

Church of God Sunday School

DAVID SPARES HIS ENEMY

1 Samuel 21:1 — 26:25

David had to run away and hide because King Saul wanted to kill him! David went to the little town of Nob, the city of the priests. He asked the priest Ahimelech (*uh-HIM-uh-lek*) for food and weapons but did not tell him of his troubles with King Saul. So Ahimelech gave David some bread and Goliath's sword.

Then David fled to Gath. The king's servants remembered David and told the king about him. When David heard this, he became afraid King Achish (*AY-kish*) would kill him. David decided to act like a crazy person, a madman! In doing so, David was able to safely escape to a cave in the land of Judah. Soon, his brothers, his family, and about 400 other men joined David.

Meanwhile, information about David had come to King Saul. Saul told his servants that David and his own son Jonathan were planning to kill him. (Was this true?) Saul complained that none of his servants felt sorry for him.

Then the chief of Saul's herdsmen, a man named Doeg (*DOH-ehg*), told Saul that he had seen Ahimelech give David food and a sword. When Saul heard this, he commanded all the priests of Nob to be killed, but his servants would not put their hand "upon the priests of the LORD." At Saul's command Doeg killed the priests (there were 85). Not only that, but Saul commanded that all the animals and people of Nob—men, women, children, and even babies—be destroyed! Only Abiathar (*uh-BI-uh-thahr*) escaped, and he went to be with David too.

When David heard that the town of Keilah (*kee-I-luh*) was being attacked by the Philistines, he asked God if they should go and fight with the Philis-

tinians. God's answer was, "Go." So David and his men went and defeated the Philistines. David and his men lived in Keilah for a while.

Someone told Saul that David was in Keilah. Saul thought it would be easy to capture David, since Keilah was an enclosed (walled and gated) city. But God warned David, and David and his men (now 600) fled to the wilderness of Ziph (*ZIF*), where they hid in caves and strongholds.

One day David's very best friend, Jonathan, came to see him. He reassured David that Saul would not find him. Jonathan also told him that he knew David would be "king over Israel." David and Jonathan promised, again, that they would be true to each other. David went back into the wilderness, and Jonathan went to his house.

But Saul continued to hunt for David. One time he almost caught him! Saul had David and his men surrounded, but Saul got word that the Philistines had invaded the land. So, Saul had to stop chasing David long enough to fight the Philistines.

When Saul returned from chasing after the Philistines, he gathered 3000 men and went to hunt for David in the

wilderness of Engedi (*en-GEE-di*).

Saul went into a certain cave to lie down and sleep. He did not know that David and his men were already hiding in that very cave! After Saul had gone to sleep, David got up, sneaked over to the sleeping Saul and cut off part of his robe. Then David felt bad for having done that. His conscience bothered him! David could have killed Saul, but he refused to hurt God's anointed man. David had a good heart.

When Saul awoke, he left the cave. He did not even



know of the danger he had been in while he slept. After Saul was far enough ahead, David cried, "My lord the king." Saul turned and saw David bowing, with his face to the ground. David told Saul how he could have killed him, but he only cut off a piece of his robe. He said, "I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed."

David assured Saul that he meant Saul no harm. When Saul heard this, he began to weep. He said: "Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. . . . I know well that thou shalt surely be king . . ." Saul wanted David to promise that he would not destroy his children or destroy his name after he was king. When David promised not to do those things, Saul went back home. David and his men returned to their stronghold.

Had Saul really changed in his heart toward David? Had he allowed God to change his heart? No. When God changes your heart, you are a totally new person as far as your desires and your actions. Saul's heart still had jealousy and hatred in it. His heart had not changed. So it was not surprising that, after some time, Saul was back after David again.

David knew that Saul was hunting for him again. When David saw where Saul's camp was, he and Abishai (*uh-BISH-i*) crept up to Saul's camp. Saul and all his men were sound asleep: "a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them." Saul's spear was stuck in the ground by his head. Abishai wanted to kill Saul, but David said, "Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless?"

Then David took Saul's spear and his water pot. Then he went to a hill far away from Saul's camp. He stood on the top of the hill and called to Abner, the captain of Saul's army. Abner said, "Who art thou that criest to the king?"

David asked Abner if he was a brave man. Then David told Abner that he had not kept a watch over the king. David said, "This thing is not good that thou hast done." In other words, "You were not doing your duty." David showed Abner the king's spear and water pot.

When Saul realized that it was David talking, he said, "Is this thy voice, my son David?" David answered: "It is my voice, my lord, O king." David asked why Saul was chasing him, saying, "For what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand?" David told Saul that trying to find him was like trying to find one flea or "a partridge in the mountains." In other words, Saul had better things to do as king.

Then Saul admitted he had sinned and "played the fool" and "erred exceedingly." Saul promised to do no harm to David.

David told Saul to "let one of the young men come over and fetch [his spear]." David reminded Saul that he could have killed him, "but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed."

Saul was glad that David had not killed him when he could have. Saul said, "Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail." Then David and Saul each went back to their own places.

MEMORY VERSE:

"And David said . . . Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless?"
—1 Samuel 26:9

Names in the Story



Find these names in the puzzle:

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|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| DAVID | SAUL | AHIMELECH |
| ACHISH | JONATHAN | DOEG |
| ABIATHAR | ABISHAI | ABNER |