again, and he prophesies himself, as he did over twenty years before, much to the surprise of his men. 1 Samuel 10:9-12. The words said at the time of his first anointing are repeated again here. God is indeed gracious to this man.

As he arrives at the place where Samuel stands he strips off his kingly robes and lies before the prophet without any of the trappings of his royalty, but in a simple undergarment of pure cotton. The word "naked" here does not mean naked, for to appear before the Lord in such a state was forbidden. Exodus 32:25. He is stripped of his kingly robes and he lies in the dust before the prophet of God. Standing with the prophet is David. The old king bows before his replacement without realising it, but sadly he will remain unrepentant, and so doom his house by his persistent narcissism. God persists in gracious appeals to this foolish and now carnal-evil once great believer.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. There is a time to flee danger and a time to stand and allow the Lord to deliver us. Let us walk carefully before the Lord so that we might know the difference. Walking close to the Lord and being used to hearing the Spirit alone is our guarantee of safety in the midst of the dangers of this present evil world.
2. God is able to directly act to save His people. His plan will work out and we will be delivered if we are walking in obedience to Him. Let us daily have our spiritual armour on and walk obediently before our God.
3. Paganism leads to naked worship and sexual actions. No worship of the Lord is ever to resemble the pagan excesses of the devil's false religious systems. We are to worship the Lord in holiness; in the Holy Spirit's power and in the truth of God's Word. Let us be careful that we do not resemble pagans in what we do. Let us worship without the trappings of this present world. Our position and status is irrelevant in our worship; kings and paupers are equal in God's sight. Let none be ashamed of standing before the Lord in the simplest of clothing.

Notes

CHAPTER 20**INTRODUCTION**

The time frame through these years covered by chapters 13-20 is not at all clear. The initial great victory over the Philistines appears to be around the twenty year point in Saul's reign, and the events that follow may take ten or more years to reach the time we find ourselves in this chapter. David has been avoiding the malice of Saul for a number of years, and Jonathan is there to assist and act as his protector. Michal also has acted to help him and been a faithful wife to David through this time although they have had no children.

David has had to be alert every time he is in Saul's presence and the vigilance of the years has taken its toll on him, yet he still hopes that Saul will change. Most war veterans have a condition called "hyper vigilance" as a result of near death experiences, and it is useful in search and destroy missions like David specialises in against the Philistines, but it is wearing in daily life. David needs a little certainty however regarding Saul's intentions after the confrontation with Samuel, and both he and Jonathan want to know whether they are safe or not in the company of the king.

This chapter records Jonathan's last attempt to deal logically with Saul's hatred of David and is the turning point in their relationship. They will remain friends for life, but from this time onwards their contact will be slight. It will be over ten years of hiding and fighting in the wild places of the land before Saul and Jonathan die in their final battle against the Philistines, and David becomes king. Both men have to face the fact that Saul is fixed in his condition now and will not change his state of mind.

There is a time when we have to sadly confront this very issue in the life of a colleague or family member, where further prayer for them appears to be of no value. We have to simply consign them to the enemy and hope and pray that they will learn the truth through the awfulness of their chosen path and before they drop into death and finally confront the facts of their rebellion against the plan of God. 1 Timothy 1:20, 2 Timothy 2:17-18, 4:14-15.

1 SAMUEL 20:1-42

20:1 And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life? **2** And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so. **3** And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death. **4** Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee. **5** And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even. **6** If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family. **7** If he say thus, It is well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him. **8** Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the LORD with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldst thou bring me to thy father? **9** And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee? **10** Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly? **11** And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field. **12** And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to morrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee; **13** The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father. **14** And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: **15** But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. **16** So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies. **17** And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul. **18** Then Jonathan said to David, To morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty. **19** And when thou hast stayed three days, then thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel. **20** And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. **21** And, behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the LORD liveth. **22** But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way: for the LORD hath sent thee away. **23** And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD be between thee and me for ever. **24** So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat. **25** And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty. **26** Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean. **27** And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day? **28** And Jonathan answered Saul, David

earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem: 29 And he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there: and now, if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table. 30 Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? 31 For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die. 32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done? 33 And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. 34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame. 35 And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him. 36 And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. 37 And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee? 38 And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. 39 But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter. 40 And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry them to the city. 41 And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. 42 And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. David has escaped the murderous plot of Saul at the Naioth of Ramah due to the direct intervention of God through the prophet Samuel. While this has led to a time of public reconciliation, it sadly does not mean anything, except that the next time Saul's malice will be more clever and dangerous. David has seen that the malice is apparently fixed, and Saul appears immovable and hardened in his desire to kill him. From his words here it may also be that Saul has even been told by Samuel that David is the next anointed king.

The meeting at the Naioth of Ramah has a veil drawn across it, but it must have been a significant one, for the entire court knew Saul intended to kill David, and possibly even Samuel as well. The reunion between Samuel and Saul must have been both public and powerful, for the old prophet was the acknowledged spiritual leader of the land and the entire court will know of the significance of these events and the words spoken. From these verses it would appear that David was either not involved in that meeting, or doubted the truth of Saul's words there, and he runs from the Naioth of Ramah back to Jonathan at Gibeah, to discuss things with him before Saul is re-established in his palace there.

David has not understood the full nature of the deep malice that drives Saul, nor has he yet accepted that the path ahead is now fixed by Saul's choice. He does not want to believe that this man will not accept God's will and hand over power at some point to him. He does not want to believe that Saul will not truly repent of his evil. David is a forgiving man, and these words are our first glimpse of this man's warrior, yet also very tender heart.

He will sin himself greatly later, and yet he knows and openly acknowledges his own weaknesses, and so he is not harsh in his judgments upon others, and as he repents, so he expects others to do the same. David is still a young man at this point, and he has to learn that others do not have his standards or character and his attitude towards God.

All of us need to heed this lesson, and believe the evidence before us regarding men's behaviours. John 2:23-24. If a person sins consistently, then by their fruit we are to recognise their true heart, and by this we are to make our assessments, and so protect ourselves and those for whom we have responsibility before the Lord. The pastor is to protect the Lord's flock from wolves who pretend at times that they are sheep. **Matthew 7:13-23, 10:16, Acts 20:29, 2 Timothy 3:1-7, 2 Peter 2:10-22, Jude 12-23.**

David seeks Jonathan's advice and assurance of protection if he returns to court as the agreement with Samuel presupposes he will do. Jonathan also is trying to see good in his father and hopes against hope that his malice is now passed after such a public crisis when Saul has been so spiritually convicted. The two men are deceived by Saul's mental state simply because he is, when sane, such a good and noble man. Remember, Saul is a man's man and he has great strength, bravery and is warm and friendly at times. It is his normally good and noble character that masks the evil of his increasingly dark and demonic purposes.

These are the hardest men and women to spot in church circles, for they are wonderful much of the time, but when their malice bursts out it is therefore that much more destructive, because they have sucked in so many by their mask of pleasantness. These people are true hypocrites; they are play actors with the truth and their goodness is deceptive. Like Satan himself they masquerade as "angels" of light, but they are servants of darkness. **2 Corinthians 11:13ff.**

David has good information from his own palace sources that Saul's hatred is now a fixed part of his character, and is powerfully focused upon David. He has been told that Saul has said that Jonathan is not to be told of any plots against David. This is still what the courts call "hearsay evidence" and so David seeks further, and more solid indications of

Saul's present intentions. Jonathan believes he will hear of anything that is about to happen, but David doubts that, given what he has overheard or been told by a supporter of his.

The palace is a hot bed of intrigue and David doubts that he can ever be safe there again. He knows that Saul is aware of exactly how powerful the love is between Jonathan and David, and he knows that in some way this increases Saul's rage. Neither of them understands the source of the anger, and both hope it will still abate or change, but they have no evidence for their false faith. They decide upon a plan to try to discover Saul's state of mind after this last meeting with Samuel. They know that if there is any chance of an abiding change in Saul's mind it must be now, and if there is lasting malice, then now is the time to see it clearly.

Verses 5 – 8. The plan has been forming in David's mind as he reflects upon the next major time of feast days when he will be expected to be positioned next to the king. The feast is the monthly "New Moon" feast that occurred on the three days following the appearance of the new moon each month. These were the Lord's spiritual alternative to the pagan fertility rites that occurred at the same time.

They were times when families gathered and feasted together upon a sacrificial meal and thanked God for another month in which to serve Him and receive His agricultural bounty. They were times when the king would gather all his officers and court and they would bind themselves together during the feast. They were times of national and corporate bonding and unity. To be missing from such a feast was to be noticed, and David invents a lie to test Saul's mind regarding his absence. Once again we are confronted with the bone fide use of a lie to test the truth of a potentially evil person. 1 Samuel 19:14-17.

The plan is that Jonathan will tell his father that David earnestly begged leave to attend a family sacrifice at Bethlehem and has gone there. This will raise for Saul all the old fears about his anointing there several years before by Samuel, and the possibility that he is raising rebellion amongst the tribe of Judah. It may even raise the possibility that Samuel is meeting him there and that together they will claim the kingdom now. All his fears could be triggered by this, or, if he has truly repented of his evil and seen the truth at the Naioth of Ramah, he will be relaxed and accepting of David's family duty.

David pledges his loyalty to Jonathan and offers himself to be killed by his friend there and then if he has any doubts about his loyalty to Saul. He makes a solemn promise, backed by a covenant agreement, that there is no disloyalty in him at all towards the house of Saul. Jonathan is absolutely sure of this himself.

Verses 9 – 16. Jonathan makes a solemn promise to David, that if he knew of any planned evil against him, then he would tell David immediately. They then work out a way to pass on the news from the feast days in a manner that none else will spot as a meeting. They head into an open field away from the palace and town of Gibeah. It must be in a place that is away from sentries on the walls, and is private for their purpose, but one in which the kings and princes were expected to walk and so would excite no suspicions.

From the words here it would appear that this is the place that David hid previously when Saul sought his life. Jonathan takes an oath before the Lord God of Israel that he will inform David clearly of the outcome of the meetings over the three days of the feast; either on day two or day three.

Jonathan makes a promise to David (recorded in verse 13) that sounds like he is accepting him as the future king. To ask that he be blessed as Saul was is to acknowledge David as the next king, not himself. This shows the depths of Jonathan's love and respect for this man. Jonathan would have happily served as a general with David as his king, even though he was the crown prince of the previous kingdom. This is a man in whom there is no hint of jealousy or envy. He is free of the mental attitude sins that will destroy Saul, but sadly Saul's sins will drag Jonathan down to an early death.

Jonathan asks for kindness to be shown to him and his house by David, and that even after David's death for that kindness to be shown to his descendents. It is as if Jonathan has a premonition of the coming disaster that will unfold over the kingdom and destroy him as well.

Verses 17 – 23. Jonathan requires David to swear again his loyalty to the house of Saul, and especially to the household of Jonathan. David loves this man and swears his faithfulness and loyalty to Jonathan and his determination to do kindness to his house after him. David will honour this promise and the writer here emphasises this, for later he will record just how fully David honours his words to the house of Saul.

The plan that the two men come up with is, that Jonathan will pretend to be practising his archery, and will take a servant with him to retrieve the arrows that he shoots. He will go into this field where a great rocky outcrop exists that is known by the name Ezel (meaning – the stone of departure). David hides in a cleft of the rock here and is able to be unseen and remain so for several days. Jonathan will shoot three arrows so that they land to the side of the rock, but out of sight of the young man who is to retrieve them.

If he calls the young man to go back a really long way to retrieve them it will be a signal to David that he is to run for the hills and get as far away as possible, but if the arrows are close by and he calls to the young man to retrieve them closer to where Jonathan is, then it means David is to come close and live with Saul again for all is safe and well. Having said this, he reaffirms his friendship with David forever. They are still friends in heaven and may yet work together in the Millennial Kingdom, where David is Regent for the Lord!

Verses 24 – 29. David hides himself in this field and waits. He is able to get food and water and hide them here and just lie low here for the four nights and three days that may be required before Jonathan will have solid evidence of where Saul is in relation to him. David must trust the Lord, and his friendship with Jonathan, through this time, for he is at the mercy of any spies that may have seen him. He must remain still for these days and nights in the rocky outcrop and wait.

The new moon feast is made and the king sits down in the evening to eat with his courtiers and officers, and David's place is set, and it is empty. Saul notes it, but thinks aloud that it may be that he is ceremonially unclean, through the slaying of an enemy, or sexual activity, and so under the Levitical rules this means he must avoid a common meal with others until the next day. Leviticus 15, 21, 23. Nothing is said by Jonathan, and he waits until the second night when David is absent again before he speaks up and tells his father the agreed lie that will disclose his father's mental state.

Notice the way Saul speaks of David as "the son of Jesse". There is no warmth that would be expected towards a son in law and great warrior who had served him so well. Jonathan delivers the well rehearsed lie to his father to uncover his mental state, and he is more successful than either David or he had expected. Saul gets immediately into a satanic rage, and tries to kill his own son, the very crown prince.

Verses 30 – 34. Saul's rage is without any reason behind it. There are times when anger is legitimate, but these are rare. Jesus was angry in the Temple with the criminal businessmen who were making merchandise of spiritual truth, and he was enraged at child abusers. Matthew 18:5-10, 21:12, Mark 11:15.

Saul's words towards Jonathan and the insult to his own wife are extra-ordinary. These were oaths and curses that ought never to have been uttered. Saul insults his loyal, loving and faithful warrior son, and his loyal and faithful wife. He makes it clear by his public outburst that David is going to take the throne from Jonathan and Saul knows it. His outburst here indicates to me that Samuel has disclosed the full truth to Saul and pleaded with him to come to terms with it. While David lives he knows Jonathan has no kingdom to inherit, for it is given to David. Rather than accept God's will and hand the kingdom over to David he is determined to destroy David.

The words are beyond doubt; "he shall surely die". Saul is determined upon the murder of the Lord's anointed replacement rather than accept the Lord's will and stand aside for the Lord's replacement of him. Saul in this hatred resembles Herod the Great in his murder of the innocents around Bethlehem nearly one thousand years later. Matthew 2:3-22. God will preserve his anointed servant, but will judge the house of those who rebel persistently against him. The family of Saul will disappear exactly as does the family of Herod the Great.

Jonathan pleads with his father and requires a logical reason for the hatred towards David. Saul's answer is to fling a javelin at his own son, and so he knows that David's life is lost if he stays in the court. Jonathan leaves the table in great rage himself; it is the anger of his grief at the spiritual significance of this event. Jonathan sees what his father's anger means for him, his family and the nation. He knows that there will be war between David and his father now and that God's hand will be against him. Jonathan will remain loyal to his father, and will go to his own death with nobility, but he has great grief for his friend and himself and his people.

Verses 35 – 42. On the morning of the third day Jonathan goes out into the field to practise archery. This will excite no suspicions, and most will be relieved to see him practising warlike pursuits to vent his rage at the events of the previous night. David has been hiding in the cleft of the rock Ezel for three days and nights now.

On the morning of the third day of the feast he sees Jonathan coming and shooting his arrows. As the boy runs ahead of Jonathan he fires his arrows well beyond the boy and calls in a loud voice for him to go "way back" beyond the rock to retrieve them. He then tells the boy to make haste and run for his life right back into the fields beyond to collect the arrows. The boy collects the arrows and returns them to Jonathan and does not know that he has been a part of the secret message being given to David.

Jonathan dismisses the boy, getting him to carry his bows and arrows back into the city, and he leaves him alone in the field. David emerges from hiding from the south side of the great rock and bows three times, touching his forehead to the ground each time in homage to the crown prince. It is another demonstration of loyalty and faithfulness on David's part towards the house of Saul. It will deepen Jonathan's grief, for he knows David's heart is pure towards Saul, but he is now clear that Saul's heart is full of evil towards David.

They greet as friends still do in the Middle East, with an embrace and a kiss on both cheeks. They weep over the terrible truth that will pit them against each other and lead to the death of one. They grieve for what they now know must unfold. They leave each other's presence with the repetition of the reality of their solemn covenant before God between their two families to support and protect each other as far as they are able all their lives. Psalms 17, 18, 54, 57, 63.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Our very survival depend upon being fruit inspectors in other's lives at times. We are to heed the words of the Lord in Matthew 7 carefully and fully. We are to accept that some are persistent and malicious hypocrites, and be ready to test such people so that we might be safe and the church we lead might not be destroyed from within. Let us be as harmless as doves ourselves, but as cunning as serpents, for the wiles of the devil and his people are evil indeed.

2. Friendship in the Lord is a valuable and vital thing in the running of the local church. The Lord desires our loyalty to Him, and also to all who stand for His truth. Let us be faithful and loyal to our senior pastor before the Lord. Let us be faithful friends to those who stand for truth with us in the local assembly.

3. Great grief is a powerful human emotion. It is normal at times to weep for the losses that evil and sin brings into the world. David and Jonathan weep for good reason, and it is bone fide to weep over things that cause evil to triumph.

SAUL – CLINGING TO SPACE-TIME STATUS – LOSING ETERNAL REWARDS

1. SCRIPTURE 1 Samuel 9:2 - 31:12.

2. BIOGRAPHY

Saul was the first King of Israel, reigning for 40 years from 1096-1056 BC. He was a Benjamite, being the son of Kish (1 Samuel 9:1,2). There is no record of him having any brothers or sisters. Saul was a very handsome man and unusually tall being head and shoulders above the men of Israel (1 Samuel 10:23). Prior to his meeting Samuel while attempting to retrieve his father's asses, Israel had demanded a king to rule over them (1 Samuel 8:19-22), to which God had agreed. Samuel anointed Saul as captain over the men of Israel (1 Samuel 9:16). Initially Saul was successful in his exploits, delivering Jabesh-gilead and defeating the Philistines. He was confirmed as King at Gilgal (1 Samuel 11:15). The turning point in his career was when he sacrificed and vowed foolishly (1 Samuel 13:8-10). Samuel secretly anointed David as the future king, and did not see Saul again till the day of Saul's death. Saul tried to kill David. He slew the prophets of Nob who had assisted David. David had two chances of murdering Saul but declined (1 Samuel 24:4-7; 26:7-12). He consulted with the witch of Endor and had his last meeting with the deceased Samuel who was brought back by God from Paradise, much to everyone's surprise. Defeated at Gilboa, Saul suicided, leaving the way open for David to become king.

3. EVALUATION

a) Saul began by putting the Lord first in his life:

- i) He had physical superiority (1 Samuel 9:2).
- ii) He was given the Holy Spirit (1 Samuel 10:9-13).
- iii) He was discreet (1 Samuel 10:27).
- iv) He was generous (1 Samuel 11:12,13).
- v) He had godly companions (1 Samuel 10:25,26).

b) He becomes impatient and proud.

- i) He relied less and less on the advice of Samuel.
- ii) Saul takes the priestly function which should have been Samuel's into his own hand against the will of God (1 Samuel 13:8-13).
- iii) As a result his kingdom did not flourish (1 Samuel 13:14).
- iv) Saul issued a vow which Jonathan broke when he ate honey but under pressure from the army he did not discipline Jonathan (1 Samuel 14).
- v) Saul did not execute Agag the Amalekite (1 Samuel 15:9).
- vi) Saul loses the Spirit of God (1 Samuel 16:14).
- vii) His frustration caused him to kill the priests of Nob (1 Samuel 22:11-19).
- viii) He turns to witchcraft at Endor (1 Samuel 28:7-20).
- ix) He commits suicide to end his life (1 Samuel 31:4).

4. PRINCIPLES

- a) Initial success and greatness in the spiritual life does not guarantee a rich life in old age nor future achievement (1 Kings 11:4).
- b) Pride comes before a fall. True fulfilment in life comes from obedience to the Lord (Proverbs 13:18; 8:13).
- c) Rejection of godly advice can be disastrous for both an individual and his family (Genesis 19:17,26).
- d) The Lord's way must be followed otherwise there is discipline (cf. Moses and the rock) (1 Kings 13:20-26).
- e) Failure to apply biblical principles to a situation can cause disaster to a nation (1 Chronicles 21:1-4).
- f) It was possible in the Jewish dispensation to lose the Spirit of God (Psalm 51:11). It is not possible for us in the Church dispensation to lose the Holy Spirit (John 14:16) -we either quench or grieve Him (1 Thessalonians 5:19; Ephesians 4:30).
- g) The witch of Endor incident teaches us that Hades or Sheol is in the heart of the earth.
- h) Suicide is the final superimposition of man's will over God's will (Psalm 31:15).

DAVID – NOBILITY

1. SCRIPTURE - 1 Chronicles 11-29; 1 Samuel 16 - 1 Kings 2:12

2. BIOGRAPHY

David was born in the 10th Century BC into the tribe of Judah. He was the youngest of eight brothers (1 Samuel 17:12). His father was Jesse. Unlike his brothers, David was a shepherd, in which capacity he learnt courage which he later used in battle (1 Samuel 17:34,35). He also learnt tenderness and care for his flocks, a side of David which was reflected

in his writings of God (eg Psalm 23). Like Joseph before him, his many talents were a cause of jealousy for his brothers (1 Samuel 17:28). When Saul was rejected, Samuel, guided by God, anointed David at Bethlehem (1 Samuel 16:1-13). God selected David to minister to Saul (1 Samuel 16:17-21), which he did, utilising his musical skills. David in his famous contest with Goliath showed himself as a courageous believer. Saul's attitude continued to decline. He became jealous of David, which resulted in David's flight from the King (1 Samuel 22:6-19). Eventually Saul was killed in the battle of Gilboa in 1056 BC. David mourned his passing (2 Samuel 1:17-27). At 30 years of age (2 Samuel 5:4) David began his reign of 40 years in Hebron as King of Judah. Seven years later he became King of the whole of Israel, reigning from Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:5), which he captured from the Jebusites. David's life, however, was not without sin and anguish. His scheming in conjunction with his taking of Bathsheba and consequent loss of his children is well known. He is nevertheless held up as the prime example of a man after God's heart and the great King from whom the King of Kings was to descend. David died aged 70 and was buried at Jerusalem (1 Kings 2:10,11).

3. EVALUATION

- a) David was not highly regarded by his father (1 Samuel 16:11).
- b) Samuel however was able to discern that the youngest son of Jesse was the chosen one of Israel (1 Samuel 16:12,13).
- c) He was able to assist Saul in times of stress with his skillful playing of the harp (1 Samuel 16:23).
- d) While acting as a shepherd he had killed both a lion and a bear (1 Samuel 17:34-37).
- e) He uses this experience when he faces Goliath of Gath, the Philistine champion (1 Samuel 17:39-51).
- f) He selects five smooth stones as there were five giants in the Philistine army, comprising Goliath, Goliath's brother (2 Samuel 21:19), Ishbi-benob (2 Samuel 21:16), Saph (2 Samuel 21:18), and six fingers and six toes (2 Samuel 21:20).
- g) In his flight from Saul, David has opportunities to ascend the throne by killing Saul, but does not (1 Samuel 24:4-7; 26:7-12).
- h) David showed compassion to Mephibosheth, the crippled descendant of Saul (2 Samuel 9).
- i) David's desire for Bathsheba causes him to cause the murder of one of his greatest warriors Uriah (2 Samuel 11).
- j) David confessed his sin asking that the Holy Spirit be not taken from him (Psalm 51:11).

4. PRINCIPLES

- a) God uses people who may not be of great importance in the world's view (1 Corinthians 1:26-28).
- b) Spiritual values are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14).
- c) Music has therapeutic values for some types of disorders.
- d) Previous experience and skills can be utilised by God in His service (Acts 22:3).
- e) With God nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37).
- f) The Christian soldier must be adequately prepared for all eventualities (the five stones).
- g) Violent revolution and coup d'etats never achieve anything as the new regime is almost always worse than that overthrown (Judges 9).
- h) The timing for change is in the hand of the Lord. Whether one is promoted or not is dependent on God's plan for your life (Psalm 113:7,8).
- i) True nobility is showing generosity and compassion to your enemies (Matthew 5:44).

Notes

CHAPTER 21**INTRODUCTION**

We enter the turning point in David's life here, from his time in the palace of Saul, to the fugitive in the wilderness leading a band of mercenaries and castaways from the army of Saul. David has had his formal military training under Abner, the general of Saul, and has had the political education of the palace at Gibeah, but now he has his active and practical education as a guerrilla leader, living in caves and forests, constantly on the run or under enemy threat. He will learn hard lessons through this time and he will become a warrior chieftain and sheik of the pastoral lands with many wives and children. It will be his final advanced training in leadership, and he will learn both good and bad habits through this time.

From the events of this chapter three psalms have survived. Remember the book of Psalms that we have contains only a fraction of the Psalms that David wrote. He writes Psalm 52 to reflect his emotion and thoughts when Doeg the Edomite wipes out the priests of Nob. He writes Psalm 34 and 56 to reflect his thinking when he had to pretend he was mad before the king of Gath and flee from him. He had written Psalm 59 when he was being hunted by the men of Saul's household and had to flee to Samuel, and many others through this time.

If you read these Psalms in the correct time order you can see the growing trust David is developing in the protection of the Lord, and the Lord's plan for his life. **Psalms 59:16-17, 52:8-9, 34:8-11, 18-22, 56:3-4, 9-13.** These are written after the event on reflection, and so we see David's spiritual growth through these events, and his learning from the sad consequences of his actions and at times his lack of prayer early enough to avoid catastrophe.

1 SAMUEL 21:1-15

21:1 Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee? **2** And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place. **3** Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present. **4** And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. **5** And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel. **6** So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away. **7** Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul. **8** And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste. **9** And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give it me. **10** And David arose and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. **11** And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands? **12** And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath. **13** And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard. **14** Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me? **15** Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. David cannot head for Ramah again, as that is the first place Saul will send his cavalry, and David cannot outrun the forces that will be hunting him. He must use guile and cunning and lie low as he moves about that land. He must try not to be seen and recognised. Ramah is north east from Gibeah, and so he heads south-east for Nob. He heads for Nob, where the tabernacle is set up again and operational. We do not know the time delay in its operation, between its return from Philistine captivity and being established with daily worship again. 1 Samuel 4:11, 5:1, 7:1-2, 14:35.

It would appear that even though the priesthood re-establishes worship at Nob after the destruction of Shiloh, it is after at least twenty years of hiding the ark and the utensils of the tabernacle. It would also appear that the worship which is re-established does not draw all the people back to Mosaic practise and may not be complete. The tabernacle may not be the one that was set up in the wilderness, as that was probably destroyed by the Philistines at Shiloh, and this one has a temporary feel to it, and will be replaced by David when he brings the ark to Jerusalem. 2 Samuel 6:17. Even Samuel offers sacrifices in a number of places and conducts worship around the land, but does not apparently worship himself at Nob. We must be careful of conclusions drawn however, as the writer may simply not mention the regular national sacrifices at Nob, simply because they were regular and ordinary. The fate of the tent/tabernacle will be covered later.

It may have been that the tabernacle there functioned well and was popular, but that is not the impression the writer gives in this history. We can only speculate as to what the actual state of religious affairs truly was. David certainly heads straight to Nob to seek the Lord's advice through the High Priest there. This tells us that the High Priest was recognised as a source of divine instruction and advice, as were the prophets of Ramah. He is also immediately recognised by the High Priest and the fact that he is initially seen as being alone makes the High Priest very nervous.

This observation in itself tells us that David is well known at Nob, and has clearly been here before. It also tells us that the High Priest is aware of court intrigues and may regularly be there also, and seated in the court. He may have been present at the recent New Moon feast, and as it was a sacrificial meal, may have conducted the sacrifice for it himself. Nob is only around 5 kilometres from Gibeah. He knows that Saul is filled with hatred towards David, and that David ought to be moving about with his retinue as the king's son in law. He knows that if he looks like a fugitive, that may be because he is one, and so assisting him will make Ahimelech a traitor in Saul's eyes. David faces a choice immediately, and one he ought to have been praying about as he approached Nob, but he will make a grave error in his actions here.

Ahimelech immediately asks David the question as to why he is there looking like a fugitive and why he is alone and on foot, rather than riding with his army unit. David has apparently some men with him, but as we will see below, he has left them in hiding. David can take Ahimelech into his confidence or not at this point, and he makes the fateful decision to lie to the High Priest. David is trying to protect the High Priest by doing this, but it was an unwise thing to do, as it leads to the death of all the people of this town; men, women and children are slaughtered as a result of this lie, and Ahimelech's subsequent actions in assisting David.

Had Ahimelech had the choice to make he may have opted to support David, or he may not have, but the innocent people would have lived. David must face the guilt over the deaths of these people, for their blood is on his hands and he knows it. 1 Samuel 22:22-23. Good men are to be given the choice to support us, or not, in any great matter. If a grave choice is to be made, it is to be faced with prayer not with any guile filled "cunning plan".

David's lie about a secret mission is transparently false, but he apparently deceives Ahimelech. Even on a secret mission a king's man would be sent out with food! Nob is close to Gibeah, well within a half day's walk, so the fact that he has no food should alert the high Priest that something is wrong and he ought to have asked further questions and disclosed his own heart to David. Neither men are using their brains fully here, nor praying about this as they ought to.

In our day it is easy to be critical, for we question all things and are taught to do so. In this day it was often fatal to question a king, or even his servant, and sadly the High Priest has got into a habit of obedience to Saul rather than the critical and the prophetic attitude he ought to have had towards him. God's men and women are called to obey authority but be critical in the process, weighing commands of men against commands of God.

We ought not to use guile in dealings with good men, but give them the opportunity to disclose their hearts, and we ourselves trust the Lord alone for the outcome. The enemy alone is to be lied to, but a lie trips all too easily off the tongue when we are desperate. When we feel desperate we are challenged to pour our tortured heart out towards the Lord. 1 Peter 5:5-9. David will learn this terrible lesson as a result of his rash error here, and he will trust the Lord more fully later and express this in the Psalms from this time. Both men are wilfully and culpably foolish in this interaction.

As we will see in his run to Gath, David is still thinking and plotting too much and praying too little in these first few days on the run. We must excuse him for this, for the Lord does, and he learns from this time and its awful results. David's greatness is seen in this character trait; he is teachable, and always ready to learn from the Lord and the things he faces in life. He makes mistakes, and people suffer as a result, but as a result he softens his heart towards the Lord, whereas Saul hardens his heart. Let us be like David, and change direction when we fail to walk as we should. Proverbs 3:1-7.

Verses 4 – 9. Ahimelech may be lying to David here, for the tents and houses of the priests are near by and someone will have five pieces of pita bread. The High Priest is trying to put David off here and just get him out of the place, for he suspects something is wrong. His error is in not asking David to fully disclose his heart, and he will pay for this with his life and the lives of all his family. We must also reflect for a second here, for God does not punish the innocent with the guilty, and this man will die, so there is much behind the scenes that seals his fate, not just David's guile and Doeg and Saul's evil.

He speaks of the shew bread from the tabernacle table, which was replaced every Sabbath, but could only be eaten in the tabernacle court, and only by the priesthood. Leviticus 24:5-9. The fact that the shew bread was available means that the day of David's flight was possibly a Sabbath day, when such a journey as he takes was forbidden anyway. This is at the heart of the Lord Jesus' observation about this event. Matthew 12:1-6. This observation of the High Priest does not put David off, and his men may have appeared at this point and so the High Priest may be feeling threatened.

He asks if the men with David have become ceremonially unclean through any sexual intercourse, and David identifies that for the last three days they have all been away from all women, but this is all play-acting. These three days have not been on the run, given the short distance from Gibeah to Nob, but have been in hiding close to the rock Ezel. 1 Samuel 20. David appeals theologically to the High Priest, noting that he is the servant of Saul, the anointed of the Lord, and is on anointed business, and therefore is entitled to be eating this bread, which for the Lord's anointed can be used for a common purpose. This is specious argument, but the High Priest gives him the bread without further question. Everyone is lying to each other and themselves here, and many will pay with their lives.

Both men are play acting and lying to each other, and it is a dangerous thing for godly men to conduct this sort of nonsense argument like devious politicians when so much was at stake. David ought to have disclosed his heart to Ahimelech and he to David, and then many would have been blessed and lived. Ahimelech faces a choice here and pretends he is not making it, but he is by not exercising his discernment and being honest. He is assisting David and needed to either do so openly and then prepare for the consequences, or refuse to assist him, for either way he would have kept his people safe. Choices – Consequences...

The interaction between the two men, and then the arrival of David's small band of fellow refugees, is observed by Doeg the Edomite. He is a hired herdsman, tasked to look after the royal flocks and herds and provide the animals for the king's table as and when required. He is wrongfully in the tabernacle enclosure but hides his presence, and watches and listens. It is said of him that he was "detained of the Lord", and that indicates he was there for some religious or purification purpose; we are not told any more. It is only later that David discovers all he said and did was observed and reported to Saul. David and Ahimelech have not been careful enough to ensure their conversation was not overheard.

Doeg is an evil and ruthless man who cares only for the money he can make and the political position and power he can wield. He has financial influence but seeks a more powerful role in the court. He sees that through this information he will have the chance to exercise greater power, and also strike a blow against the faith of Israel. This man is a servant of the satanic religion of Edom, but pretending to follow the faith of Israel and respect the priesthood's rules. He has taken the priests food and hospitality while he pretended that he was careful of spiritual things, but he will callously murder them all. Sadly there are always these "invisible" men about and failure to spot them is often fatal.

David secures food for a number of days for himself and his small band of men, and then he seeks weapons. His next reference to the "king's business requiring haste" is clearly a falsehood, for no king requires his people to run off in a panic without the equipment and food they need. Once again Ahimelech has the opportunity to ask for more information, or simply plead with David to give him the truth, but he does not. He offers Goliath's sword to David to take with him, as it was he who captured it. David readily takes the sword of Goliath, "for there is none like it".

This unique weapon is **not** what he needs, especially when he heads for Gath, where it and he will be instantly recognised. David does not need a weapon, for he is up against too many of Saul's men to fight. His only safety is in hiding, but he is thinking of fighting. Prayer is needed here and he will get to this spiritual place, but he is still stuck in macho thinking at this point. No matter how strong we are we need to pray and follow the Lord's path alone.

Verses 10 – 14. It is always the wrong thing, as a believer, to select your course of action on the basis of any emotional feeling, and especially never to act on the basis of fear. David's fear of Saul here was real; there is no neurosis or paranoia here, for Saul truly seeks to kill him. Fear is normal in such situations, but a powerful prayer response to the situation is to become the "normal" response for the believer. **Psalms 23:4, 25:14, 27:1, Proverbs 14:26-27, 1 Corinthians 16:10, 2 Timothy 1:7, 1 John 4:18.**

David will learn to cast his cares upon the Lord, but when he moves out from Nob he is not operating in faith, but in fear, and he does so for the two or three days it will take to get to Achish at Gath. It is a foolish thought but a logical one for David in his fear based thinking at this point. He knows Saul seeks his life, and that Saul's worst enemy is Achish, and so there is logic in seeking his protection against Saul, but Achish has every reason to want to kill David himself, even more than he wants to kill Saul. It is David who slew Goliath and his brothers still possibly live in Gath, and David has killed many of their best men over recent years. David is carrying Goliath's sword, as if he is saying, "see, here it is, I killed your champion, now let me join you". Can you spot the potential flaw in this....

It was the wrong thing, but God is there with David, and he is kept safe in spite of his foolishness. His lie to Ahimelech has set him on the path with more lies still to come, but now he must lie to Achish. (The only way we stop a path of lies, is to bow before the Lord in CONFESSON and so return to the plan of God for us.) He must lie to Achish about his mental state. He must pretend he is mad to escape Gath and barely gets away, and in effect he has been "mad" to do what he has done! The Lord uses the pagan superstition that it is unlucky to kill a man who is mad, and so he is able to escape to the wilderness of Judah. This final destination, after a giant circular detour, was the place closest to Nob, and where it was truly logical to head in the first place. Read Psalm 34 at this point, and especially note verses 8 – 11. David gets this message through these experiences.

The men of Philistia are even confused about David's status, thinking he is possibly the king of Israel already. They have heard the song about his slaying tens of thousands of them and they are impressed, and seek his life to get even with him, yet also will accept him as a "fellow hero". David hears all this once he is inside the city. He has been kept under guard close to the city gate while the guards speak with King Achish. Fortunately he hasn't taken his men into the city, but has gone alone to see if it is safe. David is foolish here, but he is brave, risking only his own life, not that of his men.

David has seen mad men and he now play acts, totally as a mad man. He has been in effect play acting all the way so far, with Ahimelech, and now with Achish, and so the Lord really teaches him the lesson to be learned here. He must play act his way out of this situation and then never play act again. God calls us to honesty and integrity, never play acting. If we are called to lie to the enemy we are to do it with deliberate choice to deceive the deceiver, but we must act with faith, never have fear driving us. We are not to be desperate, but quietly trusting in the Lord.

David uses all the actor's tricks here, and salivates and slobbers, moans, groans, and writes illegibly on the gates of the house and the city itself. He keeps doing this until the message of his "madness" gets back to Achish, who is deciding what to do with this gift of their greatest enemy. Achish is irritated at the news, and tells his men to throw David out of the city, for they do not need any more madmen in their nation – I suspect he is thinking of his advisers....

While those with mental illness were treated with disdain, they were not treated badly, as they were seen as afflicted by the gods, and so the gods alone were to deal with them. They were exiled from city life but always unharmed. Their pagan superstition taught that if they harmed a mad man then the god that afflicted the mad man would afflict them. Proverbs 29:23-25. David will escape but he will learn never to play act and follow fear again.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. David is desperate and thoughtful about where he ought to go and the plan he needs to escape from Saul, but he is not prayerful enough. He errs in his lie to Ahimelech and it has terrible results. We need to learn from this awful situation and draw closer to the Lord in times of trouble, rather than further away as a result of our plots and plans. When our lies and foolishness is exposed, let us draw near the Lord in full and frank confession. Let us soften and open our heart to the Lord and make the changes required to stay on the path of truth rather than trust our own thinking to keep us safe.
2. When fear dominates our thoughts of a situation we need to get on our knees immediately and cast our cares upon the Lord and seek His way through the temptation we face. David's fear opens him to death in Achish's city, but the Lord protects him in his foolishness and he invents the myth of madness to save himself. David is clever, but he has been too clever for his own good, and so the Lord makes him pretend to be a fool to show him just how foolish he has been.
3. Let us not be foolish through fear, but rest upon the realities of the power and plan of the God whose children we are. Let us praise the Lord for His faithfulness to David in his foolishness, and praise the Lord for deliverances for ourselves through paths we have foolishly chosen.
4. God calls us to prayerfulness. Let us be prayerful and faithful to the one who has called us. Let us bow before the Lord in humility and seek His path through the wilderness of this world. Let us cast all our cares upon Him each and every day. 1 Peter 5:5-9.

CHAPTER 22

INTRODUCTION

As David flees further away from Saul he draws closer to God and spends more time in prayer. He pours out his pain to the Lord and his fear is opened up to be healed by anchoring himself in the presence and plan of the Lord his God. We have two Psalms from the flight from Saul and one from the great evil of Doeg the Edomite, whose massacre of the priests he will hear of later when he is in Moab. David has acted twice in fear and confusion; the first time when he lied to the High Priest, and the second when he sought protection with Achish king of Gath, but that time is now over. He flees into the wilderness of Judah and hides there in the Cave Adullam and there he draws a small army of discontented men to his side.

As an introduction to the events of this chapter and as further evidence of the spiritual changes in the inner life of David, read first Psalm 57, then Psalms 142, and then Psalm 52. Notice in Psalm 57 his cries to the Lord for stability of mind under the stress of fear and the realisation that he is surrounded by evil and hatred. He clings to the truth of the mercy of God and rests upon the reality of the character of God rather than his plans now. He sees that he cannot go on in human strength, but in the mercy, and the truth of God he will be kept alive and will succeed. It is doctrinal truth that stabilises the mind of the believer under great crisis, and it is the certainties that flow from God's truth that enable us to keep our focus forward and move on through our testing circumstances. Psalm 57:1, 7. It is the stability that comes from resting in the truth of God's character and Holy Word that leads to true worship. Psalms 57:7-11.

David takes time out in the cave of Adullam to pray and pour out his pain and anguish before the Lord. It is here in this cave that he likely pens the Psalms that we have seen so far. Psalms 34, 52, 56. He takes the time alone to weep before the Lord and practise the principle behind 1 Peter 5:5-9. He pours his heart out towards the Lord. Psalms 142:1-7. Refuge amongst his own people was denied him, and each place he went for help turned him away. The fear of Saul is dominant in the land, and none in their secure towns will give refuge or food to the starving band of fugitives from the hatred of Saul, lest they fall victim to Saul's hatred themselves.

David is overwhelmed by fear and worry. It is a good thing to read these Psalms in their context, for then we can be encouraged in difficult places ourselves. We can see here just how powerfully the Lord stretched David's faith by these testing circumstances in order to stabilise him upon the promises of the Word and the character of God that backs them. Hebrews 4:1-8, 11:1-2, 12:1-3, 12-13.

1 SAMUEL 22:1-23

22:1 David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him. 2 And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men. 3 And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me. 4 And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold. 5 And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth. 6 When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that were with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him;) 7 Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds; 8 That all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day? 9 Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. 10 And he enquired of the LORD for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine. 11 Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that were in Nob: and they came all of them to the king. 12 And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I am, my lord. 13 And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast enquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day? 14 Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house? 15 Did I then begin to enquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute any thing unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more. 16 And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house. 17 And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD: because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not shew it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD. 18 And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. 19 And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword. 20 And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David. 21 And Abiathar shewed David that Saul had slain the LORD's priests. 22 And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house. 23 Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. We do not know for sure where this great cave complex was, but the suspicion is that it was in the lowlands of Judah, close by to Bethlehem (probably only a half days journey away from the town). He is here for some considerable time and the Psalms we have looked at so far were written here, with many others that have not survived. We see in them his growing trust in the Lord and his resting in the truth of the character of God. David there gathers first his family to him, with their extensive animal herds and flocks. As his family, they are no longer safe left staying in Bethlehem. At best, Saul could use them as hostages for his return, or at worst their relationship to David would lead directly to all their deaths.

David now knows that Saul's malice is fixed, and while he will save Saul's life twice in subsequent years, he knows that these acts only win him respite in the year they occur. He knows that this king is bad, and mad with hatred and cannot be trusted now at all. His family stay with him and this provides the animals for food, and also around 400 men gather to him from Judah and possibly other tribes.

The time frame for staying in and around this vicinity could be as long as a year, and it may be longer, for by the time he returns to Judah having established his family safely in Moab his army numbers around 600 men. These are men who have lost their money or social position for one reason or another. David asks no questions of them. Their performance and integrity with him is enough for him. They have nothing to lose except their lives and so are the perfect "Foreign Legionnaires" for David to lead. They are tough, resourceful, and have no homes to return to, and they owe all they have and are to David.

David begins this next phase of his life as a guerrilla leader with these men, who he uses to protect the flocks and herds of the surrounding areas from the marauding southern tribes of desert dwellers. In return for their protection the men of Judah and Simeon give David's men the provisions they need. By raiding the pagan tribes of the southern wilderness area they also gain booty for themselves and obtain the wealth they have lost in their previous lives. These men are bound to David, for he alone has given them the chance to get back on their feet financially and build a new identity with new status and social acceptability.

Verses 3 – 5. David is the great grand-son of Ruth the Moabitess. Ruth 4:13-22. David never knew personally his grand-father Obed, let alone his great-grand-parents, as he was the youngest of Jesse's children and his father was already old when he was born, as Boaz was old when Obed was born. 1 Samuel 17:12. He can however call upon the Moabites for protection, and he moves his parents (and possibly his entire extended family with them) to Mizpeh in Moab where they are settled courtesy of the king.

Notice David's words to the king of Moab. He seeks the path of God, and speaks to this man boldly of seeking the Lord's path, even though the Moabites were not believers at this time. He is opening the door for evangelism here, and preparing the way for these people to accept the God of Israel when they see what God does with David. The Moabites will protect David's family, as they are "hedging their bets" that he will take over from Saul and so he will have an obligation to treat them well when he is king – its politics for them, but faith driven by David.

While there in Moab a prophet meets with him and gives him the words of the Lord for the next phase of his life. The prophet Gad encourages David not to return to the cave Adullam, nor stay in one place too long, but keep on the move within the land of Judah. He heads then for the forest of Hareth. This is another reminder of the changes in the land over the years, for the last ancient forests were destroyed by the Romans during their campaigns in 67-71, and 133-135 AD.

Verses 6 – 8. Saul's narcissistic and paranoid state of mind is shown clearly by these verses. He is totally self centred in his thinking and is not stopping and asking what the Lord has for him, nor does he seek the Lord's path through the crisis. He has discovered that Jonathan is in league with David, and we hear little of Jonathan until he dies upon Gilboa. It may be that he is under house arrest for a number of months or years as a result of this discovery by his father. Saul does not kill him, but it would appear he is not allowed to march with the army for some time, although in the next chapter we will meet him again and he encourages David.

Saul makes it clear to his men that they owe him everything, and the physical blessings he has given them, can be taken away. He clearly believes that he may be murdered by some who may be in league with David. Behind these words there may be a purge of army officers, and it may be that some flee and the additional 200 men David gains on his return from Moab may be the survivors of his unit that have fled from the massacre of their colleagues.

Saul rebukes all his men, and the speech here also gives away that he has surrounded himself only with Benjamite officers, and he appeals to their tribal loyalty to have them act against David and Judah. Saul is ruling by dividing the tribes against each other. When men use the "divide and rule" principle to lead others their leadership will be both divisive and destructive over time. Biblical leadership will unite people, never divide them from their fellows. The evidence for the presence of the Holy Spirit is unity, never division. The only people the Holy Spirit will separate us from are carnal and evil men. Galatians 5:16-26.

Verses 9 – 10. The evil Edomite Doeg is present at this meeting of the officers of Saul and he speaks up at the right moment for maximum effect. He reports fully what he has seen, for he knows that such information will gain him great reward. His report regarding the High Priest is slanted and damning. This man hates the High Priest for some reason. Was it simply his evil nature and satanic influence which led him to execute the priests? Did the High Priest and the others at Nob treat him badly so that he felt a sense of grievance against them?

We cannot know for sure, but we can know that this man is pure evil. We meet such people rarely in life and they can catch us by surprise if we are not alert. Those called to leadership of the Lord's people are to be aware of these people, for you will certainly meet them more often than you do in normal daily life. These men are specific servants of Satan and they have all his hatred for God's people and God's work.

Turn to Psalm 52 at this point, as it records David's reflection upon the work of Doeg. When he saw him in the tabernacle enclosure he did not spot him then as the evil man he was, nor realise his evil plans. He must have known this man from his time in Saul's house hold, but he clearly did not see the danger he had placed the High Priest in during his visit to Nob. David feels great grief and personal guilt over what occurs, as we will see in the last verses of this chapter, but his analysis of the actions of Doeg shows us the spiritual warfare that David now sees exists in the battle between Saul and himself.

Even though the persistent and consistent malice of evil men will wreak havoc and cause great suffering, the loving kindness of God is not extinguished by the evil of Satan's men. God will judge all such men and David sees that clearly, and he realises that judgment does not come when we think it should but when God determines it upon men. David sees that Doeg is a man who trusts in, and lusts after, wealth and power, but they will not stop the judgment of God overwhelming him in the end. David rests in the timing of God's plan, and waits for his opportunities to act, and until then he rests upon the loving kindness of God over him.

Verses 11 – 16. Saul may have called the entire priesthood from Nob to Gibeah to answer the allegations against them, or the High Priest may have stood alone here. By his question Saul makes it clear that Ahimelech is judged and condemned already. This is no court of justice, but a court of injustice, where the paranoia and rage of the king at the betrayal of his leadership by his son Jonathan, will be taken out on the priesthood who are presently at Nob. In God's plan one of the sons of Aaron from this course of priests will survive and the line will continue. Only one twelfth of the priesthood served at any one time, with the others in their Levitical towns.

Why do these men die and their families with them? We cannot know the answer to this question, and must rest in the character of God and know that they do not lose anything eternally by their execution. We enter one of the sections where the innocent appear to suffer because of the guilty's actions, and if we are thinkers, we have serious questions of the Lord over these things. We are to take such things to the Lord, and rest in His character, and know that He has an answer. I have had several wonderful friends die suddenly, and from a purely human viewpoint I can see no earthly reason for what to me appears like their early death. The key to understanding these things is to understand the difference between "earthly viewpoint" and "divine viewpoint". These are still questions to me, but I know I can rest in the Lord over them, and in heaven I will see the plan as it truly is, and all my questions will be answered; for I have some.

Ahimelech must have felt his heart sink as he stood before Saul with his royal sceptre, the javelin of judgment, in his hand ready to execute him. He knows that he has been found guilty before he even speaks and that Doeg cannot be contradicted. Doeg also knows that time is against him, and that the longer the priests live, the more likely it is that Saul will recover from this episode of madness and discover why he hates them and wants them dead.

Ahimelech answers the king in such a way as to try to get him to see that his hatred of David is wrong in spirit and in truth. David is the most faithful of all his servants and there is no reason for this hatred. He reminds Saul that David is his son in law and that he is so well respected that he as High Priest immediately believed him to be on the king's business. The High Priest denies any involvement in any plots against the House of Saul. He notes that he did not inquire of the Lord for David against Saul, either in a little matter or any great one. The accusation against him is denied strongly. Saul pronounces the death sentence upon them. There is no justice in this at all. And this man must just stand and await his fate.

Verses 17 – 19. The king then calls upon the servants close by to rise up and slay the priests before him. Now there may be 85 men standing before the throne here, or it may be the High Priest was alone and the others will be killed later; the writer is not clear on this. The Israelite leaders there are shocked by the king's order, but none stand up and say, "My Lord do not do this terrible thing and bring God's judgment upon us". None risk their own lives to join Ahimelech in the death sentence.

When good men are silent, the innocent suffer. None speak up and place their lives in God's hands. The king knows that this man Doeg is without any scruples and will do what he orders without reference to morality or God. Doeg kills the high priest before the throne of Saul with his sword and then, it appears, he will head for Nob with his cut throat followers, and they will kill 85 men and all their wives and children that they can round up. Even the animals are killed.

Nob is destroyed with the same thoroughness as Shiloh was by the Philistines, but this time by Saul's orders. The tabernacle must not have been touched, for it continues to function under the next course of priests who arrive to clean up the carnage and bury the remains of the dead. The writer does not tell us anything of this, but the next time we hear of the tabernacle it is functioning under the survivors of the priesthood amongst the other courses.

Saul has placed the city of Nob under a formal "ban", in accordance with Deuteronomy 13:12-18. This was to be reserved only for those who have rejected the God of Israel and followed after paganism. Saul, in condemning the priests, condemns his own family to the fate of the priesthood of Nob. As we judge so we will be judged. **Romans 2:12-16, 14:10-13, 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, 4:2-4.**

As leaders we have to be judges of the fruit of men, and careful judges of evil by examining the fruit in the life of those we lead. We must make assessments of men because otherwise evil men will get control, as they do here in the case of Doeg, but we must be careful and prayerful when we pronounce needful judgments. We must be prepared to suffer the same fate we assign to others if we are wrong. Psalm 52:5.

Verses 20 – 23. One man escapes and flees to David. We are not told how he achieves his escape, but he gets away and heads in the direction of David. We are not told how he gets to where David is, and even in the next chapter there is much left out from the escape story of this man. There is an amazing story behind all this, but the writer keeps his focus on David, and Abiathar becomes his priest and serves David for many years.

David accepts his share in the responsibility for the death of the priests and regrets his decision to go there, but he commits to protecting Abiathar. He realises just how far now that Saul will go to get him and any who stand with him, but he will still exercise grace and mercy towards Saul. This is incredible to us, for by this point we would think that anyone killing Saul would be doing God's will, but that is not the case. Saul is still the king and David will have respect for that and leave the death of Saul in God's hands and in God's time. He is learning to wait for the Lord and trust God to raise him up without his political scheming or any murders. He mustn't behave as Saul has here, nor justify Saul's murder!

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. David leaves the fate of Saul in the Lord's hands, for Saul is the Lord's servant and David understands now that the Lord must deal with this man in His time and in His way. Even when he has the opportunity David will not kill Saul. David has learned to await God's time to act and not rush ahead of the plan and in some misguided way "help God out". God does not need our help. Let us learn to wait for the Lord's action.
2. Doeg is an example of totally evil men who we may meet in our service for the Lord. These are totally satanically inspired and driven men who have no scruples and no morality at all. Do not be surprised when you meet

such people, but walk with the Lord carefully and prayerfully. Keep your guard up against such men and be like the Lord, John 2:23-25, don't trust anyone who does not demonstrate the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their daily life.

3. David spends time in the Cave of Adullam. It is time to pause, reflect, pray and learn from the Lord and there he gathers his men around him. We need to take time out at times to rest, recharge and reflect upon what the Lord is teaching us, but we do not stay there for the rest of our life. Let us be like David and pray our way to wisdom as we reflect upon what God is doing in this world of ours, and then say "Amen" in shoe leather and do the Lord's work.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

1. God's faithfulness is based on his unchangeability - Hebrews 13:8
2. God's faithfulness is renewed "every day" - Lamentations 3:21-24
3. His promises are sure. - Hebrews 10:23
4. The faithfulness of Christ continues even when we are unfaithful. - 2 Timothy 2:13
5. Christ is a faithful and merciful high priest - Hebrews 2:17
6. God is faithful to forgive sins - 1 John 1:9
7. God is faithful to keep us saved - 2 Timothy 2:13
8. God is faithful to deliver us through temptation - 1 Corinthians 10:13
9. God is faithful to keep His promises to us - Hebrews 10:23
10. God is faithful to us in suffering - 1 Peter 4:19
11. God is faithful in fulfilling His plan for us - 1 Thessalonians 5:24
12. God is faithful to strengthen us - 2 Thessalonians 3:3
13. God is the faithful partner of our union with Christ - 1 Corinthians 1:9
14. Christ is a faithful and merciful high priest - Hebrews 2:17
15. Jesus Christ is synonymous with faithfulness - Revelation 19:11

GOD CARES FOR YOU

1. God knows...
 - a) Our sorrows. (Exodus 3:7)
 - b) Our devotions. (2 Chronicles 16:9)
 - c) Our thoughts. (Psalm 44:21)
 - d) Our foolishness. (Psalm 69:5)
 - e) Our frailties. (Psalm 103:14)
 - f) Our deeds. (Psalm 139:2)
 - g) Our words. (Psalm 139:4)
 - h) The composition of the universe. (Psalm 147:4)
 - i) All things. (Proverbs 15:3)
 - j) Our needs. (Matthew 6:32)
 - k) About animal creation. (Matthew 10:29)
 - l) Mankind. (Matthew 10:30)
 - m) What might or could have been. (Matthew 11:23)
 - n) His own. (John 10:14)
 - o) Past, present and future. (Acts 15:18)
2. God is able to...
 - a) Save forever those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ - Hebrews 7:25
 - b) Supply every need - 2 Corinthians 9:8
 - c) Deliver all who are tempted - Hebrews 2:18
 - d) Sustain the weak believer and make him stand - Romans 14:4
 - e) Keep us from falling and make us blameless - Jude 24,25
 - f) Surpass all that we could ask or think - Ephesians 3:20
 - g) Raise us up in resurrection in the likeness of His Son - Hebrews 11:19
3. With God, all things are possible - Matthew 19:26
4. God is in control. Nothing will ever happen to you that you are not able to deal with. (1 Corinthians 10:13)
5. God's character is stable.
 - a) If God is for you who can be against you. (Romans 8:31-34)
 - b) No matter what happens God's love is stable. (Romans 8:35-39)
6. God's promises are secure for He is always with us. (Matthew 28:19-20, Jeremiah 1:19)
7. God's power is always the same:-
 - a) He will always keep us. (John 10:29, 2 Timothy 1:12,)
 - b) God does not forget us or lose His power to keep. (Jude 24)

c) Even if we fall away from fellowship we still are saved. (2 Timothy 2:13)

8. God knew before time what we would need in time and has provided for the supply of all our needs. (Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 4:16, Ephesians 3:12,)

9. God has the power to bless us. (2 Corinthians 9:8)

10. God is able to make all grace abound towards us. (Ephesians 3:20)

SEPARATION

1. Believers are instructed to be separated from habitually carnal believers. (1 Corinthians 5:10, 11)

2. Separation is ordered from apostate religious organisations. (2 Corinthians 6:17)

3. Separation is commanded from unbelievers where scripture is compromised by the relationship or marriage, business partners. (2 Corinthians 6:14 ff)

4. Separation is commanded from the human viewpoint. (Romans 12:2, Romans 16:17, 18)

5. Separation is commanded from pseudo spirituality. (Romans 16:17, 18)

6. Separation is commanded from those who seek pleasure in fast living - pursuit of parties, immoral situations. (1 Peter 4:4)

7. Separation is commanded from other believers who reject Bible doctrine. (2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15)

Notes

CHAPTER 23**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter covers a few more years of David's wandering life style as leader of the band of men who have gathered around him. He learns of the fickleness of men, but this time he trusts the words that will come from the prophet Gad, and later from the priest Abiathar who has joined himself to him. David wants to walk with God, and he has learned not to trust in men. Let us learn this lesson well. We are always to be polite and respectful to others, but like Jesus we do not trust ourselves to men, for they may be self centred and flawed. God' plan and power alone can be trusted completely.

John 2:24-25. "24. *But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,*
25. *And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.*"

The men of Keilah and of Ziph both betray him to Saul, but God over-rules all their plots and all Saul's schemes and David escapes each time they think they have him cornered. Jonathan reaffirms his love and commitment to David and expresses his faith in the future kingship of David after his father's death. David is encouraged through the times of great pressure and betrayal.

Our journey through this life will often involve confrontations with the sort of people that David meets here. We have a choice each and every day, to trust in men, or rest upon the plan and person of God. Let us begin this chapter with the prayer that we also might rest upon the rock that is Christ Jesus, for in him alone we can find rest for our souls. Psalms 37:7, Jeremiah 6:16.

Jesus calls us to take his yoke of service upon us, and fellowship closely with him each day, and then we will find rest for our souls. Matthew 11:29, Hebrews 4:3-11. David applies the lessons learned so far and casts his cares upon the Lord. Psalms 54:1-7, 55:16-23, 75:6.

1 SAMUEL 23:1-29

23:1 Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshing floors. **2** Therefore David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah. **3** And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? **4** Then David enquired of the LORD yet again. And the LORD answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand. **5** So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. **6** And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand. **7** And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars. **8** And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. **9** And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod. **10** Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. **11** Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down. **12** Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the LORD said, They will deliver thee up. **13** Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbore to go forth. **14** And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand. **15** And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood. **16** And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. **17** And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. **18** And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house. **19** Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? **20** Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand. **21** And Saul said, Blessed be ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me. **22** Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him there: for it is told me that he dealeth very subtilly. **23** See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah. **24** And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon. **25** Saul also and his men went to seek him. And they told David; wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon. **26** And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them. **27** But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land. **28** Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the

Philistines: therefore they called that place Selahammahlekoth. 29 And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at Engedi.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. David returns from Moab to the mountains and forests of Southern Judah. He has good intelligence gathering networks and they inform him of the next attack of the Philistines. A Philistine raiding party has besieged Keilah, a town of Judah on the frontier of Philistine country. They are there in enough strength to sack the town eventually, but the inhabitants have withdrawn inside their walls and are holding the attackers off at present. They were well prepared and are all fighting well, but desperately need assistance. By locking all the Israelites in the town the Philistines are able to loot all the grain that is not yet within the walls and this appears to be their primary objective, with the town to be besieged and destroyed next. This is not a major town, and the raiding party may be around a thousand men.

David faces this crisis in the Lord, not in his own human strength. He calls upon the Lord for an answer to his specific questions. Many believers do not specifically ask the Lord for answers to their questions, and so they lack specific guidance, and then they complain about the quality of the Lord's guidance, but He requests our prayers be specific!

It is unclear whether this prayer was addressed personally by David and that the Lord answered him directly, or whether this may have been addressed through the prophet Gad, as it will later be through the High Priest Abiathar. David asks whether he ought to go to relieve the town. This is an indication that he sees that it could be a trap for him, as it will clearly disclose his position to Saul, whereas if he keeps his focus to the southern lands and the enemies of Israel there Saul may not hear any intelligence of him.

His men have real fears about heading from the safety of the mountains and forests into the heartland of Judah and attacking so warlike a people as the Philistines. David takes his fears and those of his men to the Lord again and receives the assurance that the Lord will deliver the enemy into his hands. **Psalms 54:1-7, 55:16-22.** The even bigger issue is that the Lord will deliver them from Saul when he hears about David's exploit so close to his power base. It is a clear insult to Saul, for David's relief of Keilah will underline the fact that he has a better intelligence network than Saul, and he is ready to defend Judah, whereas King Saul of Benjamin is apparently not so keen to hazard his life.

Verses 5 – 8. David arrives in Keilah and catches the Philistines organising the booty of cattle and flocks and he slaughters them. The inhabitants of Keilah are saved and their goods are returned to them with Philistine weapons and possibly booty on top. They are blessed by the arrival of David, and he is in turn blessed by the arrival of Abiathar, the surviving High Priest who joins him after this battle with the Philistines. Saul has been distracted by his madness and murder of the priests at Nob and this meeting with Abiathar is God's purpose in the relief of Keilah, as well as teaching David further truths about the nature of fallen men.

Abiathar has brought the linen ephod, or coat of the High Priest with him. In this is Urim and Thummim, the sacred stones through which God revealed His will by flashing response to any direct question. Exodus 28:6-7,30, 39:1ff. We are not told how he secured this in his flight from Nob, but he has clearly been lying low in the vicinity of Keilah and takes the opportunity to meet David. When we follow the Lord's instructions we are in the right place to meet the right people at the right time.

Saul hears of David's arrival in Keilah and his work there. Note Saul's false religious fervour in praising God, whose priests he has slain. Notice this because you will face this hypocrisy and selective memory with all carnal and evil men and women. Satan's servants have selective memory when it comes to their acts of evil; Satan is ever the minimizer of evil. He will always deceive his people into thinking that their sin or evil is not as bad as it is. Genesis 3:1-7.

Saul acts and speaks as a holy man, yet he has murdered all the priests of one of the courses, and all their families. He forgets this great evil and acts as if he remains the Lord's anointed. All men like this act in a manner that is super-spiritual, and we need always to be wary of those who speak in such a spiritual manner, but do such terrible deeds. Matthew 7:13ff, 2 John 7-11, 3 John 9-11. By their evil deeds men are known, not by their fine spiritual words.

Verses 9 – 12. David is told of Saul's "secret mischief" against him. My only conclusion regarding this is that Jonathan has kept informing him of events in the palace wherever possible, and once it is known that David is here in Keilah it would be easy for him to get a message directly to David. Jonathan's later meeting with David lends weight to this suspicion, but it is only a suspicion. The writer is recording these events well after the time, and either does not have the information, or omits it. We can save these matters as questions for heaven, when we will have all the facts. One of the great things about eternity is that we will be able to see all the events of time and have the answers about what really went on at key points, rather than depend upon the often slanted surviving records of man.

The way the ephod and Urim and Thummim worked is mysterious and all we have is the speculations of the commentators and early scribes. It appears that they flashed an answer, with one for "yes" and one for "no". Questions had to be singular and specific and the questioner had to be holy before the Lord. David will be answered by the Lord, but Saul will not be answered in his prayers; he will however continue his pretence of spirituality until his last date with destiny on Mt Gilboa. As a leader of God's flock you will be surprised by the tenacity of the hold of evil over some men and women, so that even to their deaths they work mischief rather than repent. I have observed people create mischief for the next generation by stirring up evils from their very death beds!

David asks specific questions of the Lord but initially he asks a double question in verse 11. God's answer is singular, Saul will come down after him if he stays in Keilah. David must then ask the second question about the inhabitants of Keilah. Will they betray their deliverer? The answer is clear from the Lord, they will betray David if he stays there. These people know that Saul's wrath is to be feared, and the murder of the priesthood at Nob must have sent a shiver through the land. Many of the spiritual believers of the land will not respond to Saul's final call up of men for the battle at Gilboa, possibly for this reason, and so they will be delivered from his fate. The priests do not die in vain.

We are called to separate ourselves from evil men, and especially from those who pretend spirituality but whose behaviours indicate carnality at the heart of their being. David must now separate from the people of Keilah, without any bitterness or hatred towards them, for he knows the hearts of men. **John 2:24-25**. The biblical concept of SEPARATION from carnal and evil men and women is crucial for leaders to follow.

There are people we cannot fellowship with as their natures will lead others to think we are either evil or stupid ourselves. This is not arrogance on our part; it is protective of our reputation as godly people before the Lord. We must flee even the very "appearance of evil". Note Paul's "Daily Orders" for all truly spiritual leaders below.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22.** "16. *Rejoice evermore.*
 17. *Pray without ceasing.*
 18. *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*
 19. *Quench not the Spirit.*
 20. *Despise not prophesyings.*
 21. *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*
 22. *Abstain from all appearance of evil."*

Verses 13 – 18. David escapes from Keilah, and slips back into the wilderness of Southern and Eastern Judah where there were many "strongholds", (that is places that were easy to defend, and hard to attack without warning). This reminds us that alertness to danger is the hallmark of the active and spiritual believer who values their survival.

Faith does not preclude preparedness and military might, in fact it presupposes it. Like Nehemiah later, David is ready for his enemies by constant vigilance, and so the Lord is able to keep him safe and David is able to learn more of the Lord and man. Nehemiah 4:6-18, Romans 8:31-39. Foolish believers are often kept safe also, but they learn little through the experiences and achieve even less for the Lord through them.

David heads to the south east of Hebron, his later capital. Saul keeps on searching for him, and does so until the day of his death several years later, but the Lord keeps on protecting David. Verse fourteen introduces the next few chapters where Saul's constant hunting of David is recorded.

The wonderful thing about this time of his life is the visit of Jonathan to strengthen and encourage David. The two friends have not embraced since that day outside Gibeah when David was instructed to flee from Saul. 1 Samuel 20:35-42. Jonathan slips away from the army and meets with David in the forest. This was a meeting fraught with difficulty and danger to both. David's men may know Jonathan was his friend, but many would not recognise Jonathan and would have killed him on sight. God's hand is upon them both that they get away with this meeting without Saul knowing of it.

Jonathan's words here give me reason to believe, as I noted in chapter 20, that Jonathan has accepted that David will rule after his father. Saul clearly feared that fact, and did all he could to thwart it, but Jonathan embraced that reality and would have served as David's second in command. His words here are extra-ordinary, and express his great faith in the Lord and in his friend David. Jonathan should have joined David at this point and the two men called upon Saul to hand over the kingdom and retire. Such a thing was so unheard of that it is not done, and we can only wonder at why Jonathan does not seek the prophet Samuel's, or Gad's advice.

Had he joined David he would have lived to serve him, and we wonder what these two men might have achieved together, but this man was controlled by his father. Jonathan knows that his wife and children will be killed by his father if he fled to David. Sadly they will all die anyway, and this is the warning that we must not act to keep other people safe, but only ever act and follow what is right before the Lord, whatever the imagined and feared consequences.

As crown prince he acknowledges David's lordship over him. He tells David that his father Saul knows all these things, but will not believe them. 1 Samuel 20:13ff, 30-31. This also is a shock to read, but it reminds us of the sinfulness of man. We must remember these things, for the Lord calls us to be obedient to Him alone and not to trust in men, who will, when driven by their Old Sin Natures, follow after their will rather than God's for their life.

Verses 19 – 24. While Saul's army is still in the field searching for David, the men of Ziph, who David has been protecting from marauding southern desert tribes, come to Saul at Gibeah. They come with a message of betrayal of David. Once again we have the contrast of the loyalty of Jonathan, and the disloyalty of the men of Ziph. The location of Saul also tells us why Jonathan was able to slip away from the army, and also perhaps one way how the Lord kept the army of Saul away from David at this time. Jonathan, I believe, has been quietly making sure David escapes from any traps Abner sets for David. When the carnal betray/attack us, God provides his people to protect us.

The Ziphites are unscrupulous in their reports to Saul and clearly want to win his favour, or possibly just avoid his wrath. We are not told here, but it would not be uncommon for a king to declare all people within an area where an enemy was hiding from him as “enemy” and give orders for them all to be killed. It may be that this possibility, or reality, has led to these actions by the Ziphites.

David bears them no grudge for their betrayal of him, any more than he did the people of Keilah. He knows the weakness of men and does not judge them according to his own high standards. David now has the heart of the Lord in kindness and forgiveness towards those who are weak in their resolve to stand for the truth and resist evil. This readiness to forgive is a noble aspect of David, at a time where “blood feuds” were common and few would forgive enemies anything.

Notice again in verse 21 the contrasting false super-spiritual words of Saul. This man has now become the consistent hypocrite, covering his evil with fine sounding words. He rejoices, in the Lord’s name, for being able to attempt murder on the Lord’s man. He sends the men of Ziph away to watch David’s movements carefully and report them back to him. He sets up a spy network through these people to spot where David is and report back to the army that he now dispatches into the area.

Saul speaks of the tribe of Judah as if they are hiding David in verse 23, and this may be the clue that he is starting to plan to execute men of Judah who he thinks may be hiding David. David quietly slips further away into the wilderness regions. He avoids any show down with Saul, as he does not want to spill Israelite blood in a civil war. When it does finally come, this war will not come from him, for he sees it as the evil it always is. There is no godly counsel that ever leads to civil war, for only Satan delights in such things. Satan hates mankind, but God’s people are loath to shed blood.

Verses 25 - 29. The armies cross on opposite sides of the mountains of Maon. It is a close run thing, and Saul takes personal charge of the army at this point. David has to run with his men to escape Saul and at one point he is actually surrounded. At the crucial point a messenger arrives in Saul’s camp with the report that the Philistines have arrived in force in the land, possibly to avenge the defeat of their raiding force at Keilah, and so he has to leave off chasing David. He may not have realised how close he had come to catching him.

The name of the place recorded here could be translated “slippery rock”, indicating that David was hidden on one side of a large rocky outcrop and Saul was on the other side, and that David slipped down the opposite slope and escaped when Saul received the news of the invasion. God’s deliverance of David was eleventh hour, as it often is with us. The Lord tests our faith at times to what we feel is the limit, but the challenge to us is always to rest in His path for our lives and walk on in absolute trust in His power, person and plan. Joshua 1:6-18, 10:8, 25.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Rest upon the rock of your salvation believer. Rest your weary head upon the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ who gave Himself for you. Be secure in His presence through your daily prayer and Bible studies, and so draw strength to face the traitors to truth who will besiege you if you are a leader of God’s people. Do not set your trust upon men, for even the most noble of men can let you down. Set your trust upon the Lord alone, and shoulder His burden of daily service, and advance through the pressures looking to Him for your encouragement. If you need further encouragement the Lord will always provide the “Jonathan” to encourage you. Just be sure to be a “David” yourself!

2. Like the Lord, we must know that the hearts of men are deceitful and wicked. Remember your own tendency to sin from your own Old Sin Nature, and remember that others have this fallen nature within them also. Only Holy Spirit controlled men have freedom from the desires of their old nature while they walk in the Spirit. We must not be surprised when betrayal is more common than loyalty, and lies more common than truth. Such is the state of fallen man, and the Lord has warned us of these things. Trust in the Lord alone, do not lean solely upon your own thinking processes, but trust in God alone.

3. The Lord is often the God of the eleventh hour, but if we wait faithfully for the Lord, doing all He has asked us to do as we wait His deliverance, then we will be delivered. The Lord calls us to wait actively, never passively. We are always to pray, study God’s Word, and serve our fellows in the faith in all we can do while we await the Lord’s move to deliver us. Let us be active in the Lord’s work while we await His deliverance from whatever circumstances we face this day.

4. Remember the choices made by Jonathan, for he had the opportunity to join David against his own father, and he should have when he knew that David was the anointed king. He naturally chose to be loyal to his father and hope that he would repent, but the evidence was there that he would not. Our enemies are often of our own house. We must select as our “household” our family of faith, not our genetic family. Jonathan chose loyalty to Saul ahead of obedience to the plan of God and paid the price, he died under the same judgment of his father. He died in nobility, but could have lived the same way as David’s general. Ask him in heaven, for it may be he faced extermination of his entire family.

Matthew 10:34-39. “34. *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.* 35. *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.* 36. *And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.* 37. *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* 38. *And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* 39. *He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”*

CHAPTER 24**INTRODUCTION**

David faces one of the great temptations of his life here. He has Saul, the king whom God has rejected, crouched in front of him and totally powerless. Human viewpoint says to him, that all he needs to do is kill Saul and he will be king, but this is the same flawed logic that led Moses to kill the Egyptian taskmaster. Exodus 2:11-15. If he gives in to this temptation all that will happen is that he will be the murderer of his best friend's father and create a civil war. It is tempting to kill the apparent enemy, but it is fatally flawed logic that would lead him to this untimely course of action.

David will defeat this temptation, and he will trust in the Lord's timing, and he will not raise his hand against the "Lord's anointed", even when Saul has fallen into gross sin. David will trust in the Lord's deliverance of him each time he is threatened, and will rest in God's timing for the fulfilment of his own anointing as king. He will resist the temptation to "help God" with His plan.

All man can add into the plan of God is our own total obedience and patient faith; if we add human works, all we add is imperfection. God does not need our help for His Plan is perfect, and his timing is always right. He desires our humble obedience and our absolute focus upon His will, His plan and His timing in the plan. **Psalms 37:7, Isaiah 28:12, 30:15-18, Jeremiah 6:16, Habakkuk 3:16-19, Zephaniah 3:16-17, Matthew 11:28-29, 1 Peter 5:5-10.**

1 SAMUEL 24:1-22

24:1 And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi. **2** Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. **3** And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. **4** And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. **5** And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. **6** And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD. **7** So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way. **8** David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself. **9** And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? **10** Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed. **11** Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. **12** The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. **13** As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. **14** After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea. **15** The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand. **16** And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. **17** And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. **18** And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. **19** For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. **20** And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. **21** Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. **22** And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 5. Events may appear at times to be the Lord's path for us, but we need to be very careful of what others may call "providential circumstances", to see just what the Lord is doing in those circumstances. There is only one question for the Lord's leaders, and that is, "What is the Lord doing here?" Hasty conclusions and ill thought out actions may be repented of deeply later. David is thinking by means of God's Word and His secure promises to him. He is not tempted to twist a situation to see the justification for murder.

Saul's death at David's hands will serve no good purpose except to divide him from his friend Jonathan, and his friend is his encourager in the Lord. David sees that God does not use evil actions by good men to bring in good things. If he did then Saul would be justified in his murder of the priests. The political saying, "the end justifies the means", is biblically false and is an expression of evil, not ever the policy of God.

David is hiding in a cave around the hills of En Gedi. It is, as the writer puts it, "wild goat territory". It is difficult land, and even in that day was fully fertile only in a few places, but in that day it was good pastoral land for much of the year. It is a land cut by deep ravines, with many caves and hiding places for desperate men. It would be used later during the two great rebellions of the Jewish people against the Romans and it would take the Roman forces many years to eliminate the Jewish guerrilla fighters from these caves.

This wilderness area will be used again during the Great Tribulation period and be a hiding place for the soldiers of that day. David has been hiding out in this wild area for many months after his last escape from Saul, who after the battle against the Philistines returns to hunt for him with 3000 chosen men. In God's Plan Saul enters the very cave that David is hiding in to go to the toilet.

David is hiding in a cave with a few of his men close by to some sheep folds in the wilderness. David would have stayed close to the people of the area so that he could obtain milk and meat from them and one of Saul's army groups arrives unexpectedly, and David, with his small team hide quickly in a cave. As Saul is preoccupied relieving himself David's men whisper in his ear that this is clearly the Lord delivering Saul into his hands. This is a real faith/temptation and test.

David's men quote an apparent prophetic promise to him regarding this situation. This may be a promise of the prophet Gad, or it may simply be the men urging David to action as if God is saying this to him now. Whatever the truth of this, the "prophetic word" is correct. David is to do whatever "seems good to him". To David the right thing to do is to give divine warning to Saul that he is embarked upon a wrongful task here in trying to kill David. David will not twist scripture, or the words of any prophet, to justify the wrongful act of murder. **2 Peter 3:14-18**. The satanic nature of this sort of temptation is seen in that it is this one that Satan tries on Jesus, by twisting scripture. **Matthew 4:1-11**.

Before digging a hole in the cave floor in which to relieve himself, Saul has cast off his sword and cloak to the side. They have fallen close to David's feet. David stoops and cuts a piece off the cloak and does nothing else. He is later ridden with guilt even at this action, for he has by doing this insulted the dignity of the king by cutting a royal robe. 1 Samuel 15:27-29.

David can see that the Lord has given Saul into his hands this day to teach truth to himself and to the servants of Saul, and so prepare for his kingship later, for all will know that he is just and loyal in character by this action. Saul must be without excuse before the Lord, and God determines when "enough" warnings are given, not us as flawed men. David has also noted that "all Israel" has provided men for this hunting expedition to find and kill him, and so all Israel must know that he is not just a rebel of Judah, but the Lord's anointed over them all, just as Saul was.

Verses 6 – 9. David withholds the hands of his own men, who would kill Saul themselves, and so save their leader's tender conscience. David explains his reason to them as not acting against God's anointed, or out of God's plan and timing. Psalms 105:15. He does not want to do what Saul did when he killed the priests; he will not declare war on God, for then he will lose. God will lift him up, and so he will not lift himself up. 1 Peter 5:5-10.

David waits until Saul and his men are heading away and there is a safe distance between them. They leave the cave and quickly get to higher ground where they can escape from Saul with certainty. David is speaking truth, and he is in the Lord's hands, but he is taking all precautions against the evils of a demon possessed or influenced man. This is a warning to us all. Just because we are walking in the Lord's path is no reason to drop our alertness for the possible attacks of the enemy. We do not speak or act too quickly in dangerous situations. **James 4:7-8, 1 Peter 5:8-9**.

He first ensures they are all safely away from threat from Saul's archers, and then he uses the natural amphitheatre of the rocks to speak to Saul and his army detachment. He addresses the king respectfully and bows low to the ground as the servant does to the leader in this day. He then strongly challenges those who have been spreading evil lies about him into the ears of Saul. Evil men are feeding Saul's paranoia, as evil men do. The message that Saul has been hearing is that David seeks his life, and David will use the events of the last few minutes to prove that this is not the case.

David demonstrates the correct attitude to the ruler of any nation, and leader of any church. Romans 13:7, 1 Peter 2:17. As Peter identifies in his first letter, our challenge is to be like Christ when we face injustice and evil from men and from rulers. We are to ensure we are in the right path of the Lord, and then we are to patiently wait for the Lord's deliverance, in life or through death. **Isaiah 53:9, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:21-24**.

Verses 10 – 11. David now has the high moral ground from which to convict Saul of sin and bring him to the place of repentance. David seeks for Saul's soul to find peace and stop this now yearly pursuit. David addresses Saul as "father" to try to rebuke him for his evil plans, and this is successful at this point. He holds up the evidence from the cut robe, and this may create the flash back to the incident with Samuel and his rent robe. 1 Samuel 15:27-29. Saul is rebuked by truth and he does repent at this point, although only emotionally. He will drift back into evil in days.

David cannot win a lasting victory over this man, because he is determined to resist the truth and so will not hand over the kingdom to David. For his disobedience to the clearly revealed will of the Lord he is under the judgment of God and will not permanently repent of his evil thoughts, but David will leave him to the judgment of God. David will not get between God and His man. When God is judging a man it is best not to come between them! David rests in the Lord's justice and grace. **Psalms 7:1-5, 140:7-11**.

Verses 12 – 15. David places himself firmly under the judgment of God if he has done anything wrong. He feels guilt over just cutting the robe and he asks for the Lord to forgive and judge him for that if it was wrong. David totally places himself under the hands of God. **Psalms 7:6-11, 35:1-8, 43:1, 94:1, Romans 12:19-21.** David asks God to judge him, and he promises that his hand will never be raised against the king. David then quotes a biblical proverb from a book that has not survived, except for this quotation. The quote is an equivalent of Matthew 7:15-20, 12:33-34, and 15:19; “by their fruits you will know them”. Wickedness comes from wicked people, good deeds from good ones. By men’s deeds men’s hearts and will are known!

David then refers to himself in very unflattering terms. He refers to himself as “a dead dog”, and a “flea”. He plays down his significance to Saul and to the kingdom. Physically he smells like a dead dog. He is unclean and dirty from so many months on the run. He has no dignity of kingship. He is like an insignificant annoying flea, and certainly not worthy of such a great army coming against him.

Basically David is saying that the pursuit after him is unworthy of the dignity of the king. He does not seek the king’s life and is content to be left alone, and he will not threaten the dignity or position of the king either. He then calls the Lord to work upon Saul to convince him of the truth of these words and make him stop this evil pursuit. David rests in the defence of the Lord. He has avoided all reference to his being king, for he sees correctly that this is God’s decision as to time and place, and he will not politic or murder to achieve God’s position.

Psalms 119:153-159. *“153. Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.
154. Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.
155. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.
156. Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.
157. Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.
158. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.
159. Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy loving kindness.”*

Micah 7:5-9. *“5. Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.
6. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.
7. Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.
8. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.
9. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.”*

Reflect deeply upon both these passages, as they challenge us all to rest upon the Lord in the hard places we find ourselves in, and trust in the Lord to vindicate us in His good time.

Verses 16 – 19. Mentally unstable people are always emotional, and Saul is no different. Saul is not to be pitied for his mental and spiritual condition for it is the result of his own choices. We can literally drive ourselves homicidally mad; all we need to do is deliberately go against the will of God for long enough. Saul is responsible for his mental condition, but some are not, and deserve our compassion, as the Lord had compassion and healed many. Study the many and varied healing miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ in this regard.

We are to be careful in this area, and not assign all whose minds unhinge to the category of “judged”, but see that some are like Saul, and some are not. Saul becomes emotional and cries as he confronts the truth here. It is a reminder that emotion proves nothing, nor does it give evidence of any life changing decisions. Tears prove nothing except self centred emotional response, or chemical stress in the body. The body releases stress hormones through the tears. Emotion is simply emotion! It is not any emotional outpouring that proves reality beyond the moment of its expression. Emotion is unstable and changeable. Emotional people are “unstable in all their ways”. It is clear doctrinal and biblical thinking that the Lord requires of us, and with the associated godly “follow through” actions. James 1:8.

Saul acknowledges the truth openly, and speaks aloud for all to hear, that David is more righteous than he is. Simple acknowledgment of the truth has however never saved any-one! Refer to James 2:19. Read this verse carefully and get its full significance. The simple acceptance of a truth proves nothing other than that you have been overwhelmed by evidence. It does not prove that you like the truth, or that you will obey the truth, or that you will follow the truth thereafter. It is these latter things that prove you are a person of the truth. Saul acknowledges the truth, because he can do no other thing, but he will not walk in the truth, for he has long ago chosen to walk after his own heart. He will die under judgment, because of this persistently chosen path.

David has done the work of God here, for Saul is without excuse for his evil, and cannot complain about the results that flow from it. He blesses David for his actions, and truly David will be blessed for this act of mercy, and the Lord will show him greater mercy through his life. As David has forgiven Saul, and showed mercy, so the Lord will forgive him and show him mercy after mercy. The Lord Jesus Christ built upon this principle strongly in His ministry instructions to us all. **Matthew 7:1-5, Mark 4:24, Luke 6:35 - 38.**

Verses 20 – 22. The words here are amazing from Saul, yet they do not bring about the handing over of the crown that alone would have saved his house from destruction and the nation from the disaster of the later civil war. Saul requests that he might show his household after his death the same mercy he has shown him this day, but this is a fake show on Saul's part. He does not intend to show mercy to David, but David will be merciful to Saul's house, at least until they show they are as bad as their father and grand-father.

It is as if Saul has written off his own life and expects to die soon, and yet he doesn't follow through with his logic and make his peace now with God. Rather than rest in God's mercy and cast himself upon the Lord for mercy, he trusts in David's mercy over the survivors of his household. He will not repent and be saved from disaster, he keeps on trying to work deals that will enable him to keep on being king. He leaves David in the wilderness of En Gedi, but he heads back to his palace. His desire to enjoy his wealth will lead to the deaths of tens of thousands of his people, and the loss of nearly his whole house.

Saul will enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, (Hebrews 11:25), but he walks away here from the opportunity to have a noble retirement and know God's forgiveness for his great evils. The paradox of service in the Lord's kingdom is, that the more we give away, the more we hold eternally. Saul cannot let go of the trappings of power and wealth. The truly valuable things if held too closely are lost, or crushed, or slip through our fingers.

Matthew 10:39-42. *"39. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.
40. He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.
41. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.
42. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."*

Mark 8:34-37. *"34. And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
35. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.
36. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?
37. Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

Luke 9:24-25. *"24. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.
25. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"*

John 12:25. *"25. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."*

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We cannot help the Lord out by anything other than our faithful obedience to His revealed plan. We are to walk patiently before Him, and when tempted to give up and fall off the path, we are to return to the Lord, even though it may be wearily at times. Then we will be encouraged by His Word and know the comfort of prayers that we are assured are heard, even though they are uttered through our tears and total exhaustion. Let us return to the Lord in our grave testing circumstances.
2. Saul is determined upon his evil path, even when confronted by the goodness and righteousness of David. Let us not be fooled by the emotional tears of evil men when they are caught out in their sins. Let us trust in the Lord alone and keep ourselves safe when confronting any evils. Let us rest in the Lord's power to vindicate us and deliver us from all evils.
3. Emotion proves nothing other than that the person involved at this point is emotional. It has no evidence of any truth in it at all. Affirmation of the truth also does not make anyone a believer in the Lord, any more than the devils are "believers" in the Lord because they know He is indeed God. It is not feeling a belief, or believing that something is the truth that saves a person, but being gripped by the significance of the truth, and living in the light of it. Remember, the devils believe and they tremble, and genuine believers will do a lot more than tremble at the truth; they will rejoice and live in it. Faith without the works of faith is not saving faith at all. James 2:14-26.

CHAPTER 25**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter starts quite quietly and casually, but the news is catastrophic. Samuel has died, and he has died after a long period of time during which he has been unable to influence Saul or his court. While the mourning for Samuel was great, and the writer records that "all Israel" mourned, the king has not been paying attention to the old prophet for years, and his influence and ministry has been constrained by persecution from the king. We will only know in heaven exactly what Samuel did in these last crisis filled years of his life. He may have had significant influence upon the people of the land and prepared them for the united monarchy of David and Solomon, but we cannot know until we meet him in heaven.

My suspicion is that men like Samuel and the other prophets like Gad, had great effect upon the common people, and that it is this almost "underground" movement of God that is the main one through dark times. This is what we see in modern church history and I suspect it is true through all the ages of man. It is not the people who official court historians write up that may be the most rewarded in heaven. The humble believers simply doing their work in the local communities may have been more faithful and powerful than even the kings of their nations. This is the historic pattern.

It is faithfulness that the Lord rewards, not apparent powerfulness in the political world of man. Our present historian is following the story of David and Saul, but remember, as we advance here, that the common people were playing out individual dramas of spiritual warfare on a daily basis also, just as we ourselves are. It is our faithfulness to our divinely assigned task that wins eternal rewards, not our fame before men and women who think they are "the power elite".

1 SAMUEL 25:1-44

25:1 And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran. **2** And there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. **3** Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb. **4** And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep. **5** And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name: **6** And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. **7** And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. **8** Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. **9** And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased. **10** And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. **11** Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be? **12** So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings. **13** And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff. **14** But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. **15** But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: **16** They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. **17** Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him. **18** Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses. **19** And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal. **20** And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert on the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them. **21** Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. **22** So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. **23** And when Abigail saw David, she hastened, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, **24** And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. **25** Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. **26** Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. **27** And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord. **28** I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. **29** Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the

soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. 30 And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; 31 That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid. 32 And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: 33 And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand. 34 For in very deed, as the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. 35 So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person. 36 And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light. 37 But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. 38 And it came to pass about ten days after, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died. 39 And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife. 40 And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife. 41 And she arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord. 42 And Abigail hastened, and arose and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife. 43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives. 44 But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which was of Gallim.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. The writer introduces us to four key people who will be the key players at the centre of the action that will unfold in this chapter; Samuel who has died, Nabal who will die, David who will be king, and Abigail who will become a queen.

The chapter is over shadowed by the death of Samuel, for he has been the spiritual light for the nation for over seventy years. He dies and is buried, and goes to his eternal reward. The people gather and mourn for him and he is buried in Ramah where he lived and served. The cycle of life is over for Samuel, and his death reminds us all that the only thing that matters for us in our brief time upon this earth is our service for the Lord. **Luke 12:16-31, 16:19-31.**

The death, burial, and mourning for Samuel, will be strongly contrasted to the death and burial of Nabal later; for he is a man who will be buried and forgotten. There are men who make history, men who read history, and men who are buried in the dust of history. Samuel is in the first category, and Nabal in the last. Where will you be believer?

The writer doesn't have to record the character of Samuel, for he is well known, but he introduces us to the two new people. Nabal is by name a "fool". This is a hard name to have for anyone who doesn't have great character and a funny or happy disposition, but this man apparently has neither.

Whatever good reasons his parents may have had for calling him foolish, they are all certainly well gone by his adult life. He is wealthy and successful, but foolish in his attitudes and arrogant in his estimation of his power and influence. He has a track record of dog-like behaviours towards others, and he is evil. He is a descendent of Caleb, but lacks the dignity and character of his ancestor. God has no grand-children, and each generation must actively live up to the legacy of their godly fore-fathers. He does not have what we now call "emotional intelligence". He also lacks common sense.

David has over 600 armed men who are experienced warriors and have fought many campaigns against the Philistines and the southern desert tribes. They have protected the farmers of the southern and central regions of Judah for many years now and are well known for their honesty and integrity. They demand pay for their protection, but their protection is real and valuable to the farmers. David is no mafia boss; he is the protector of the tribes of Simeon and Judah. Abigail is introduced as a beautiful, spiritual, and intelligent woman. She is one of the great women of her age.

Verses 4 – 9. David is on the look out for large farming operations to protect, and by this means support his own men with food and clothing. His men have protected Nabal over the last season and asked for nothing as they built their reputation for honesty, but this year he needs help to feed his men after the hunting by Saul the last year. He has had to move further into the wilderness region after the death of Samuel, as he suspects that Saul may intensify his hunting for him. David sends his best ten men to Nabal to ask for provisions and in return offers to protect his flocks again during the shearing when the southern Edomite tribal raiding parties can descend upon them to kill and steal.

David gives his ten men a prepared speech, and it is the sort that could be heard even today around the camp fires of any desert tribe in the Middle East. It is polite, formal, and respectful, but it firmly requests gifts of food in appreciation for the services rendered in the year before and in anticipation of the services being received this year. It is a "good day" for Nabal to give to David, but implicit in this message is a warning. The men of David have not received anything from

Nabal over the time they have protected him and his men and flocks, and the time is running out for Nabal to act properly and give what is owed for the work done.

Verses 10 – 13. The young men deliver their message while standing, and then are seated awaiting the response of Nabal. It is all formal and polite, but it is charged with tension, for the wrong answer here will quite rightfully bring a war party down on Nabal and all his men understand this. Psalms 73:1-20 records the words of the psalmist Asaph regarding foolish men and it forms a good introduction to this chapter, for Nabal is initially the sort of man that you would envy, but on closer examination he is a man fit only for judgment.

Nabal's answer is contemptuous of David, indicating he is but a traitor to his lord and like all other brigands and not worthy of the food and water that he has set aside for his own men. Nabal has no time for David at all and believes he is "a nobody". He knows he is the "son of Jesse", but the title is that used by Saul and may indicate Nabal is a man in Saul's camp, or at least he believes Saul will finish David off before he troubles him. He is very wrong! David takes four hundred men with him and leaves 200 men with their baggage train to guard their property and families. He is out to slay Nabal and all the men of his household for this gross insult.

Verses 14 – 17. The true assessment of the situation is given to Nabal's wife Abigail by one of the servants who had seen the men of David working for them in the wild hill country. He also reports the stupidity, arrogance, and unteachability of Nabal. A fool is defined as a person who will not learn from experiences; either his own or others. Fools despise truth, for they elevate their own opinions to a level above contradiction by others.

Narcissism on the part of Saul will lead to the death of many, and Nabal's narcissism is in a similar vein, and it will cost him his own life. Their self centeredness makes them impossible to correct or teach, for they admit no authority other than their own. **Proverbs 10:8-10, 23, 14:16, 15:5, 17:7-28, Ecclesiastes 10:3-14, John 9:26-40, 2 Timothy 3:6-9.** Let us ensure we open our hearts and minds to the Holy Spirit through our regular Bible study so that we never stray down the path of foolishness.

The servant knows Nabal and knows Abigail and so he speaks directly to her. She is a woman of wisdom who he hopes can take action and save them all. Such insults as have been offered to David could lead to the death of all of the household as a punishment. Abigail moves quickly, and because her husband is a fool and would forbid her doing anything, she does not tell him of her actions. Some ask, is it right for a wife to deceive her husband, even to do a good thing? The answer is here clearly given, and it is a resounding "YES". To save the innocent the fool must be deceived, in the same way as the evil man must be lied to in order to protect the innocent, as Rahab does.

Verses 18 – 20. Abigail moves quickly to prepare an ass-train of provisions for David and his men. She knows the importance of gift giving to pacify the anger of an offended person, and she understands that such forethought will be seen as a demonstration of her own regrets at what has happened. Proverbs 18:16, 21:14.

The fact that she can gather so much so quickly, tells us that it is not shortage of provisions that has hindered Nabal offering David provisions. She does not even empty the larder to ensure that David has enough provisions to be impressed and forgive the foolishness of Nabal. Nabal has so much food stored that he doesn't even notice this significant amount gone, and will later party on with a fraction of the rest of the food.

Abigail knows, from her husband's servant, the probable direction of the march of David's men and she rides quickly to cut them off. She reaches a pass between two hills and she sees them coming towards her. David and his men do not approach in a friendly manner, and the conversation may be had here with swords drawn. David is enraged at what has happened.

Verses 21 – 24. This woman is a great diplomat as well as being a most beautiful, brave, and intelligent woman. David's determination is to kill every man in the family and household of Nabal and seize all the flocks and herds, and the women and children, and take them all for himself. This was the rule of war in the ancient world, and worse could be determined upon a particularly devious enemy. Abigail bows before David and recognises him as her liege lord. This was the way to publically demonstrate that you accepted this man as your protector and accepted that you owed him everything he asked for from your goods. Abigail is accepting David as her lord. She accepts total responsibility for the foolishness of the answer given to David's young men and seeks permission to give her reply to the evil done to David's men.

Verses 25 – 29. This is a godly woman. She has been married to a fool but she has not stopped growing in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord, and she speaks often of the Lord. Malachi 3:16-18. There are some who say, "Lord, Lord", but their hearts are far from the Lord, but this is not such a woman. Matthew 7:21-22. The writer is strongly contrasting the fake and the real all the way through his story, for he wants later generations to be clear in their thinking about what the Lord requires, and it is real spirituality.

Note her words in her speech, for this is the fruit of a life that is spent in alertness and prayerfulness. Many people think that once they are married, or working in some area that their real spiritual life of service in ministry is over. Abigail is the example of what the Lord does when people remain focused upon Him alone. The Lord can lift us up from any place, any relationship, and at any age, for great service, for it is our spiritual positioning that matters. Matthew 7:21-23, 25:41, 1 Peter 5:6-7.

Abigail is wise and has been kept well informed of the actions of David. People who wanted to be were very well informed of events in the ancient world. They needed good spy networks, and that meant people in the household who hung around at the wells and gathered gossip and information from travellers as they passed. Nabal has listened to no-one, but Abigail has listened to everyone who is worth listening to, and she knows David's reputation and his character by his works, and her prayers have led her to the conclusion that he is to be the king and gather the people together in unity.

Abigail may have heard prophetic words from Gad or others, but she also has discernment and knows that David is God's man, and he is the man of destiny, not Saul and his household. Wise people could see that the house that slew the priests could not rule under God's grace and mercy for long. It was just a matter of time before David rules and Abigail recognises him as king; the first since Jonathan and Samuel to do so.

Notice the things that Abigail sees that God has done, or is doing, in David's life:

1. The Lord has with-held him from the slaying of the household of Nabal that he planned.
2. The Lord has protected him from his enemies, making them fools like Nabal, so that David has always escaped from them and prospered.
3. The Lord will build David a secure house to reign after him.
4. The Lord will keep protecting him, for he fights the Lord's battles and is without sin and evil in his life.
5. His soul is "bound in the bundle of life with God". What a great way of saying that he will not die one second too early because the Lord is with him and he is working out God's plan in his life.

This woman has blessed David and given him spiritual encouragement that is not flattery; it is truth. It reflects a repetition of Samuel's blessing upon him, and encourages David in this very difficult time.

Verses 30 – 31. Abigail notes persuasively that she does not want David to have anything on his conscience when he becomes king. She is wise here, for people can ignore their sinful deeds while they advance to the winner's platform, but once there they look back, and what they see can take the lustre off their victory. Abigail knows that David ought not to kill anyone in Nabal's household, and that the fool himself can be left with the justice of God.

Abigail has absolute confidence in the Lord's plan for David. She spiritually knows that he will reign as king over all Israel and asks that David remember her words when he reigns. David is halted from judging this man, and learns in a strong way to pass all things relating to justice over to the Lord. Read Psalms 43:1-5, as it may sum up the lessons of this day.

Verses 32 – 38. David immediately recognises the Lord's hand in the events of this day. He sees that Abigail's words have corrected his thinking and eliminated his anger. Her beauty is already working its magic upon him, and her wisdom has captured his soul. David gives special thanks that he has been stopped from his angry path, for he acknowledges that every man would have been slain by his soldiers for the evil done to him, and that such a course of action would have been excessive and brought God's judgment upon him. David receives the presents of food and thanks Abigail, and dismisses her with a blessing to return to her house knowing that her mission has been successful, and all her men folk will live now.

When she arrives home Nabal is feasting and is really drunk with the wine he had taken. Had David arrived that day he would have broken up this party with the death of every man! Abigail does not tell Nabal of her work that day, but the next morning, when he is sober, she tells him. He has a serious heart attack at the news and only lingers on for ten days before dying. God's judgment is upon him, but he lingers on for ten days, hopefully in order to deal with his sins before the Lord, and find faith in the end. His judgment has mercy at its heart and this foolish man is given time to die he doesn't deserve, and make his peace with God.

Verses 39 – 43. David has waited before acting on his love for Abigail, but he is thinking a lot of her through the days after their meeting. Abigail sends a message to David's camp telling him that Nabal is dead. David praises God for His judging of this evil man and for saving him from shedding blood unnecessarily. He then sends an embassy to Abigail and asks for her hand in marriage. Her response is formal and positive. She is ready to serve the men of David's camp as a servant. This was not to be taken literally by these men, but as the most positive reply to David that was possible. John 13:5-17. Abigail heads away to David's camp and becomes his wife.

There is no weeping and wailing for Nabal, the people simply move on past the grave of the fool. We can get foolish ourselves in this matter of funerals and what is an appropriate time for grieving the foolish or carnal dead. The death of a fool is of little consequence, and people ought not feel any obligation to grieve and pay their false respects to evil foolish, carnal, or pagan people who have died.

When Ananias and Saphira died the church simply buried them without ceremony or service and moved onwards. Acts 5:1-12. They would have said the Jewish prayers of the dead over their graves, but did not pause any longer. Let us not be hypocritical and sentimental, for both emotions are wasted time and energy. It is neither spiritual nor godly to pretend a dead person was a great saint if they were not. It is more than just hypocrisy and time wasting lies, for it may give the impression that the sort of life the evil person lived may be acceptable to God.

David marries Abigail, but sadly also takes Ahinoam of Jezreel as his wife also. Joshua 15:55. Ahinoam's place of birth is not the Jezreel valley, but the city of Judah close by to Hebron. It may be that she was a captive from a raid, possibly released or rescued from enemy capture, or that like Abigail, she was a beautiful local woman who caught his eye; we cannot know for sure. While David is not blamed here for taking these women as his wives, the practise of polygamy was

forbidden by the Mosaic Law for all kings. Deuteronomy 17:17. David was I believe wrong in this, and he will pay a terrible price for any lust he expresses through these marriages. We do not “get away with” any disobedience of the clear instructions/orders of God’s Word. Old Isaac didn’t get by with his sin and neither does anyone else.

David is however, not directly criticized for these two marriages, as Solomon was later. 1 Kings 11:1-13. The words there tell us that Solomon was judged for taking pagans and worshipping their gods alongside the true worship of the Lord his God. Exodus 20:1-5. Both of David’s wives in the wilderness years were believers, and apparently strong ones. They were beautiful, intelligent, and also loyal to him and his cause; they believed in him. But the question remains; was he right in marrying more than one woman, and did he have a problem in the sexual temptation area that starts to emerge here? The answer is not a simple one.

A married woman had protection from unwanted attention in any campsite or city of the ancient world, and David’s motives here may have been both love and concern for the women. While this may be true, it could open the door to his “rescuing” every beautiful woman he comes across, and that mental attitude is just a more subtle form of narcissism. Whatever the good intentions in these two cases, he will give in to sexual temptation more and more as he goes on and it will undo him, and through his polygamy and adultery he will face his worst tests and most serious divine discipline.

David seeks the comfort of beautiful women in his wanderings, and while this is normal, he ought to have had one wife, and that should have been Abigail alone. This woman appears to be God’s right woman for him, but sadly he will add many others, and even more sadly Solomon will follow his bad example without the spiritual discernment of David. The Mosaic Law was very clear. Read again **Deuteronomy 17:14-20**. No-one ever gets away with breaking the Lord’s Laws, for they are there for our blessing, and to ignore them is to place oneself outside the place of blessing.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We will not die one second early as we walk the Plan of God for our lives. David has complete security within the plan of God for his life, and so do we. The Lord seeks our obedience to the Plan and then we have absolute safety in all we do. Let us relax in the Plan and trust the Lord in all things, and so live each and every day worthy of the mourning of our peers, and the thankfulness of our descendants.
2. When great believers die it does not stop or even hinder the plan of God, for all the details of time are in the plan. Samuel’s death does not stop anything, and David is encouraged by others and by the Holy Spirit within him to simply maintain his advance in the Lord’s path for him. Let us grieve the great who have been our mentors in the faith, but let us honour their memory by advancing in greater strength towards our own divinely appointed goals. Let us not waste too much time visiting cemeteries but honour the godly dead by living as they set us the example.
3. Let us not get sentimental about the stupid or carnal dead. We are neither to mourn nor weep for those who have gone to death in their foolishness and carnality. Let us remember that funerals are useful as means for us to encourage the survivors with Bible doctrine, they are not to be focused upon the dead person. Once we have supported the surviving people who grieve their loss, we are to set them the correct example by walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our job is to move steadily forward to our own date with death, for it is not the angel of death that takes us, but the Lord who welcomes us home. Acts 7:55-56, 60, 2 Corinthians 5:6-9.

REFLECTION UPON OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE – ETERNAL REWARDS AND CROWNS

1. Rewards and Salvation are carefully separated in the scriptures. Salvation is a free gift from God, rewards are for meritorious service in the power of the Spirit.
2. Salvation - a free gift to the lost (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 6:23, John 4:10), an everlasting possession (John 3:36, John 5:24, John 6:47).
3. Rewards - to the saved who faithfully work for the Lord (1 Corinthians 9:24, 25, Revelation 22:12), distributed at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10), which takes place after the Rapture of the Church (Revelation 19:7,8).
4. Rewards are often pictured in the form of crowns:-
 - a) The incorruptible crown - for faithfulness in exercising self control (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).
 - b) The crown of glory - for faithfulness in suffering (1 Peter 5:4).
 - c) The crown of life - for faithfulness under trial (James 1:12, Revelation 2:10).
 - d) The crown of righteousness - for faithful testimony (2 Timothy 4:8).
 - e) The crown of rejoicing - for faithful service (1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20, Philippians 4:1).
5. Rewards come after you have entered into the Plan of God through regeneration
6. Rewards are based on the use of divine operating assets including the filling of the Holy Spirit
7. You can lose rewards but never salvation (1 Corinthians 3:14-15, 2 Timothy 2:12,13)

CHAPTER 26**INTRODUCTION**

Once again we confront the instability of emotion as the basis for anything. The Ziphites are emotional in their support of David and blow with the prevailing wind. Saul is also emotional and tries again to kill David, and is saved from death again by David's character and obedience to the Lord. David must rest upon the Lord's protective arms through this time, and he must resist the temptation to act on the basis of emotionality.

David is carried through these times of betrayal and malice by the assurance of the Lord's love for him, and the promises of God that are repeated by Abigail and others around him. David is used by the Lord to deliver the last warning to Saul. Saul has been saved from death twice, but there will not be a third time.

God has been gracious to Saul, but the time for his repentance runs out and he is judged by the Lord within a few months of this last meeting with David. Read Psalm 54 as the introduction to this chapter as it appears to come from this time period. As you read this short Psalm note David's growing reliance upon the Lord's protection as he faces the hatred of men. David will make another mistake and go back to the Philistines for protection, but the Lord will protect him even then.

These next chapters remind us that the Lord knows we are dust! Psalm 103:10-17. Read this whole Psalm, as it reflects upon this entire time period of running from Saul. God is gracious to Saul and to David, and He is gracious and patient with us. Read the two Psalms now and begin this chapter with praise for the dependable character of the Lord our God. We cannot trust ourselves, but we can always trust our Almighty Eternal Heavenly Father, our God. Psalm 4:6, 62:5

Proverbs 3:5-7. *"5. Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
6. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.
7. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil."*

1 SAMUEL 26:1-25

26:1 And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon? **2** Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph. **3** And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. **4** David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed. **5** And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him. **6** Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee. **7** So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him. **8** Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time. **9** And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless? **10** David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish. **11** The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go. **12** So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them. **13** Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off; a great space being between them: **14** And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who art thou that criest to the king? **15** And David said to Abner, Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord. **16** This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the LORD liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster. **17** And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king. **18** And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand? **19** Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods. **20** Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains. **21** Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. **22** And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it. **23** The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD delivered thee into my hand to day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed. **24** And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of

the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation. 25 Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. Once again David is betrayed by the very people he is protecting against attack by the southern Edomite tribes and the Philistines. David is seen by these people as a financial burden and a nuisance, and after a few years of freedom from raiders they feel they don't need him. It is always the case with insurance policies; you think you don't need them because nothing has happened. David is giving good value – but they resent him and commit great sin here.

Their level of betrayal is significant; they visit Saul and tell him exactly where David's main hide out is. It is the specific nature of the betrayals that upsets David and will drive him eventually to seek sanctuary in a Philistine controlled area, for he despairs of finding a community in Judah and Simeon that he can trust. They are his extended family, and he protects them, and they betray him to Saul every time. The hard thing in all this is that they are members of his own extended family of the household of Judah. Joshua 15:20-24, 55. The worst betrayals you will ever face as a believer, and especially as a pastor, will come from the people closest to you, and at times they will be dangerously carnal, but genuine believers.

Saul hears the words of the men of Ziph and heads south with his royal guard and instructs them to fan out, possibly in three groups of around a thousand each, to hunt for David. Saul stays at the centre of the circling armies pitched in the very place that was previously David's main campsite. It is an area David knows like the back of his hand and that works against Saul.

David stays in the wilderness area where he can disperse his men and lie low, allowing the major forces of Saul to pass them with each sweep they make. David uses individual spies who can move without being seen, to locate the enemy forces and report back to him in his various wilderness hide outs. By lying low and offering no contact with the forces of Saul he increases the frustration of Saul, and ensures he fights no pitched battle he cannot win against the numerically superior forces of Saul.

This is perfect guerrilla warfare strategy and was used by General Grivas in the war in Cyprus, and by the Jewish Haganah forces in Palestine, both against the numerically superior British forces. It is at the heart of Mao Tse Tung's 20th century Guerrilla warfare doctrine, "The enemy concentrates we disperse, the enemy attacks, we withdraw, the enemy camps, we surround, the enemy retreats, we attack". These men are referred to as the founders of the doctrine of guerrilla warfare, but David is ahead of them all by 3000 years!

Verses 5 – 7. Once he knows where the king's camp is located David approaches the camp at night to see the nature of Saul's camp and look for the divine opportunity to do something that will be useful. As David knows the area around this place very well, he can approach the camp without being seen. It is clearly a star lit and possibly also a moon lit night. He can see the army of Saul on the hill side in a good defensive position, with a trench dug around the top, and Saul asleep within the inner citadel so made by the trench.

By sleeping there the king had placed himself at the strong point of the hill and in the place where his men could form up below him and he could direct them. By sleeping possibly in the trench itself, he was all but invisible to those looking across to the camp, and so he would be very hard to hit by anyone firing a volley of arrows across at him. To kill the enemy leader by a volley of arrows was a good tactic, as a leaderless army was easier to defeat.

To all human appearance Saul was asleep in a very safe position surrounded by his men, but God's hand was with David and God's plan called for David to give one last message to Saul, a message of final warning to repent, stop hunting David, and hand over the kingdom to David.

David calls upon his bravest of the brave and asks who will go across to the camp of the enemy. He is seeking the Lord's path for him in this situation, not any emotion driven plan. David is thinking and acting in cool and clear doctrinally based logic. He has learned the lesson of Nabal, and is not marching towards Saul's camp with any emotion other than a deep sadness at the whole situation.

Abishai, the brother of Joab offers to go with David immediately and joins David on this commando mission. They know where to head, for Saul has stuck his great metal headed javelin at his head by his pillow. This act by Saul was not an intelligent thing to do, as it advertised his exact location, and illustrates his arrogance and self centeredness. David can use the metal tip of the great royal javelin as a beacon flashing in the moon or star light to guide him to the king.

It may also be that Saul does not have all his army here this night. Two of his thousand man groups may still be out sweeping through other parts of the wilderness of Ziph. David does not have to elude 3000 men this night, he is able to advance through the sleeping figures as if he belongs amongst them, for once he did. He may even know their passwords through the work of his spies, although the next verses tell us that he didn't need to know them, for the Lord has gone ahead of him. He will also know exactly how they spread themselves out around the king so as to take the easiest route through the sleeping ranks.

Verses 8 - 12. The Lord has moved ahead of the two men, for a deep sleep from the Lord has settled over this army and none awake. This is incredible, and yet possible where the nature of the terrain allows the two men to get past the guards on the lower slopes, even if they are still awake, but is only certain to be successful because the Lord has "gone before them".

Abishai is impetuous and not at all hindered by the words of the Lord regarding Saul's status as the anointed. He is sick of wandering in the desert and seeks the fastest way to the palace for David and himself. He is brave, loyal, logical, and very good with his javelin thrusts, but in this case, he is wrong. In military thinking the smartest thing to do to disable an army group is kill their leader(s). The only exception to this is when their leaders are either, incredibly stupid (and they will in effect work for you), or there are too many good ones, with good discipline to pass command over. It is not therefore good military logic to kill Saul, for you would also have to kill his sons and Abner, for there are several great military leaders in this army, and the death of one will not disable the army, as will be proved at the end of the civil war.

David also knows that it is not good spiritual logic to kill Saul. God will deal with Saul in His time, just as He dealt with Nabal. David has learned from the words of Abigail that he is to wait upon the Lord for the Lord's timing to destroy Saul; he is to leave Saul's destruction to the Lord. 1 Samuel 25:29-30. On both counts Abishai is wrong, and David will not act impetuously. Saul has been a moral and good leader, but he has started to slip into immorality himself, but we will not be told this until after his death. He is becoming more and more fit for judgment; David must just wait upon the Lord to judge, for then he will not be guilty of evil and subject to divine judgment himself. 2 Samuel 3:ff.

David sees that Saul's death at his hands will bring God's judgment upon him and his cause. Genesis 47:29, Deuteronomy 31:14, 32:35-36, Psalms 37:3-11. Saul is still the Lord's anointed, and God is responsible for his removal. Psalms 94:1-3, 23, 105:15. David is the new anointed of the Lord and it is therefore God's role to lift him up; it is not for David to place the crown on his own head one minute before the Lord's correct time. David sees that there is a day fixed in the plan of God for Saul's death, and David will wait upon the Lord for that day. 1 Peter 5:5-9.

David takes the spear, and the water skin from beside the pillow of Saul and the two men creep away through the camp, and none awake. The Lord has ensured that the men of Saul are sound asleep. God's hand is upon His obedient servant, whereas had he slain Saul the entire camp would have roused and killed David and Abishai in a second. God's path is the best path, but each of us must be like David and diligently seek it. Deuteronomy 11:13, 22, 13:14, Proverbs 11:27, Hebrews 11:6, 12:15.

Verses 13 – 16. David does then what he has done only a year before after the incident in the cave. He heads to a far hill where it is easy to make an escape back into the wilderness from. 1 Samuel 24. He then cries aloud to Abner and the king. He addresses his words first to Abner, who as the king's general, was responsible for his life. Abner is also the strategic "genius" of the other side and David takes the opportunity to challenge and mock him and point out that he is not as good as David is. This sort of warrior talk is common in Homer and in accord with the "spirit of the age" but it is not spiritual, and it is not righteous! It is easy to fall into cultural habits, but God's leaders are called to higher standards.

This challenge is not spiritual, as it ought to be, and Abner's resentment of David will create the civil war later. David's words to Abner are the sort of funny "ribbing" that one soldier will direct at another, but the humour here is going to have an evil flow on effect. It is the sort of thing the Homeric heroes, and Philistines, do to each other and leads to unnecessary deaths. We are **never to copy evil men's habits!** Matthew 7:13-23!!!!

David really insults Abner in his words and calls for the death penalty upon him. There is humour here, but also seriousness, for this was the penalty for the general who did not keep their trust and protect the king. David could have simply said, "the Lord has caused a deep sleep to come upon you all so that I could do this, and this is the last warning to you all to lay down your sceptre voluntarily, and acknowledge the will of the Lord". This does not occur, and the legacy of David's words is a long war between the houses of Saul and David after the defeat on Mt Gilboa. 2 Samuel 3:1-6. David holds up the javelin and the water skin. The javelin is, as we have seen earlier, Saul's sceptre, and in the hand of David it was a serious illustration from the Lord to Saul, that the true power had passed to David.

Verses 17 – 19. Saul now awakens out of sleep and like his army, straps his armour on and stands to hear the challenge from across the valley. In his sleepy state he recognises David's voice and becomes child like in his response. His emotional way of speaking illustrates his mental instability; at one point filled with hatred towards David, at another time, calm and loving towards him. His character is emotional, and untrustworthy. Saul is ruled by his emotion, and his family life is falling apart through this time in exactly the same way that his kingdom is fighting against itself. His failure to deal with the reality of God's anointing of David, and his rejection of the plan of God is starting to work out in his life in all areas. 2 Samuel 3:7. The young concubine Rizpah is just one illustration of this decline in the household of Saul.

David again challenges the hatred of himself, and the justice and righteousness of the pursuit after him. David draws Saul back to the will of the Lord, and invites him to question his motivation and see whether he is walking with God in this action or walking according to the counsel of evil men. Is this another dig at Abner? We cannot know the answer here. Abner will certainly show himself a carnal and corrupt man later. 2 Samuel 3:7-11.

Verses 20 – 25. David has challenged Saul to produce any evidence that David has encouraged people to leave the service of God and seek after other gods, for he has not done such evil things. If he had, David makes it clear that he will accept any death penalty visited upon him. David again refers to himself as a flea, and this time adds a partridge.

Saul recognises his sin and confesses it publically, but as we noted earlier, his confession lacks reality, for he returns to his sin later. Sin acknowledged but not rejected and turned away from is the chosen life pattern, and it will lead to judgment! Saul acknowledges he has been a fool, but he will still play the fool, and will not genuinely repent of all his evil before the Lord. God seeks genuine repentance and associated life change. If the life is not changed the repentance is not real. Saul promises he will not hunt David again, and he does not, but that is because he is soon to fight his last battle. He has had his last warning and will die the next time he faces the enemy.

David reminds Saul that he is before the Lord and that David has shown mercy because of the Lord's hand upon his life. Saul acknowledges this mercy and thanks David for it and promises he will not search again for him to do him harm. David offers the king the javelin back and invites one of the young soldiers the opportunity to come across and retrieve the items while they still speak.

In verses twenty three David asks for the Lord's blessing upon them both in accordance with their own righteousness. As he was able to kill Saul that day, David recognises that God is able to kill David any day He chooses and David bows before the Lord and recognises that fact. He prays that the Lord might deliver him from all evil. Saul recognises that David will do great things. Saul has been "among the prophets" and he speaks truth here, but it will not be for long, because he has chosen a path that is no longer the path of God.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Emotion is a guide to nothing other than emotion. Let us be guided by clear thinking dependence upon the doctrines of the Word of the Lord. If we are angry, let us learn to pause and reflect upon the anger, and act only in accordance with truth.
2. Opportunities to do things are not all to be seized upon from one perspective. David has the opportunity to kill Saul, but he sees that this is also an opportunity to save and warn Saul. David asks the right question, which is always the same one; what does God want to bring from this situation?
3. There is a time to die for us all. As we walk with the Lord our lives are bound up with the Lord in the bundle of life. We will not die one second early if we are walking in his plan for our lives. Let us walk carefully and with confidence; careful of sin, and confident in the Lord.
4. We all walk with God and in Him we live and move and have our being. Let us not forget it each and every day, for each one may be our last upon this earth. We are here only for a short time, and we are here to serve; let us do so with our eyes fixed upon the Lord.

REFLECTION UPON THE DANGER OF CARNALITY AND SPIRITUAL SLACKNESS - DON'T GO COLD

1. The big danger for believers is going cold in their love for their Lord. This opens the door to sin and evil. Satan's key strategy against believers is to distract and deceive them, so they drift away from the moment by moment fellowship with the Lord who loves them. John 15:7-17. Refer ABIDING.
2. The church of Laodicea is the case history of this problem. Revelation 3:14-22.
3. Paul gives the Corinthians church the remedy to assist believers from going cold in their love and obedience. 2 Corinthians 13:5. He gives specific instruction:
[a] Test yourself regularly, by asking some basic questions. Am I dealing with sin quickly? Am I studying God's Word often? Am I praying often through each day? Am I speaking of the Lord daily?
[b] Prove yourself a worthy servant. Am I serving the Lord productively? Is the fruit of my life spiritual or carnal? Refer FRUIT.
[c] Know yourself. How well do you know your gifts? How well do you know your Old Sin Nature weaknesses?
[d] Christ is in you. Practice the presence of Christ. Hourly through each day, is there a deep and meaningful exchange between you and the Lord? Is prayer and the inner dialogue about life and issues a real and present reality? John 14:16-17, 20-21, Romans 8:9-11, Galatians 2:20, Colossians 1:27, 3:16, Ephesians 3:17-19.
4. The church at Laodicea had gone cold through the distractions of the wealth of this world. Like Demas, they had gone astray from the true path the Lord had for them and chased after, money, power, social status, respectability, and influence. They sought a comfortable life, rather than a spiritually active life. 2 Timothy 4:10. This church was still meeting, and still had all the trappings of a church, but without the loving and real and powerful life of a church. They needed to deal with their situation of distraction and open the Word again, so that the Holy Spirit's ministries could begin afresh within them.

OVERCOMING BY FAITH

1. By faith learn to accept conditions as God's will for life and be thankful - Romans 8:28, 1 Thessalonians 3:3; 5:18
2. By faith maintain fellowship with God, walking in the light - 1 John 1:7

3. By faith consistently day by day examine your conduct, confessing all known sins - 1 Corinthians 11:28, 31, 1 John 1:9
4. By faith receive the Word of God daily as being more necessary than daily food - Matthew 4:4; 5:6, 2 Peter 3:18
5. By faith approach the throne of grace boldly in every case of need, requesting aid, casting every care on Him - Hebrews 4:15-16; 1 Peter 5:7. Walk by faith, not sight – 2 Corinthians 5:7.
6. By faith resist the attempts of Satan and he will flee from you - Ephesians 6:10-13, 1 Peter 5:8
7. By faith maintain the habit of thinking and meditating on spiritual values and priorities - Philippians 4:6-9

CHAPTER 27

INTRODUCTION

David despairs of ever being able to relax and settle anywhere, and after several years on the run from Saul he thinks again of the possibility of staying with the Philistines at Gath. Several years have passed since his last try and Saul's hunting of him has opened up at least one opportunity for the Philistines to attack the land of Israel while Saul was distracted seeking to kill David. 1 Samuel 23:24-29.

The Philistines are certain that David is the enemy of Saul now, and so he can approach them with the idea of an alliance. Achish can see that there is value in this now, for David's Battalion of 600 battle hardened men may tip the balance in any future battle. Also David has been as careful as he can to leave no survivors of any evil raiding group he intercepts and kills, so the Philistines don't have the full facts about him.

David is playing with fire here and will nearly be called up to actually fight his own countrymen, and by this time with the Philistines, he will be known by many in Israel as a turn coat. Politically it is disastrous to ally himself with Israel's sworn enemies, but David sees little choice humanly speaking. The sadness of my chosen words here is that David should not be operating on the logic of "humanly speaking" – but by searching the will of the Lord. God will work this out, but.....

Spiritually it is a near disaster for David to do this, and it may contribute, with his words to Abner to the civil war that will cost so many lives. There is tellingly no mention of prayer or prophet being associated with this decision to live with their enemies. We must be very careful when we seek safety and peace, and calm, for we are called to fight in the Angelic Conflict upon this earth, and what appears to be rest and comfort may be a comfortable trap.

1 SAMUEL 27:1-12

27:1 And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand. **2** And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath. **3** And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife. **4** And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no more again for him. **5** And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee? **6** Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day. **7** And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months. **8** And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt. **9** And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish. **10** And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to day? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites. **11** And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring tidings to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so will be his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines. **12** And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 7. David is in deep depression about his constant running and hiding from Saul. While he has had Jonathan being able to advise him of attacks at times, the last one was serious, and having been delivered twice he fears that next time Saul, in his madness, may mobilise the entire army. His fear drives him back to Achish. As we have seen before, Fear is a bad motivation to do anything, and when we know we are depressed we must be twice as alert to the danger of spiritual compromise than at other times. Depressed people are almost guaranteed to make bad decisions.

David heads back into danger, but it is not from Achish this time. Several years have passed since his last time with Achish, and more than ten years have passed since Goliath was killed. The Philistines were proto-Greek, Homeric culture peoples, and so they celebrated their heroes, but also were quick to bury them and move on with their previous enemies as their friends. They were people who celebrated war, and they loved to win, and so whatever, and whoever assisted them to win, was what they valued – they loved and valued winners.

David uses straight forward human logic to reason why it will be good to be in Gath. He is of course correct, and Saul does forget him once he is safely there, but that is only because David's presence with the enemy is a propaganda coup for Saul and solidifies the opposition to David that many of the northern tribes feel anyway. They will only grudgingly accept him as their king several years after the death of Saul.

Achish welcomes him into the city itself, and when you consider the size of ancient Gath, this must indicate that they have lost many men to the on-going war against Israel, and they have the space within their walls. Ancient Ekron covered possibly as many as 50-85 acres, and ancient Gath may have been the same size. These were seriously large cities with great walls in the Philistine period. Some have estimated 6000 as their populations, but at 50 acres of houses, (200,000+ square metres of floor space, with 3 story houses) the population could have been far higher than 10,000.

David takes all 600 men and their wives and families with him (possibly as many as 1500 people). The Philistines would not have had that many foreigners inside their walls if they numbered more than 10-20% of their total population. That would have been too great a security risk. I believe, that these cities had big populations; far bigger than we have estimated to date. David has the two wives until he becomes king in Hebron, where he will add others. It appears that he has no children at this point. 1 Samuel 30:5, 2 Samuel 3:1-5.

David finds the close quarters of the city too constricting after the open fields of southern Judah, and he requests a city from Achish, in which they can dwell and be useful as guards of their southern flank from the southern nomad enemies. The Philistines must have seized and destroyed, or driven off, the Simeonite population of Ziklag, and so it is given to David to rebuild, fortify and settle in. Joshua 19:5. The writer, writing many years later, records that it is still a royal city, meaning the descendants of David's soldiers who live there, are settled as royal servants, and probably have special obligations in taxation directly to be paid to the palace treasury.

Verses 8 – 12. David uses the opportunity while he is in Ziklag to attack the sworn enemies of Israel who dwell in the southern lands towards the borders of Egypt. He lies to Achish about the nature of his raids, telling him that he is attacking Judah and Simeon. Achish believes David and thinks that he will be building a reputation amongst his old people that will ensure he is a servant of Achish for all his life.

This device is useful for David and buys him time, but the many murderous raids he undertakes are not necessarily sanctioned by the Lord and he is a man of blood, from his partial responsibility for the murders of Ahimelech and the priesthood, to the many killings here. It will be this that stops him building the Temple for the Lord later. 2 Samuel 7:1-16, 1 Chronicles 22:2-13, 28:2-5. David does not "get by" with disobedience any more than we do.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. It is always dangerous to make decisions based on escaping from a known pressure, or from the desire for an easier life. Paths chosen for these reasons may be pleasant for a time, but they will have severe consequences down the track for us. David has a pleasant sixteen months, but the murderous raids he makes cost him the chance to build the temple later, and the city of Ziklag proves to be a temptation to the people he has been decimating, and they attack and seize it and all the women and children there.

2. David pays terribly in grief and worry for the decision to join himself with the Philistines. There is a saying, "there are no free lunches". This means that anything that you get for free always has a hidden price. For David, as we will see in the next chapter, it is a high price indeed. Let us stand with the Lord alone, and not be tempted to join with any pagan who promises us peace and plenty. Let us walk with the Lord, in the Holy Spirit's strength, through the hard times, and seek no compromise solutions that will lead to worse pressures than we have tried to escape from.

Notes

CHAPTER 28**INTRODUCTION**

It is always dangerous to seek a calm and safe option when the Lord calls us to walk with him in the more dangerous place. Over the next chapters we see the cost of David and Saul's bad choices. David will learn that a dark place with God is better than a bright place with the enemies of God, and Psalm 23 will be the result, but at this point he is seriously compromised in the eyes of his people. Choices = Consequences - again and again we see this principle operating.

Israelites see David in the army of the Philistines that gathers to attack Israel. The Lord will protect him, and the other Philistines will have no confidence in him and he will have to leave, but he is nearly caught in the battle that is to see the death of Saul and the defeat of Israel. While he is away his own people are captured by the enemy and his men must race many miles to rescue their own families, and they are ready to kill David before they do so, for they blame him for their predicament by tying them into the Philistines in the first place.

In this chapter we also see the final reason for Saul's death. His sinful life style reaches its ultimate point as he consults a witch/medium at the town of En-dor. None of his closest men and family raises any objection to his seeking this counsel and so they all die with him. God expects his women and men to stand against evil, for in their silence they support it, and in their weakness to confront evil they will die in its sphere of influence. All the women of the household will suffer for their complicity in the evils of Saul also.

1 SAMUEL 28:1-25

28:1 And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men. **2** And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever. **3** Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. **4** And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. **5** And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. **6** And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. **7** Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. **8** And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee. **9** And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? **10** And Saul swore to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. **11** Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. **12** And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. **13** And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. **14** And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. **15** And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. **16** Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? **17** And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: **18** Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. **19** Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines. **20** Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night. **21** And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me. **22** Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way. **23** But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed. **24** And the woman had a fat calf in the house; and she hasted, and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded it, and did bake unleavened bread thereof: **25** And she brought it before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. The writer sets the scene for Saul's last battle against the Philistines. The Philistines went to war every summer season, for war was their modus operandi as a culture. Their heroes were all warriors and fighting was their main occupation, with their war-slaves tending the fields where ever possible. They worshipped war and sex and their robust paganism made them formidable opponents.

Achish sends a message to David that he is to accompany him into battle against Israel, and that no excuses will be accepted. Achish's request to David indicates he may have started to doubt David's reports of his attacks upon the southern tribes. David's answer to Achish is a masterly piece of double meaning that is worthy of the oracle of Delphi. His answer could mean he will serve well, or that he will surprise Achish at the last minute and turn to aid Saul and Israel.

The writer then repeats the message from chapter 25, reminding us that Samuel had by this time died and been buried for some time in his home town of Ramah. He is mourned by the people, for they long for the days when a man like him was around to provide guidance to them. It is also mentioned that Saul has taken action against all who practised witch craft and other forms of paganism amongst the Israelites. Witchcraft was simply a séance based form of paganism, and all who continue in this practise today hold the old gods in reverence, and are modern pagans. In this action Saul was obedient to the commands of Exodus 22:18, Leviticus 19:31, 20:6, 27, and Deuteronomy 18:10-11.

All who practised witch craft that have been identified have been put to death on Saul's orders by the time of this last battle. This act of apparent spiritual obedience is to be placed against his murder of the priests, and seen for what it was, a smoke screen for his evil, and an act of rank hypocrisy. He hoped by killing the mediums/witches to take pressure off him self for the murder of the priests. This is simple political scapegoat behaviour. Saul hasn't changed and neither have the people, for the surviving witches are well known and easily consulted by those who wish to seek them out.

Verses 4 – 7. The battle is a major one, with the Philistine armies gathering and organising themselves at Shunem and Saul pitching his army camp site at Mt Gilboa. The two sides prepare and work up for the battle, neither making any sudden moves towards the other, and each probably engaging in skirmishes but holding back from full assault upon the other's defended line. The major difference in this battle is that Saul has lost his nerve for the fighting. He is engulfed by fear when he sees the enemy. He has a premonition of doom, and he is right – it is his doom!

He calls the priesthood and the prophets, and requests divine guidance by any and all means. He even calls the survivors of his massacre of the priests and asks that the new High priest call upon the sacred ephod with the Urim and Thummim. Remember Abiathar has been with David for several years now, and he has an ephod of the High Priest, and is able to consult the Urim and Thummim within it, but this reference here may indicate that he may have had a backup set of raiment. If Ahimelech was wearing his full regalia when he was killed then the original ephod of the High priest remained with Saul, and he was free to appoint his own replacement, and he apparently did so.

This situation is a reminder that it is not the ephod, or the precious stones within it, that were powerful, but the spiritual status of the men involved who referred to it. By the early days of David's reign there were indeed two High Priests, and this may be explained by Saul's appointment, and David's man. 2 Samuel 8:15-18. Saul receives no answer from the Lord, for he is out of fellowship and his sins against the Holy Spirit are now fatal, but he will yet add another to the existing list. Saul asks for a witch/medium with a "familiar spirit"/demon, to give him some guidance. Why would a believer ask the devil's people for help? Why go to the forces of evil when you are about to fight a battle against the forces of evil?

The only explanation is that Saul had fallen into the sort of liberal religious belief system that many are in today. Satanic religious theology teaches that "all roads lead to God", and that all means of contacting the creator are bone fide and harmless. Satan ever seeks to compromise the faith of believers by enticement to become involved in evil. The ineffectiveness of Saul's purge of paganism from Israel is seen when his men can identify a local witch close by with little investigation. She is across the other side of enemy lines, but they have her address.

Verses 8 – 11. Saul disguises himself and takes an incredible risk by going with only two others (who are unidentified) across enemy lines to see the witch and consult with her. He risks his life to get to this woman. They marched, or better crawled and crouched, and ran, for two to four hours at least to get to En-dor. He enters her house and immediately states his business, and the woman is very cagey, telling him of his own edict against all who practise these dark arts. He swears by the name of the God of Israel that no harm will come to her.

Now pause and reflect upon such a promise and oath. Is it not strange to swear by the God who you are not referring your prayers to, and who is silent towards you? Saul will honour his promise to the witch, but she has no logical expectation of that, for he swears in the name of the God, whose words he has rejected in seeing her, and who she rejects in her paganism. **Deuteronomy 18:9-22.**

Many seek answers from the Lord and wonder why they are not heard, yet the reason is that they have walked away from God, worked wickedness, and gone after the ways of evil. God's Word is very clear to us all on these matter. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me!" Psalms 66:18. Those who have not dealt with their sins and evil, have no right to ask anything of the Lord, until they address the wickedness of their life. What are the pre-requisites for answered prayer? Do a word study from your concordance of "iniquity", and look up every verse that speaks of this, and then see the entire teaching of the scriptures on the nature of iniquity and the need to address it in your life by true REPENTANCE AND CONFESSION. **1 John 1:5-10.**

Saul asks for the witch to call Samuel to the séance to speak with them. Before we go further it is important to understand the true goings on in any séance, be it then or today. There are two categories of séance; the genuine one, where evil spirits speak, and the fake one where a very good con man or woman runs the meeting using cunning and set occultic tricks and techniques.

The purely human con-artist form we will leave aside, for the great magician Houdini around 1900 exposed these for what they are, and he personally found no genuine evil spirit led séances. The majority of séances were probably in this area until more recent days, but the enemy has seen a great opportunity to deceive modern pagan people who seek the “spiritual” without meeting the infinite and bowing their knee to God. At the heart of satanic religion and spiritism is this fact; Satan offers religious experiences that do not require men and women to bow their knee to God, whereas God demands our worship.

Real demonic empowered Séances and other forms of demonism/spiritism have become major tools of Satan for these last days in which we live. In the genuine séance, where spirits (these are Satan’s demons – evil spirits) actually speak, you must understand that the spirits who speak are **not** the dead human beings, for they are either in hell or heaven, and are normally denied access back to speak to people upon the earth. We have Jesus and the Apostle’s words on this. **Luke 12:16-31, 16:19-31, Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10.**

This particular séance will be the **only one** recorded in history where a real human being is sent back by God to speak, and it will frighten the witch almost to death, for she is used to speaking with the evil spirits, and is comfortable with them. Human beings after death are under God’s orders totally, either for judgment or for blessing, and they do not return to speak, although the saved dead appear to be observers of our actions. **Hebrews 11:32 – 12:3.**

Verses 12 – 14. When Samuel arrives in the room the woman screams aloud, for she has never been confronted with a real “living” dead human being before, only demons pretending. She is full of fear at the unusual nature of this, and the reality of Samuel’s presence, as the great believer of his generation, is too much for this pagan. It is a reminder of the truth of 1 John 4:4, “Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world”. There is no power contest between the forces of God and the forces of Satan, for the forces of God are far more powerful than the forces of evil.

This woman knows she has been set up by Saul now and recognises him now as the king who killed all her fellow pagans. Saul tells her to be quiet and not panic, but rather tell him what she saw. She is granted the actual vision of Samuel arriving with an escort of angels (“gods” in her terminology). She then describes Samuel himself and Saul knows when he sees him arrive in the room that it is indeed Samuel who has come to them that night.

Saul bows to the earth before Samuel, yet he would not bow before the God and acknowledge his sin! Samuel served God and Saul had many opportunities to confront and fully deal with his sins but he has always found other things to do! He has refused to deal with sin and accept the will of the Lord and pass the kingdom whole and at peace over to David, so he must now confront the reality of his judgment in the battle that will be lost the next day.

Verses 15 – 20. Samuel is enjoying quiet rest in the waiting place for the dead at this time (Hades) and complains to Saul that he has disturbed his rest in calling him up. This gives us insight into the place where the dead waited for the Lord’s victory on the Cross, and is similar to the passage in **Luke 16:19-31**, that we looked at above.

Before the Lord’s resurrection all the saved dead went to a place called “Abraham’s Bosom”, apparently within the earth itself, where they rested, awaiting the Lord’s proclamation of His victory at the Cross. Once that occurred He led them triumphantly into heaven itself and Hades was emptied, except for the unsaved dead who remain in “torments”. Psalm 68:18, Ephesians 4:7-10. This is the area we know as “hell” today, and those who are there will one day be cast into the Lake of Fire with the one they have followed or been deceived by. Revelation 20:10-15.

Samuel is blunt with Saul and gives him the message from the Lord regarding his destiny because of his great sins, the first alone of which is mentioned. Saul’s refusal to slay the Amalekites is noted, not the death of the priests of Nob, because this first great sin sets the path for Saul that has led to all the other sins in his life by this stage. By mentioning the first Samuel makes God’s point; Saul didn’t reverse his direction and so it has come to the “Sin unto Death” this day.

The refusal to obey the Lord was the issue that Samuel identifies; Saul always felt he was “special” and could alter or ignore the words of the Lord, as he felt fit. It is this sin that is at the heart of his judgment, and it is this sin at the heart of our own judgment, if we follow narcissistic self-centeredness like Saul, rather than the obedience and submission illustrated by Christ. **Isaiah 53:1-12, Romans 14:7-11, Ephesians 2:4-13, Philippians 2:5-11.**

There is no hope for Saul and for the army he leads. All will suffer with their commander. Saul says that he sought the answer to the question, “what shall I do?” This is not true. He knows what he is to do, for he is to fight the Philistines who have invaded the land. He also knows what he needs to do before that; he is to make formal sacrifice, deal with any unconfessed sin, and humbly seek the Lord’s grace for the battle to be fought. He doesn’t need to seek further instructions, especially from the demonic.

The principles for warfare are well spelt out in Deuteronomy 20:1 – 21:14. Those who are in fear ought to be sent home before the battle, and Saul himself is disabled by fear. Saul’s real question for Samuel is, “how can I win this battle because I am so afraid?” Samuel’s answer is blunt and to the point; you cannot win this battle, for you and all this army are doomed to die or flee before their enemies, and they are all culpable, for all have failed to speak truth to this man

through the years. Samuel is by his words, going to remind Saul of God's words through Moses about the consequences of failure to deal with sin. **Deuteronomy 27:9-10, 28:25-26.**

Samuel asks Saul why he has sent for him, as God has so clearly and finally left him and will not answer favourably. Why does he expect Samuel to answer him positively, when God does not? Samuel reminds Saul of his words when Saul tore his coat, as recorded in 1 Samuel 15:24-35. The words of Samuel here make me personally convinced that Saul has known all along that David is the one to whom the kingdom has been given, and that he has deliberately and culpably resisted this clear word of the Lord from the very beginning.

Every step David takes he has resisted, when he was placed in the right position to educate David in kingship and then hand the kingdom over to him, with Jonathan as David's second in command. All of this was possible, but Saul's choices have made it just a glory that was not actually received because of his sin. How many glories do we miss in our own lives because of disobedience to the revealed will of the Lord? I still believe Jonathan may yet be David's 2IC in his Millennial Kingdom rule over Israel on behalf of the Lord Jesus. We will see...

Saul has been fasting all that day, and so when he hears his judgment spoken out he collapses with the mental and physical stress of the events. His fast is certainly not spiritual; it is most likely legalistic point scoring, and that stress has so tightened his stomach that he has been unable to eat. Any spiritual fasting is way too late for Saul; his sins have placed him beyond recovery at this point. He is a pathetic figure grovelling in the dust and the Lord has no compassion on him at this point, for he is in this place due to his own persistent disobedience and rejection of the truth about David.

We must look closely at this situation, for this is the place that everyone gets to who commits sin so often that they get to the stage of the "Sin Unto Death". It is sad and pathetic, but it is without remedy by this point. Saul is to die, and all who stand with him will die with him or flee in panic. Abner will live, and at this point we have no information as to why he is not mentioned in this battle. It may be that he was absent for some reason, for he survives and takes charge of Saul's house afterwards as a result. He is a thoroughly devious man himself and will pay the price for that also.

Verses 21 – 25. The witch is a pleasant woman, and has real human concern for Saul at this point. Most people involved in the occult and spiritism are pleasant people, and often their loveliness as human beings masks the reality of the fact of their service for Satan. Remember Satan is the "Angel of Light", and is the most beautiful of all created beings. **2 Corinthians 11:13-15.**

Satan's most dangerous servants are pleasant and attractive people; only their soul is corrupt initially. Their attractiveness as people is what makes them such effective deceivers of the unwary. That is why we are told to be so very careful around those who practise the occultic dark arts, for they refer to it as "white magic", but there is no such thing. They are servants of Satan and we are to flee from their presence. **1 Corinthians 6:18, 10:14, 1 Timothy 6:9-11, James 4:7-10, 1 Peter 5:8-9.** Over time the servants of Satan become ugly like their master truly is, but they can be hypocrites of holiness and look very good until close to their end. Flee from such people and all their evil works.

This woman urges Saul to eat, and also the men with him. A cloak is pulled over who these two men are. Are they his sons? Are they simply brave members of his guard? The details of this meeting become well known and are passed on to the writer, so at least one must have survived to record the tale and pass this on to the house of David or to Abner. Saul's cause of death becomes known, and the reason behind the destruction of their army becomes known and is recorded in the records for our writer to bring it into scripture.

The woman makes a meal as quickly as she can, and the men all eat and are refreshed. The preparation of a fatted calf takes significant time, and even cooked in BBQ fashion would have taken several hours from the decision to make it to the end of the meal. The men with Saul comfort him as he speaks of what he saw and heard, and as they reflect upon what they saw and heard (the total content of the words of Samuel may not have been heard by the two men – John 12:28-29, Acts 9:1-7).

The men leave late in the night and head back through the enemy lines to their own army. God preserves them from capture, so that they might die the next day, as it has been ordained. Saul has a few more hours to come to terms with his death, and through prayer make his peace with God. His suicide on the battlefield indicates he may not do this; only in heaven will we know for sure. This man, like Henry the 8th of England, may be saved, but their carnality and evil costs them all their eternal rewards. There are many major questions over Henry the Eighth, but it appears Saul was saved.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. All forms of paganism are to be shunned and avoided at all costs. To consult séances for answers to anything is to consult with the devil and come under God's judgment. It is evil and always will be evil. Believers are to have nothing to do with evil and all its practises. Even things that appear like evil are to be avoided. 1 Thessalonians 5:22. To deal with anything from Satan's side is to place yourself under the SIN UNTO DEATH as Saul does here. Be very scared of any dealings with satanic religion, for by means of these things many believers are deceived and die every year. Keep yourself from evil!

2. Saul's life is a life of missed opportunities. He saw the glories of kingship and enjoyed them for at least twenty five years, but in the end he lost his life and many died with him through his sinful refusal to confront the evil in his life.

Let us seek the Lord's path through this life and serve Him alone in absolute obedience to the Lord. Let us deal with sin quickly before the path down hill becomes too steep to return from.

3. Humanly good and lovely people serve the enemy, and their goodness may mask the evil forces they serve. Do not be fooled by the appearance or the speech of people, but seek the fruit of their lives and work, and identify the servants of the enemy and avoid them totally. Have nothing to do with the social society of determined evil people; after giving them the Gospel message leave their presence promptly.

REFLECTION ON THE TRUE NATURE OF RELIGION

1. Satan's religion is a humanly acceptable one: no sin, no judgment, no Saviour and no Hell. Satan appears as an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:13-19,26)

2. Many pastors in the churches are servants of Satan's policy, knowingly or unknowingly by spreading falsehoods. (Isaiah 30:12, Jeremiah 2:8, 2 Peter 2:1-10)

3. Satan's strategy towards unbelievers is to keep them blinded to the truth of the gospel. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, Colossians 2:8, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10)

4. Satan's strategy towards believers is:-

a) To confuse by false teaching. (Matthew 7:15, Romans 16:18)

b) To appeal to pride. (2 Corinthians 10:12)

c) To promote idolatry. (Habakkuk 2:18,19)

d) To promote legalism. (1 Timothy 1:7-8)

5. Satan's policy calls for counterfeit faith:-

a) Counterfeit gospel. (2 Corinthians 11:3-4)

b) Counterfeit pastors. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

c) Counterfeit communion. (1 Corinthians 10:19-21)

d) Counterfeit doctrine. (2 Timothy 4:1)

e) Counterfeit righteousness. (Matthew 19:16-28)

f) Counterfeit way of life. (Matthew 23)

g) Counterfeit power. (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10)

h) Counterfeit gods. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

1. Forgiveness is by the death of Christ (Matthew 26:28, Revelation 1:5)

2. Divine forgiveness is to all who believe in Christ (Acts 10:43, Acts 16:31)

3. The penalty of sin was paid by Christ on the Cross. (Hebrews 9:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21)

4. When a believer sins his fellowship with God is disrupted. God forgives these sins upon confession and cleanses from the unknown sins in the believer's life as well as known sins. (1 John 1:9).

5. Jesus Christ is our propitiation – there is no other, and none is needed. (1 John 2:1,2)

6. In human forgiveness we are told to forgive others even as God has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32). This can only be accomplished by the filling of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:22,23)

7. Steps towards restoration of fellowship

[a] Examine yourself for genuineness of motivation. (2 Corinthians 14:5)

[b] Act on what you see (Romans 4:7-8)

[c] Deal with any sin by confession. (1 John 1:9, Psalm 66:18)

[d] Forget the sin you have confessed. Do not proceed into a pattern of guilt. (Philippians 3:13-14, Psalm 103:10-12)

[e] Resume your active spiritual walk. Avoid areas where you might be tempted by the sin which so easily besets us. (Hebrews 12:12-13)

[f] Be reconciled to others once you have been reconciled to God. (James 5:16)

[g] Get moving and grow up. (2 Peter 2:17-18)

CHAPTER 29**INTRODUCTION**

If our heart is right before the Lord, then the God protects us even when we are where we shouldn't be. David shouldn't be working for the Philistines, for they are his enemy, and they are the enemy of God's people, and of God Himself. To seek protection from them was bad enough, but understandable on David's part because of the great stress he felt as a result of Saul's constant pressure upon him. Praise God that he knows we are dust!

God over rules in this chapter and enables David to escape the battle that will kill Saul, and ensures he is able to rescue his people, who have been captured by the Amalekites. As we look back in our own lives, let us reflect upon how many times we have been rescued by the Lord from the foolish situations we have gotten ourselves into. Let us praise God that our foolishness does not stop His grace, His love and His mercy.

Psalm 18:1-6. *"1. I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.*

2. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

3. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

4. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

5. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

6. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears."

1 SAMUEL 29:1-11

29:1 Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: an the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel. **2** And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rereward with Achish. **3** Then said the princes of the Philistines, What do these Hebrews here? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, Is not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me unto this day? **4** And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men? **5** Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands? **6** Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, as the LORD liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host is good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless the lords favour thee not. **7** Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines. **8** And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king? **9** And Achish answered and said to David, I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God: notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle. **10** Wherefore now rise up early in the morning with thy master's servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart. **11** So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. The Philistines initially gather their armies at Aphek. If you check your Bible maps you will see that this mustering point is in the west of Ephraim, and to the north of the Philistine cities. From here they will head north east, and their final battle camp is pitched at Shunem, in the tribal territory of Issachar between Mt Gilboa and Mt Tabor. They intend to ravage the northern parts of Israel in this campaign. The events of the previous chapter have not occurred as we open this chapter before us. The writer has run ahead and told us what occurs with Saul on the spiritual battle field before the war begins in earnest, and in this chapter returns to David and explains why he is not there at Shunem with the Philistines.

When David arrives at Aphek, he does so as the rear guard of the forces of Achish. The other Philistine lords review each detachment as it marches into their mustering point ready to be wielded into a combined army for operations in the north. When the lords of the other cities see David and his 600 men they are really angry with Achish for bringing such a potential traitor to them to join them. The risks of David being a spy for Saul are just too high for these practical and tough minded pagans, who would respect and admire an enemy, and change sides at will, but David is too dangerous.

Verses 4 – 5. Their concerns are real and valid. David has been loyal to Achish until this point because it suits him, but he has not been tested in full battle against his old master, and betrayal was common in military conflicts, whereby a major unit would go over to the other side at a crucial point, and could affect the outcome of the battle. The possibility of them being spies and relaying all information to the Israelites was also very high. The Philistines have heard the songs about David and they remember his head chopping and foreskin taking, of their best men! They have too many reasons to distrust him and they will not march with him at all.

Verses 6 – 8. Achish speaks as if he is a believer here, and there are two possible reasons for this. The first is that David has started to influence him for the monotheism of Israel, but the second is that the “lord” he speaks of is Baal. The second explanation is the most likely one, although as we will see later, David has a guard made up of Philistines (also called by their Egyptian name of “Cherethites”, 1 Samuel 30:14, 2 Samuel 8:18) when he is king and so clearly many Philistines did become allies of Israel and accepted the true One Lord God.

David is told to return to Ziklag, and he protests that he has been loyal to Achish and refers to him as his king and lord. David certainly speaks as a vassal of this pagan monarch. This is good politics and keeps David safe in the eyes of the other Philistines, but I suspect he is relieved, and so are his men when they are told to leave the enemy’s camp.

Verses 9 – 11. Achish clearly loves David and admires him as a man, speaking of him as an “angel of the Lord” to him. This indicates more thorough service to this king than simply attacking the marauding hordes of the southern lands. David must have given great service to have this said of him. Perhaps David protected Achish in a coup attempt, or some other great service that is not mentioned here. Whatever the great service Achish cannot move the other lords of the Philistines and so David is told to depart as soon as it is light the next day and leave the camp and head back to Ziklag.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God protects David from a dangerous situation here where he would have been fighting his old master and his friend Jonathan. David has been with Achish nearly eighteen months now and never been placed in such a situation, but it was bound to come at some point. God protects him and he and his men escape from what would have been an impossible situation for them. David could not have become king had he marched to Mt Gilboa in the Philistine Army.
2. God protects us from disasters if we keep our focus upon His will for our lives. Let us commit ourselves again to the service of the Lord and pray for divine deliverance from any situation of compromise we find ourselves in. Psalms 37:23-24, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Peter 2:9.

CHAPTER 30

INTRODUCTION

There is a price to be paid for all compromises with the enemy. David has been assigned the city of Ziklag, but on the call to battle from Achish has left it unguarded and headed away from their homes. It takes three days to march from the muster point at Apehik back to Ziklag. When we see what has happened here and the close run thing that the rescue is, we give thanks that David was told to leave when he did. David and his men beat themselves up that they did not leave the camp of the Philistines earlier, but the timing here is the Lord’s, and they have lessons to learn.

David and the others must learn that in the worst situation they can imagine the Lord can still deliver them, and they must walk with the Lord, and have total trust in Him. They must also be physically fit and mentally ready to pursue the enemy and recover their people. Let us be ready to deal with despair, for it will come to us at times. Like David, let us be ready to pray and cast our cares upon the Lord, and then rise up and pursue the goal the Lord has set with all our might. Psalms 56:1-13, 1 Peter 5:5-9, Hebrews 12:12-13.

1 SAMUEL 30:1-31

30:1 And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire; **2** And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way. **3** So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. **4** Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep. **5** And David’s two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. **6** And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God. **7** And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech’s son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. **8** And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all. **9** So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed. **10** But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor. **11** And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water; **12** And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. **13** And David said unto him, To whom belongeth thou? and whence art thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick. **14** We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which belongeth to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire. **15** And David

said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company. 16 And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah. 17 And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled. 18 And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. 19 And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all. 20 And David took all the flocks and the herds, which they drove before those other cattle, and said, This is David's spoil. 21 And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them. 22 Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart. 23 Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. 24 For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. 25 And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day. 26 And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD; 27 To them which were in Bethel, and to them which were in south Ramoth, and to them which were in Jattir, 28 And to them which were in Aroer, and to them which were in Siphmoth, and to them which were in Eshtemoa, 29 And to them which were in Rachal, and to them which were in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to them which were in the cities of the Kenites, 30 And to them which were in Hormah, and to them which were in Chorashan, and to them which were in Athach, 31 And to them which were in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 6. The men will be thinking of their homes and families and all be pleased to be coming back after their close call at Apehek. Having been delivered by the Lord from fighting their own brethren they will be relaxing as they head south. As they get closer they would not see the smoke rising from their city, just a blackened and empty landscape. The embers of the fire may be still warm, for the enemy were there only three days earlier but everyone is gone. The trail of the Amalekites is however fresh and easy to follow, but their first reaction is totally emotional. They weep until there are no tears left. Then they seek David's life for leading them after Achish in the first place.

This is emotional logic and understandable, but it is wrong. The Lord's hand is in all this, for had they been there, 600 men could not have held the city against the mass of Amalekites that have come against the south. David's men would have been cut down to a man. The Amalekites have done no harm to the captives at this point, and because there was no resistance, they have simply taken them and all their earthly goods with them as captives. The Lord has preserved the families because there were no men to fight for them, and now David has the way open to recover their families and defeat a vastly numerically superior enemy so that it will never threaten them all again.

In the place of abject despair David "strengthens himself in the Lord". This is the place to come when total disaster strikes and David finds peace on his knees. **Psalms 56:3-4, 9-11, 1 Peter 1:6-9**. This is indeed the toughest test of faith for David yet. He can see the size of the vast horde of the enemy from their tracks away from Ziklag, and he wonders whether he can defeat them. Abraham faced the same dilemma after the attack upon the land by Chedorlaomer. Genesis 14:1-16.

The stress David faces here is great, with worry about his wives and the sure knowledge that they will both be raped by the enemy when they pause long enough to camp and enjoy their spoils. The imagination of the men will run riot and so affect some, and wear them out, that they are not even able to complete their pursuit of the enemy. Worry and fantasy or fear filled thinking will rot out our soul and destroy our body. Stress is incredibly destructive on the physical and mental health and stamina of those who give way to irrational, or even rational anger and worry.

We need to cast all our cares, whatever their origin, upon the Lord and leave them there. Faith does not mean that we do not have worries, nor that we will not be overwhelmed by sadness and anxiety at times, but it means we bring them to the Lord and leave them there. Read the following Psalms and be encouraged in the Lord for daily application of this principle of walking by faith. Psalms 27:1-3, 34:1-9, 37:1-7, 40:1-2, 42:5, 11, 56:1-13, 62:1-8.

Verses 7 – 10. David calls the High Priest Abiathar to him and asks for guidance as to what he is to do regarding the host of the Amalekites. Both David and Saul face hopeless battles against vastly superior forces. Both seek the Lord's guidance through the priesthood. Only David is answered immediately and precisely by the Lord, Saul receives nothing except the fear that indicates he is rejected by the Lord. The contrast between chapters 28 and 30 is total and the writer is strongly underlining that God is with David, even though the situation appears hopeless.

David transforms the mourning and grief of his men into power through divine guidance. Isaiah 61:3. Notice David's question to the Lord through the priest. He is focused upon the military issue; should he fight or not? Then he is

concerned to know, whether if he fights, will he be successful and recover all the people? The message is clear on both counts; he is to pursue after the enemy and they will be successful in recovering their people.

The entire group heads off with all their baggage. They have food and water and use it on their march. We know this because of the food they can share with the captured Egyptian later (verse 11). Even though they have the food and water some are so mentally and physically exhausted that they cannot go any further than the brook Besor. David leaves one third of his army (200 men) there with the baggage train and presses on with 400 men to attack the enemy camp. These 200 are men who are unfit for the rigors of the next march across desert terrain to the attack probably due to their exhaustion after their prolonged weeping. They are “stress casualties” and as such will be despised by their colleagues.

Verses 11 – 15. They find a disorientated Egyptian wandering about in the fields. He is from the Amalekites but only a servant of one of them. He has been left behind when he got sick three days before. He is treated as an enemy by David’s men, but fed and watered until his spirit revives so that he can speak to them. He is under no illusions about his fate if he gets anything wrong; they will kill him.

This is a tense meeting, with the Egyptian as he revives telling them everything they wish in order to save his life. He knows where they are heading and offers to guide them there for the attack to be made as long as he is not handed over to his old master. He uses the Egyptian name for the Philistines/Canaanites of the coastal region, “Cherethites”, and tells that they were the armed party that burned Ziklag with fire and also have attacked a number of the settlements named after Caleb. David has no intention of handing this man over to his old master, for he intends to kill all these Amalekites and rescue his people.

Verses 16 – 20. David arrives at night fall at the enemy camp and finds them at twilight, feasting and dancing. They have camped here, believing they are far enough away from Judah to rest before dispersing to their tribal lands. They are dancing and feasting and will move on to sexually taking advantage of all their captives in a short while, so David takes no time to decide what to do next; he prepares an immediate attack. He has the Lord’s words that he will be victorious and recover everyone, and so he attacks immediately.

The writer records that they fight all that night and into the next evening twilight. This may have two possible meanings; the first, that they fought for twenty four hours (unlikely), and the second, that they fought from one evening (3pm-6pm) until the next (6-9pm) in Jewish time. Remember Jewish time keeping went from 6 pm until the following day. The second time frame is the most likely correct here, with the battle being started on what is called the last evening of the day they discover the enemy, and goes into the new day (starting at 6pm) and is finished by the end of the first evening of that day (by 9pm). The enemy stand and fight in places, so this is no easy battle, and lasts for several hours. Four hundred men of the enemy escape on fast camels without their loot and captives, but the rest are slain.

As God has promised, all the goods taken are recovered and all the people taken are recovered and all apparently unharmed, and not raped by the enemy by their time of rescue. All the fears and anxieties of the men of David are found to be groundless, and in the Lord’s grace all is restored to them, except their energy lost in worrying! How often have we worried about things that did not happen at all? The truth is, most of our worries don’t happen!

How much energy have we wasted on worry about what has never occurred? As for me the answer is, “Way too much!” Let us be rebuked by this incident and cast our cares upon the Lord and leave them there each day. The men are so pleased with their great victory that they select out the best of the flocks and herds they capture and set them aside for David, and drive them ahead of the rest.

Verses 21 – 25. They return back to Ziklag to rebuild, and on their way back they cross the brook Besor and David greets the two hundred who were so worn out that they could not follow the rest and fight in the battle. David is gracious to these men, even though his warriors who went all the way do not feel inclined to be. God’s way is gracious and these men stuck with their task and guarded the baggage train and were ready to die defending it. They were not lying around when David returns but active guards, now restored to strength.

The writer criticizes strongly those who abused their exhausted colleagues who stayed behind, even calling them “men of Belial”. Why is this strong language used? The answer is seen in the spirit of the men who criticized; they lusted after the stuff that was captured. These men have given in to lust and greed and do not want to share the spoil with anyone, and this mental attitude will turn them into evil men if they do not check it. The four hundred actually want to dismiss the two hundred from David’s service and send them away. Remember, these men walked to the point of physical collapse; the only reason they could not cross the stream was their total exhaustion, and even though it may have been caused by their earlier mental anguish, they are forgiven for that.

This harsh attitude, expressed by David’s men, would not be unusual in the ancient world, for when an army fell with fatigue they were often punished severely and dismissed with dishonour from the service. The Romans practised “decimation” of such a legion, killing every tenth man and then forcing the rest into the next battle at the front of the army. This harsh view has continued through the centuries, and even in the Battle of Britain RAF pilots who collapsed with battle fatigue were harshly dealt with by the British and punished for “lack of moral fibre”. David’s treatment of his men is therefore very mild and he sets a rule that goes through the years, and the writer notes is still applied in his own day.

David bases his gracious attitude upon the basis of the grace of God, recognising that the Lord gave them the victory, not their great power and might. David’s policy is that all who make themselves available for action share in the spoils of

action. It is the lack of readiness to serve, not any physical debility that stops your service, and that is why the Lord values and rewards our heart for service. This is an important principle that applies to eternal rewards also. Some will be called only to “guard the stuff” in this life, but if they do it well and are ready for any other call, then they will receive equal reward to those who led the charge at the front line. All who serve the Lord faithfully, to the limits of their ability will be rewarded. The Lord wants our energy poured out for His glory, and that energetic service and the heart that loves the serving is what wins the eternal rewards. **2 Timothy 4:1-8.** Pour believer, pour!

Verses 26 – 31. When David arrives back at Ziklag his first thought is for those of Judah who have suffered in this invasion. He sends as much as he can to them through the elders of the tribe. David does not know the result of the battle on Mt Gilboa, and so he cannot be accused of politics here. He has genuine concern for those who have died in the invasion by the Amalekites and for the pastoral losses suffered and does all he can to assist the rebuilding of community wealth.

Once the death of Saul is known this earlier act of charity and compassion will open the door for the acceptance of Judah of David as their king. Wherever David and his men went and were known David sends the spoil of war. He does not keep things for himself, but uses all he has to build support from the people who are coming to trust him as their protector from the southern tribes and the Philistines. How different would things have been had the Lord not ensured he was not at Mt Gilboa. It is good that we are in God’s hands rather than our own!

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Despair will come at times, but when we rest in the Lord, despair will be transformed into praise, for the Lord can lift us up out of any situation that He has allowed us to get into. We are safe in the Lord alone, and so let us walk closely to Him and really pour our hearts out to the Lord on all things that overwhelm us. In the Lord’s grace we may discover as we look back that the Lord actually preserved us through the difficult situation we found ourselves in. Had David and his men been in Ziklag when the Amalekites arrived there would have been a pitched battle that David may have won, and many of his people would have been killed. God’s way meant short term despair, but long term victory.
2. All compromises have their cost, and David is lucky to be in the Lord’s hands, and so are we! Let us be thankful of the Lord’s hands over us, but let us be careful in the compromises we make with those who are not spiritually on our wave length. Let us ‘strengthen ourselves in the Lord’ when we face any decisions. Let us walk close to the Lord and firmly in His will. The Lord uses Achish to deliver David and ensures that David’s obligations to him open the door for blessing later. The Lord truly turns cursing into blessing. Let us praise the Lord.
3. How often have you wept and wailed and worried over something that didn’t happen? This incident here is a challenge to us all. We all too often weep and wail over things we cannot change, and even worry about things that have not and will not happen. Let us relax in our prayers and pass our cares over to the Lord and so save our energy and build up our resilience.

Notes

CHAPTER 31**INTRODUCTION**

The writer now moves back to the action to the far north of David. While he and his men have been walking back to Ziklag, then chasing the Amalekites into the wilderness, and then returning all the stolen flocks and herds to the men of Judah, the terrible end of Saul was played out upon Mt Gilboa. David will not hear of the defeat and death of Saul for many days after the battle, although he knows that there will be one fought at some point during the time he is running and fighting in the south. It may be that David prayed for Saul. It would not surprise me to discover that in heaven. David loved Jonathan and loved and respected the man that Saul had been in his strength, even though he despised the man he had become in his madness.

1 SAMUEL 31:1-13

31:1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. **2** And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchishua, Saul's sons. **3** And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. **4** Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. **5** And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him. **6** So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together. **7** And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them. **8** And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. **9** And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people. **10** And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan. **11** And when the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul; **12** All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bethshan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. **13** And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 6. The death of Saul is as a hunted deer upon the hill of Gilboa. He fights well, as he always had, but the men of Israel fall away before him. There is no strength in the army because of their king's sin and their own personal compromises with evil. Leviticus 26:7-8, Deuteronomy 20:1-4, 27:9-10, 32:30. Saul fights but is retreating as he fights, and sees each of his sons fight rear-guard actions against the enemy to try to protect their father, and each is cut down in turn and finished off by the enemy.

The Philistine archers fire at Saul and they hit him in numerous places so that he is unable to run further. Others are fighting around him and he is hidden in the battle, and it is becoming night so the enemy do not press their advantage but Saul takes no chances. He does not want to fall into the hands of the enemy so falls on his own sword rather than die in captivity. His poor armour bearer, who has seen all the house of Saul in the battle die falls also upon his own sword. Both die by suicide rather than fight on. It is a brave, yet also wrongful end for a great king. Refer to 1 Chronicles 10:1-14 for the parallel passage, with the priestly commentary on Saul's death.

Suicide is never the right way out of this life, and normally it is a sign of a person who is out of their mind with grief, anxiety or stress. This is the case with Saul. His fear is such that he seeks the quick way out rather than fight on to death with numerous arrows in him affecting his ability to fight on. His body will be disfigured anyway, and he could possibly have taken a few more enemy soldiers with him, or at least spent his final moments in prayer as he waited for the arrows embedded in him to do their work.

It is never the right thing to fall on ones own sword; it is always right to keep fighting or praying until death enters you into heaven. Saul has been spiritually beaten for a long time however, and he refuses to accept defeat at the enemy's hands, and that is just Homeric warrior pride. The man who reports Saul's death must see this drama unfold, and the bodies are not stripped until the following day, so the action must end in the night, and the surviving Israelites slip away while the Philistines return to their camp and come back to strip the dead the next morning.

Verses 7 – 10. After the defeat of the Israelite army there is a general exodus from the cities around the battlefield. The Philistines enter these cities that are vacated and live in them as occupying troops. Their plan appears to be to clear the north of people, and then from there invade the southern areas as well. The Philistines really celebrated their victory with pagan excess, taking the bodies of their enemy rulers and nailing them to the city gates of Beth-Shean, which must have been captured soon after the defeat on Mt Gilboa.

The witch at En-Dor may also be a victim of the invasion at this point, for the victorious Philistines spread out through the country and pillage at will, with the Israelites fleeing for the far side of Jordan. Saul's armour is taken to the temples of

their gods and does a triumphant circuit through their land, ending up in the main temple of Astarte/Ashtaroth (Female goddess of sexual fertility – insult to the warrior). While the writer here records that Saul's body was nailed to the gate at Beth-Shean, the writer of Chronicles records that the sons of Saul were also nailed up there, and the head of Saul was taken to the temple of Dagon, and fastened on a spike there to rot before their god. 1 Chronicles 10:10-12.

Verses 11 – 13. The men of Jabesh-Gilead heard what had happened and even though the enemy were still active in the land, they gathered all their armed strength and went all night to the place where the bodies were and took them down, partly cremated them, and buried their bones and ashes with honour under an oak tree in Jabesh. They then fasted in honour of these great princes for seven days. Saul had delivered them, and so they give burial to their bones and ashes. 1 Samuel 11. The cremation here has been the cause of great debate. Is this cremation in our sense? The answer is clearly "no", for to burn a body was to express total abhorrence of that person and indicate they died under the curse of God. Leviticus 20:14, 21:9.

The burning here was to purify the bodies given their state of decay, and was probably done with spice and herbs as befitted a king, so that there was a pleasant smell rather than the smell of total physical corruption. It may have taken several weeks to recover the bodies and the putrefaction would have been extensive. The burning of herbs and spices with the bodies made the process more pleasant, and indicated their death was "a sweet smelling savour" to the people. It gave them honour as the noble men they were. David would later rebury them all in Saul's family grave at Zela. 2 Samuel 21:11. It is a reminder that the place of burial is important, as it is the place that the resurrection body is received, and the company of the believer in the resurrection is with those they are buried with.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. All of us can be like Saul was, either for good, or for bad. All of us can walk nobly before the Lord and be the men and women of God in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. We can also decide not to deal with our sins and so fall daily more and more under the power of evil. Madness and sanity are separated by a narrow line and that is the will of the Lord for us; if we walk with God we can walk through the worst stress and traumas and be sane, but without God we will be as mad as Saul becomes. Let us walk in sanity, and that means in spirit and in truth.
2. There comes a time to die for all of us. Let us live in such a way that our death reflects our courage in life and is an example to others, not a disgrace or source of unnecessary sadness.
3. The courage of the men of Jabesh-Gilead is an example to us all. They felt a sense of responsibility to Saul and his sons for their actions in protecting them earlier. They risked their lives to ensure the bodies were treated with respect, and brought them to give them the best burial they could. Their task was an awful one given the state of the bodies, but they put aside their own physical revulsion to give honour to those who had fought to save them.