

## Lesson 40

### The Conflict between Saul and David

1 Samuel 20; 23:14-24:22; 26; 31



**Teacher, please remember that the commentary below is intended to help you in your study, not to be read to your students. Make your own list of applications, using the help from the commentary, but don't necessarily try to cover everything! Think of the students in your class, then be prayerfully selective.**

Contents:

1. Preparation
2. Memory verses
3. Theme
4. Lesson introduction
5. Verse by verse commentary (suggested location of activities included)
6. Suggested prayer to close
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8. Possible Activities to choose from
9. Bible Text (in full, without commentary)

### **1. Preparation**

- 1) Choose memory verse
- 2) Select attention grabber to start off lesson / break the ice - optional, recommended for younger classes. See point 7.
- 3) Suggested activities- optional, recommended for younger children. See point 8.

### **2. Choose memory verse**

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” Psalm 34:19  
(Note: you may explain that David wrote this at the time in his life when he was being pursued by King Saul)

### **3. Themes**

**God wants us to trust Him when we are in danger!**

### **4. Lesson introduction**

**To the teacher:** This is a **combined lesson** on the conflict between Saul and David. It covers a span of five years and several chapters in 1 Samuel. You will need to be selective with the materials provided here, emphasizing what you think will be most useful for your age group.

Have you ever felt that your faith in the promises God has given you has been tested to the limit, to the breaking point? Perhaps some of you, though young, can relate to David as he faces heavy trials in our lesson today. Samuel had anointed David. David had God’s Word: he would one day be the king of the children of Israel. Yet, the difficult times ahead would challenge his faith to the very limit.

After David’s battle with Goliath, many saw him as a hero; but there was one who began to see him as an enemy. King Saul became jealous of David because the people seemed to love David more than they loved him. Saul began to see David as his enemy, and he set out to destroy him. Saul tried to kill David himself; when that attempt failed, he hired men to murder David in his own bed. Through all these circumstances, God protected David from death. God had a plan and a purpose for David—he was to be Israel’s next king; therefore, no harm could come to him. Yet, on David’s part, much faith in God would be required, for it seemed that every circumstance of his life was saying that he would not even live long enough to become the next king of Israel.

The Bible texts we will talk about this morning show how King Saul pursued David for about five years to try to kill him. David ran from Saul. Sometimes he acted with trust in God; sometimes he did not, and he and others faced the consequences of his running away in unbelief. In the end, God did indeed remove the kingdom from King Saul and he and his son Jonathan died in a battle with the Philistines, clearing the way for David finally to become king.

## 5. Verse by Verse Commentary

### **1 Samuel 20:1-11**

David, continuing to run from Saul, left Ramah and found Jonathan, the son of Saul. He asked Jonathan what he had done to cause Saul to want to kill him. Jonathan could not imagine his father would do such a thing to David. David explains that Saul would not confide in Jonathan his intentions to harm him, since Saul knew Jonathan and David were close friends.

The Bible says that Jonathan loved David “as he loved his own soul” (1 Samuel 20:17). God sometimes works in mysterious ways. God blessed David and Jonathan’s friendship. During a very difficult time in David’s life, Jonathan proved to be a very faithful friend.

David asked Jonathan’s help as he sought to determine why Saul was so angry with him and if there was any chance of reconciliation between them. David made plans to be absent during the feast of the new moon. If King Saul was upset over David’s absence, then David would know that there would be no reconciliation between them. But, if King Saul was pleasant and accepting of David’s absence, then perhaps reconciliation was possible. Jonathan reassured David that he would help him and that his father would not come between them in their friendship.

### **1 Samuel 20:12-23**

Jonathan and David reaffirmed their friendship. Jonathan faithfully promised David that he would let him know how his father reacted towards David. If it was good, he would let him know; if it was evil, he would send David away safely. Jonathan asked David to remember him and his family, and show kindness to his house always.

Jonathan and David agreed with each other how to get the message to David about Saul’s attitude toward David. They would do it by Jonathan’s shooting an arrow, either close to David or over David’s head. Each of these had a hidden meaning: come back to the palace or leave the area for your own safety.

### **1 Samuel 20:24-34**

As David waited for news in another place, Saul sat at the table for the feast with his son Jonathan present. Saul said nothing about David’s absence until the second day. Then he vented his anger on Jonathan, hurling his spear at him in a jealous rage. Jonathan knew then that Saul was really out to kill David, so he must tell David about the danger he was in.

### **1 Samuel 20:35-42**

Using the pre-arranged signal. Jonathan shot an arrow well beyond where David was waiting in hiding. David understood that God was sending him away. Alan Redpath comments, “If David dared to linger now, after this word from heaven, he would lose his life, the crown, and everything that God had for him. This man’s life was being emptied from vessel to vessel, like wine, in order to preserve its freshness and keep it from going musty. Every prop upon which he had leaned was taken away from him; now he must stand alone.” Though David was leaving behind all earthly comforts, he had the most important thing anyone could ever have, a relationship with God. God would become his all in all. David and Jonathan had to say goodbye, never knowing if they would ever see each other again. 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 forever.” So, David departed; and Jonathan went into the city. David was in danger: would he trust God? What do you think?

### **1 Samuel 23:14-18**

David ran from the wrath of King Saul. During the first years of his flight he went to a Philistine city far away from Saul. But that got him into trouble because the Philistines did not trust him—he was after all a Hebrew soldier. So he went back into the territory of Israel, where Saul was closer and where David would have to take more risks. But **he decided to trust God when he was in danger.**

During these years more and more Jewish men gathered around David to protect him. His little band of soldiers grew to about six hundred men and their families. They had been fighting for Israel while hiding from Saul in the town of Keilah. They had beaten the Philistines and saved the city, but the people of Keilah repaid David’s kindness by betraying him to Saul. So David had to withdraw his six hundred men, the ones who remained faithful, and flee to the desert of Ziph. He was there briefly, joined by Jonathan who encouraged him and reaffirmed him of his calling and anointing to the kingship of Israel. How faithful God is to encourage us when we need it; Jonathan the rightful heir to the throne, encourages David, who is running for his life, that he will in fact one day be king. God is faithful to encourage us when we get sad and discouraged. Perhaps, He will use His Word, our parents, or Christian friends. No doubt, David needed that

encouragement. How sad it would be to be betrayed by a people you tried to help. Anger or desire for revenge could have filled David's heart. But, instead he is learning the valuable lessons of patience and faith that can only come through such difficult experiences. [When we are in danger we should trust in the Lord—not take matters into our own hands.](#)

### **1 Samuel 24:19-29**

The Ziphites went up to Gibeah to betray David to Saul by telling Saul that David was hiding in the woods up on their mountains. And for this treachery, King Saul blessed them. In Saul's evil conscience, he thought David wanted to murder him and thanked God that the Ziphites had compassion upon him. Saul was worried that David would escape so he told them to watch him carefully. However, David, aware of what was happening, escaped to the Desert of Maon. Saul pursued and found David on a mountain in the Wilderness of Maon and encircled him and his men. Saul had a few thousand men and David just a few hundred! It looked like Saul would finally kill David.

But God in His faithfulness protected David. Just when it looked the scariest for David, a messenger brought an urgent message to Saul. While Saul was busy chasing after David, the Philistines had invaded his land. Saul had to go back and defend the land from the Philistines. David now had opportunity to escape to the strongholds at En Gedi. God delivered David from the hand of Saul. When we put our trust in the Lord, He will deliver us from all of our fears, our problems, and even our enemies. God keeps His promises. We need to trust Him. [We should wait on the Lord—not take matters into our own hands.](#)

### **1 Samuel 24:1-8**

Saul returned from his fight against the Philistines. Informed that David had fled to En Gedi, Saul headed out with 3,000 men to find David and his men. While there, Saul found a cave and went into it to rest for a while. It just so happened that it was the same cave that David and his men were hiding in! When David's men heard this, they told David, "This is the day which the Lord said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand that you may do to him as it seems good to you.'" Saul's life was now in David's hands. In fact, so close was Saul to David that he "secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe." How easily David could have killed Saul. He could have put an end to his life as a fugitive and become the new King of Israel. Yet David did not kill Saul; he only cut off a corner of his robe. From the world's perspective, David missed his hour of opportunity and would prolong his suffering. But, what was God's perspective of the situation and David's reaction? Because David saw Saul as God's anointed, he felt bad for cutting off the corner of Saul's robe. David had no intention of harming Saul in any way; he would leave the situation in God's hands. If God wanted to punish Saul for his sin, God would do it. Through these situations, God was training David for his kingship, teaching him to be a kind and just king.

Has there ever been a time in your life when you have had opportunity to get back at someone who was being mean to you? What did you do? The Bible tells us that vengeance is the Lord's (Romans 12:17-20). That means that the Lord will take care of people who treat us wrong. We should not "get back at people who mistreat us." We need to pray for them and allow the Lord to take care of them and us. [We should wait on the Lord—not take matters into our own hands.](#)

### **1 Samuel 26**

Now the Ziphites came to Saul, to tell him where David was, and Saul knowing that David is anointed of the Lord to someday be king, tried once more to upset the plan of God by seeking David's life. So Saul took with him three thousand chosen men of Israel and went down to the wilderness of Ziph. David, hearing of Saul's arrival, sent out spies. When the spies confirmed that Saul had come, David went near to his camp and asked his men, "Who will go down with me?" Abishai agreed to accompany David, and they proceeded down to the place where Saul was sleeping. "A deep sleep from the LORD had fallen on them." David removed Saul's water jug and spear without any man hearing.

David once again showed Saul amazing kindness in sparing his life. Saul was again trying to kill David, and again David finds opportunity to put an end to Saul's life and, thus, an end to his troubles. Once more, David determined to let God be his avenger; he would not have the king's blood on his hands. David stopped Abishai from killing Saul with his own spear. David then went a good distance away and called to Saul's personal guard, Abner. He asked him why he did not protect his king. Saul recognized David's voice and asked if that was he speaking. David then revealed to the king what he had done that night and how God had delivered him into his hand. Saul, in the light of this kindness, sees the fool he has been. So evident to him was God's protection of his rival that he could only confess his own wickedness and recognize fully and finally that David was to be the shepherd of Israel. This was to be David and Saul's last meeting. Kindness won in the end, without bloodshed. David learned valuable lessons through these difficult times. He learned how to treat people the way God would treat them. It could not have been easy for David to be kind to Saul, for Saul had certainly not shown him kindness; but David hung in there, and the most important battle was won.

As David, let us represent God's heart to others. One of the chief characteristics of God is kindness, to the just and unjust.

It is easy to be kind to those who are kind to us; but, to represent God's heart, we must show kindness to those who are unkind to us. God will deal with those who are unjust to us, if they do not turn from their sins. Remember, as David modeled, [we should wait on the Lord—not take matters into our own hands](#).

### **1 Samuel 31:1-13**

As we come to the end of the account of King Saul, we find that when he was in danger, he did **not** trust in the Lord the way David did. Instead he trusted in a spiritist—a witch at Endor—to find out if he would win a battle with the Philistines, who had come north into Israel to attack him and the armies of Israel. Even at this time, if only Saul had turned to the Lord, the battle might have turned out much differently.

The Philistines closed in on Saul and killed his three sons. Then they pursued Saul and wounded him badly. Since Saul was critically injured and could not escape, he asked his armor-bearer to kill him so that he would not be captured and tortured by the heathen army. His armor-bearer was afraid, so Saul took his own life. Saul, his sons, his armor-bearer and his entire army died on the same day. When the other Israelites saw that the Israelite army was defeated and Saul and his sons were dead, they fled from their homes and went into hiding. The entire nation felt the consequence of Saul's disobedience as Philistines overran many of their cities on this day. How tragic it is when we trust in ourselves rather than in God when our lives are in danger! It is far wiser to trust in God as David did when he was in danger than to disobey as Saul did.

### **6. Prayer:**

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to trust in the Lord and not to take matters into their own hands when they are in danger. May others see kindness in their lives and glorify God. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity.

### **7. Attention Grabbers**

#### **Wait on the Lord Game**

##### **What you will need:**

Five small toys or balls. Raisins, Cheerios, marshmallows, apples (pre-cut into small triangles) and toothpicks. Blue, brown and black construction paper, glue, crayons or chalk.

When David was in the wilderness he had to learn how to wait upon the Lord. Sometimes waiting is not easy. Use this game to illustrate waiting and how it is sometimes tough. Divide the class into two even groups. Have one group on one side of the room and the second group on the other side of the room. Have each child count off from 1 - 10 (or up to the number of children in each group). You can give the younger children a small piece of paper with their number to help them remember. Lay out five small toys or balls in the center of the room. Pick two numbers and call them out. The children with those numbers will run, try to get as many toys as possible, and run back to their line. Now, place the toys back in the center of the room. The second time that you call out numbers, call the same exact numbers. Do this again 3 or 4 times.

By this time, the other children will be wondering when they will get called. After you have done this a while, stop the game and talk to the children. Ask them what was happening (the same children were being called). How did that make them feel? (Left out, etc.). How do you think David felt when he had to wait 10 years to be king? Say: "Sometimes it is not easy to wait for the Lord's timing; it helps to know He always has our best in mind." That's what we will learn in our story today. Have the children line up and resume play. This time begin to call on the rest of the children and declare a winning team. You can award all of the children for being good sports by giving them a small prize (pencil, eraser, etc.).

### **8. Activities:**

#### **Cave Craft**

Our story today centers around how David did the right thing twice when he had the opportunity to take matters into his own hands. David learned to wait on the Lord. This craft will help the children to remember the story.

Use a sheet of dark blue construction paper for the night sky (background). Using brown construction paper, cut out a cave and glue to the blue paper. Next, cut out a black circle using black construction paper. Glue the black circle onto the cave for an entrance. Using white or yellow crayon or chalk, write the memory verse on top of the "night's sky" and color in stars and moon. For some of the children as an option they can draw the characters from the story in and around the cave.

## **Braided Belts**

For this craft, you will need three strips of cloth or thick yarn, approximately 1" thick and 2 yards long. You will need three strips for each child.

This craft will teach the children the value of working together with a friend. Form pairs. Give children each three strips of fabric. Have one child hold the ends of three of the strips. Show the other child how to braid the strips and then tie each end. Then have partners switch roles. When both partners have completed their braids, show the children how to tie the belts around their waists. Read Proverbs 17:17 as a class. Explain that friends are people who become part of our lives, just like these separate pieces of cloth became part of our belts. God can "knit" our hearts together with other Christians. Tell your partner one thing you'll do to be a good friend this week. [God wants us to be faithful friends.](#)

## **9. Bible text (NIV):**

20:1 Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, "What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to kill me?"

<sup>2</sup> "Never!" Jonathan replied. "You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn't do anything, great or small, without letting me know. Why would he hide this from me? It isn't so!"

<sup>3</sup> But David took an oath and said, "Your father knows very well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said to himself, 'Jonathan must not know this or he will be grieved.' Yet as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death."

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you."

<sup>5</sup> So David said, "Look, tomorrow is the New Moon feast, and I am supposed to dine with the king; but let me go and hide in the field until the evening of the day after tomorrow. <sup>6</sup> If your father misses me at all, tell him, 'David earnestly asked my permission to hurry to Bethlehem, his hometown, because an annual sacrifice is being made there for his whole clan.' <sup>7</sup> If he says, 'Very well,' then your servant is safe. But if he loses his temper, you can be sure that he is determined to harm me. <sup>8</sup> As for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a covenant with you before the LORD. If I am guilty, then kill me yourself! Why hand me over to your father?"

<sup>9</sup> "Never!" Jonathan said. "If I had the least inkling that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn't I tell you?"

<sup>10</sup> David asked, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?"

<sup>11</sup> "Come," Jonathan said, "let's go out into the field." So they went there together.

<sup>12</sup> Then Jonathan said to David, "I swear by the LORD, the God of Israel, that I will surely sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favorably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know? <sup>13</sup> But if my father intends to harm you, may the LORD deal with Jonathan, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away in peace. May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. <sup>14</sup> But show me unfailing kindness like the LORD's kindness as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, <sup>15</sup> and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family—not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth."

<sup>16</sup> So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD call David's enemies to account." <sup>17</sup> And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.

<sup>18</sup> Then Jonathan said to David, "Tomorrow is the New Moon feast. You will be missed, because your seat will be empty.

<sup>19</sup> The day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began, and wait by the stone Ezel. <sup>20</sup> I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I were shooting at a target. <sup>21</sup> Then I will send a boy and say, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to him, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them here,' then come, because, as surely as the LORD lives, you are safe; there is no danger. <sup>22</sup> But if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, because the LORD has sent you away. <sup>23</sup> And about the matter you and I discussed—remember, the LORD is witness between you and me forever."

<sup>24</sup> So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon feast came, the king sat down to eat. <sup>25</sup> He sat in his customary place by the wall, opposite Jonathan,<sup>[a]</sup> and Abner sat next to Saul, but David's place was empty. <sup>26</sup> Saul said nothing that day, for he thought, "Something must have happened to David to make him ceremonially unclean—surely he is unclean."

<sup>27</sup> But the next day, the second day of the month, David's place was empty again. Then Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why hasn't the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?"

<sup>28</sup> Jonathan answered, "David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem. <sup>29</sup> He said, 'Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away to see my brothers.' That is why he has not come to the king's table."

<sup>30</sup> Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you? <sup>31</sup> As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send someone to bring him to me, for he must die!"

<sup>32</sup> "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan asked his father. <sup>33</sup> But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David.

<sup>34</sup> Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the feast he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David.

<sup>35</sup> In the morning Jonathan went out to the field for his meeting with David. He had a small boy with him, <sup>36</sup> and he said to the boy, "Run and find the arrows I shoot." As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. <sup>37</sup> When the boy came to the place where Jonathan's arrow had fallen, Jonathan called out after him, "Isn't the arrow beyond you?" <sup>38</sup> Then he shouted, "Hurry! Go quickly! Don't stop!" The boy picked up the arrow and returned to his master. <sup>39</sup> (The boy knew nothing about all this; only Jonathan and David knew.) <sup>40</sup> Then Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy and said, "Go, carry them back to town."

<sup>41</sup> After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together—but David wept the most.

<sup>42</sup> Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.'" Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.<sup>[b]</sup>

22 David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father's household heard about it, they went down to him there. <sup>2</sup> All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their commander. About four hundred men were with him.

<sup>3</sup> From there David went to Mizpah in Moab and said to the king of Moab, "Would you let my father and mother come and stay with you until I learn what God will do for me?" <sup>4</sup> So he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him as long as David was in the stronghold.

<sup>5</sup> But the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold. Go into the land of Judah." So David left and went to the forest of Hereth.

## David Saves Keilah

23:<sup>14</sup> David stayed in the wilderness strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph. Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands.

<sup>15</sup> While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that<sup>[c]</sup> Saul had come out to take his life. <sup>16</sup> And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. <sup>17</sup> "Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this." <sup>18</sup> The two of them made a covenant before the LORD. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh.



<sup>19</sup>The Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, “Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hakilah, south of Jeshimon? <sup>20</sup>Now, Your Majesty, come down whenever it pleases you to do so, and we will be responsible for giving him into your hands.”

<sup>21</sup>Saul replied, “The LORD bless you for your concern for me. <sup>22</sup>Go and get more information. Find out where David usually goes and who has seen him there. They tell me he is very crafty. <sup>23</sup>Find out about all the hiding places he uses and come back to me with definite information. Then I will go with you; if he is in the area, I will track him down among all the clans of Judah.”

<sup>24</sup>So they set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the Desert of Maon, in the Arabah south of Jeshimon.

## David Spares Saul’s Life

24:1 After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, “David is in the Desert of En Gedi.” <sup>2</sup>So Saul took three thousand able young men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats.

<sup>3</sup>He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave. <sup>4</sup>The men said, “This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said<sup>[b]</sup> to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.’” Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul’s robe.

<sup>5</sup>Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. <sup>6</sup>He said to his men, “The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD’s anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the LORD.” <sup>7</sup>With these words David sharply rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.

<sup>8</sup>Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, “My lord the king!” When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. <sup>9</sup>He said to Saul, “Why do you listen when men say, ‘David is bent on harming you’? <sup>10</sup>This day you have seen with your own eyes how the LORD delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, ‘I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the LORD’s anointed.’ <sup>11</sup>See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. See that there is nothing in my hand to indicate that I am guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. <sup>12</sup>May the LORD judge between you and me. And may the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you. <sup>13</sup>As the old saying goes, ‘From evildoers come evil deeds,’ so my hand will not touch you.

<sup>14</sup>“Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Who are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? <sup>15</sup>May the LORD be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand.”

<sup>16</sup>When David finished saying this, Saul asked, “Is that your voice, David my son?” And he wept aloud. <sup>17</sup>“You are more righteous than I,” he said. “You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. <sup>18</sup>You have just now told me about the good you did to me; the LORD delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me. <sup>19</sup>When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today. <sup>20</sup>I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. <sup>21</sup>Now swear to me by the LORD that you will not kill off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father’s family.”

<sup>22</sup>So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

## David Again Spares Saul’s Life

26:1 The Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah and said, “Is not David hiding on the hill of Hakilah, which faces Jeshimon?”

<sup>2</sup>So Saul went down to the Desert of Ziph, with his three thousand select Israelite troops, to search there for David. <sup>3</sup>Saul made his camp beside the road on the hill of Hakilah facing Jeshimon, but David stayed in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul had followed him there, <sup>4</sup>he sent out scouts and learned that Saul had definitely arrived.



<sup>5</sup> Then David set out and went to the place where Saul had camped. He saw where Saul and Abner son of Ner, the commander of the army, had lain down. Saul was lying inside the camp, with the army encamped around him.

<sup>6</sup> David then asked Ahimelek the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, "Who will go down into the camp with me to Saul?"

"I'll go with you," said Abishai.

<sup>7</sup> So David and Abishai went to the army by night, and there was Saul, lying asleep inside the camp with his spear stuck in the ground near his head. Abner and the soldiers were lying around him.

<sup>8</sup> Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I won't strike him twice."

<sup>9</sup> But David said to Abishai, "Don't destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the LORD's anointed and be guiltless? <sup>10</sup> As surely as the LORD lives," he said, "the LORD himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. <sup>11</sup> But the LORD forbid that I should lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. Now get the spear and water jug that are near his head, and let's go."

<sup>12</sup> So David took the spear and water jug near Saul's head, and they left. No one saw or knew about it, nor did anyone wake up. They were all sleeping, because the LORD had put them into a deep sleep.

<sup>13</sup> Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the hill some distance away; there was a wide space between them. <sup>14</sup> He called out to the army and to Abner son of Ner, "Aren't you going to answer me, Abner?"

Abner replied, "Who are you who calls to the king?"

<sup>15</sup> David said, "You're a man, aren't you? And who is like you in Israel? Why didn't you guard your lord the king? Someone came to destroy your lord the king. <sup>16</sup> What you have done is not good. As surely as the LORD lives, you and your men must die, because you did not guard your master, the LORD's anointed. Look around you. Where are the king's spear and water jug that were near his head?"

<sup>17</sup> Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is that your voice, David my son?"

David replied, "Yes it is, my lord the king." <sup>18</sup> And he added, "Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done, and what wrong am I guilty of? <sup>19</sup> Now let my lord the king listen to his servant's words. If the LORD has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. If, however, people have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD! They have driven me today from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other gods.' <sup>20</sup> Now do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the LORD. The king of Israel has come out to look for a flea—as one hunts a partridge in the mountains."

<sup>21</sup> Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have been terribly wrong."

<sup>22</sup> "Here is the king's spear," David answered. "Let one of your young men come over and get it. <sup>23</sup> The LORD rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. The LORD delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. <sup>24</sup> As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble."

<sup>25</sup> Then Saul said to David, "May you be blessed, David my son; you will do great things and surely triumph."

So David went on his way, and Saul returned home.

## **Death of Saul and Jonathan**

31:1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell dead on Mount Gilboa. <sup>2</sup>The Philistines were in hot pursuit of Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. <sup>3</sup>The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically.

<sup>4</sup>Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me."

But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. <sup>5</sup>When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. <sup>6</sup>So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day.

<sup>7</sup>When the Israelites along the valley and those across the Jordan saw that the Israelite army had fled and that Saul and his sons had died, they abandoned their towns and fled. And the Philistines came and occupied them.

<sup>8</sup>The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa.

<sup>9</sup>They cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and they sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temple of their idols and among their people. <sup>10</sup>They put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan.

<sup>11</sup>When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, <sup>12</sup>all their valiant men marched through the night to Beth Shan. They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned them. <sup>13</sup>Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.