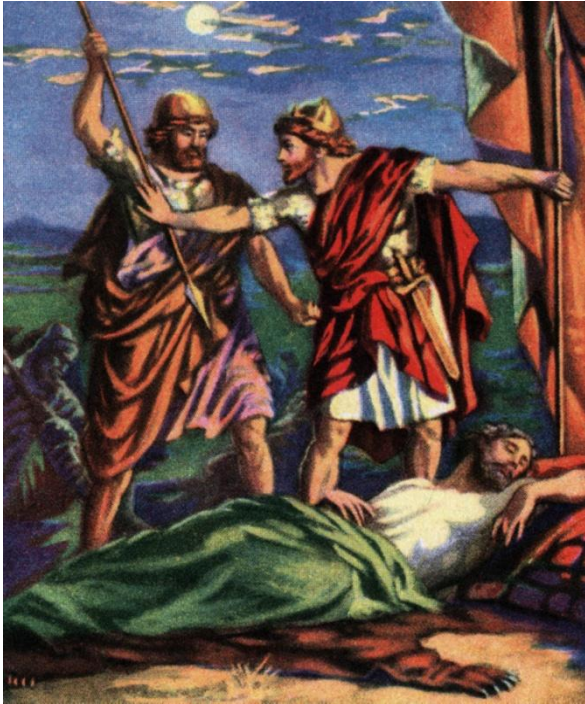


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 12



DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE

Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 26:1-21

In this lesson today we observe the conflict which goes on between friendship and enmity, between good and evil, between love and hate. Jonathan typified everything good in human character and Saul everything evil. The Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul. When this happens, the stage is set for every form of betrayal and violence.

Saul was an evil king because he was man's choice, made in defiance of God's purposes. David, on the other hand, was God's true king. He was the type of that greater-than-David who was to come in the fullness of time and with the purpose to save God's spiritual people.

David felt that to raise a hand to harm Saul would be to raise it to harm God, even though Saul had failed God and failed to fulfill the high service to which he was called. We should reverence God's choice in the person He has chosen.

MEMORY VERSE: *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.*

—*Matthew 5:44*

David's Opportunity

1 Samuel 26:1-8 Once before, at Engedi, David had spared Saul's life when he had a perfect opportunity to kill this man who threatened his life. Now another such opportunity is coming. How will he react? The Ziphites were friends of Saul and not of David. For the second time (**1 Samuel 23**), they sent word to Saul telling where David may be found. Saul came with three thousand choice soldiers, established camp, and lay down to sleep. Through spies, David knew Saul had come and drew near to watch. That night he and Abishai stood by the sleeping king. Abishai asked for permission to kill him. He argued that God had given this opportunity.

David's Response

1 Samuel 26:9-12 **Destroy him not**, was David's verdict. Why not? Because Saul was **the Lord's anointed**. His fate was in the hands of the Lord – **the Lord shall smite him, or ...** He left that to God. David believed that anyone who defies God is in a position of defeat. However, David recognized something special about Saul. He was anointed with oil at God's direction. This sacred ceremony had set him apart to be King of Israel, approved of God. Even though Saul had failed to fulfill his high service to God, it did not change the high position which he represented. Nor did it change the respect due to his office.

We owe reverence to the one whom God has called and anointed to be pastor of His people (**1 Chronicles 16:22; Acts 23:1-5; Hebrews 13:17**). David took Saul's spear and cruse as witness and left. In all these thousands, **no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awakened**. How could this be? **A deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them.**

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David Talks With Saul

1 Samuel 26:13-20 In the morning David withdrew to a hill to look on Saul's army below. At that safe distance he taunted with **sarcasm**, not Saul but Abner and the men supposed to protect him. **Art not thou a valiant man? ... ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed ... see where the king's spear is ...** Saul knew that voice. At once, he knew what David had done. It touched his heart. David reasoned with him. **What evil is in mine hand? ... let not my blood fall.** Read **Proverbs 15:1**.

Saul's Response

1 Samuel 26:21 Saul was softened, **I have sinned ... I will no more do thee harm ...** Saul may have meant it, but David had little confidence in it (**1 Samuel 27:1**). The other time he spared Saul's life; Saul had wept and seemed repentant, but continued to pursue him. The spirit within Saul was an evil spirit. It gave Saul no help to carry out his better desires. What softened Saul's heart? Would force or show of authority have done it better or sooner? David knew that Saul was wronging him and disobeying God. He did not try to punish him; David knew the Lord would take care of that. Even though Saul was his bitter enemy, David loved him and desired to see him live right and do well. This is what the Lord means in **Romans 12:19-20**.

Our Lives Must Please God

This lesson reveals much of the character of two men. It reveals Saul's reasons for pursuing David. It shows his feelings toward a man greater than himself. It shows David's feelings toward Saul. It shows his respect to God's anointed. He felt no desire for revenge. Saul did not endeavor to repair the damage he had caused his son-in-law or attempt to make his wrongs right. Each showed how they honored or dishonored God. Where did each put trust for care of his interests? How much evidence of a forgiving spirit did each show?

Saul had some smiting of conscience and appeared to repent. It was not complete; it was only remorse. Had it been real, God would have forgiven and accepted him. We shall learn more about this in the next lesson. Our lives are formed and controlled by our choice to hear and obey or, on the other hand, disobey the voice of God.

JUST A THOUGHT

You can't hold another fellow down in the ditch unless you stay down there with him.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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