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*“Precious Life”*

1 SAMUEL 26:1-25

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## AT A GLANCE

When faced with the opportunity to get even, what you choose to do often reveals what you believe about God - about His care for you, His justice, and His mercy. David was presented with just such an opportunity in this chapter. Because he knew his life was precious in God’s sight, he trusted the Lord to take care of his enemies.

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Have you ever had a moment where you had the chance to settle the score? Someone wronged you. Hurt you. Lied about you. Undermined you. And suddenly—the opportunity to retaliate is right there in front of you.

You could say something. You could do something. And everything in you says, *“This is your chance.”* That’s exactly where David finds himself in this chapter, again.

His enemy is asleep. His weapon is within reach. And his closest ally is whispering, *“God has given him into your hand, let me take the shot.”* And in that moment, David has to decide: Will he trust God, or take matters into his own hands?

What you do in that moment reveals what you really believe about God—about His justice, about control, and about whose hands your life is actually in. That’s what we’re going to unpack this morning. What impact does it have when you realize your life is precious in God’s sight?

### 1 SAMUEL 26:24

**“...Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the Lord, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation.”**

In **verses 1-5** the narrator sets the next scene. Ziphites sold David out. Ziph is a subclan of Caleb. David had just married the wife of Nabal, a Calebite. (cf. 25:3) He now controlled a very wealthy Calebite’s land and fortune. Perhaps they felt he was encroaching on their territory.

Saul, in usual fashion, rallies 3000 of his best men and mounts a search party. David once again gets word and evades in the wilderness. But he doesn’t stay away. Instead, he went on the offensive, sending out spies and then going himself to where Saul was encamped.

In **verses 6-7** David recruits a couple guys to go down into the camp with him. That’s some gusto! That’s some delta-force-level stuff. Three thousand choice warriors occupying a patrol base and David walks right into the heart of it.

When they got into the camp, there’s Saul laid flat out with his spear stuck in the ground. And the narrator adds, verse 7 **and Abner and the army lay around him.**

## MORE THAN PROXIMITY

That little note isn't just a note of proximity. It reveals a categorical failure of Saul's bodyguard and his entire army to protect him. Soon we'll see why. But let this moment sit with you. Saul is the most powerful man in his world. And yet despite all the assets at his disposal, he's absolutely vulnerable.

All the outward trappings of power and control are merely thin veneers carefully crafted to give us a sense of protection. Our life is a mist, a vapor. We imagine we have control. We imagine we get to decide. But we're creatures of the Creator who sovereignly reigns over our lives.

That note of Abner's proximity reads similar to, *"and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate."* Genesis 3:6 Abner, like Adam, failed to protect the one he was given to protect. He left Saul vulnerable just like Adam left Eve vulnerable. Adam should have protected Eve from Satan's schemes just as Abner should have protected Saul.

There's another parallel to the Garden here - David is being tempted, like Eve, with forbidden fruit – **verse 8 Then Abishai said to David, "God has given your enemy into your hand this day. Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice."** Take the life of your archenemy. Put this to an end. Deal with it! Be decisive!

**Verses 9-12a But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?" 10 And David said, "As the Lord lives, the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish. 11 The Lord forbid that I should put out my hand against the Lord's anointed. But take now the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go." 12a So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head, and they went away.**

## A SYMBOL OF ABUSE

That spear is significant. It wasn't just a tool or a weapon. It was a symbol of power. And it was a symbol of power abused. (Leithart)

But David was restrained. He recognized Saul's authority as the anointed of God. Of all David's weaknesses, submission to authority was not one. And it was rooted in his confidence that the Lord would be his vindication. We saw this in the cave of Adullam. David knew that one way or another God would accomplish His will if he'd just leave it up to the Lord.

David learned this lesson in the previous episode in his life – Nabal. He was hellbent on killing that man and every other man in his house. But God got through to him with Abigail. And then God showed him real-time that He's able to take care of his enemies without blood on his hands. God's got you, David! Now David gets it.

Man, sometimes you've got to experience this yourself before you really get it. You gotta get hit in the gut a few times and feel that temptation to strike back and be restrained and watch the Lord work it out in a way you never thought possible for you to get it.

## DEEP SLEEP

But watch this, there was a reason David walked into the camp unnoticed. **Verse 12b No man saw it or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them.**

It wasn't David's place to punish the servant of another. Paul warns us of the same, *"Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand."* Romans 14:4

Every person alive is going to stand before the great Judge. We're all going to give account of our lives. None of your enemies is an exception. You do not have to take matters into your own hands.

Confront, yes! Take a couple witnesses, yes! Tell the church, yes! Protect yourself from further harm, yes. Pursue justice, yes. But you do not have to make it right yourself. If you do, you're going to regret it. I promise you, you're going to regret action taken in vengeance.

Nevertheless, David took a token of war, something to prove he was no threat to Saul. First, David took a piece of Saul's robe in the cave, and with it symbolically the kingdom. Now, he took his spear, the symbol of his power and the weapon of his wrath. And he took the king's water jar, essential for life in the desert.

Imagine the feeling of holding a symbol of abuse in your own hands. For some it might be a father's belt. A mother's a cigarette lighter. A manager's clipboard. Or sadly, a pastor's bible. And given the chance to exact revenge, what kind of self-control must David have had to not to wield it himself?

### FINAL CONFRONTATION

**Verses 13-14 Then David went over to the other side and stood far off on the top of the hill, with a great space between them. 14 And David called to the army, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Will you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner answered, "Who are you who calls to the king?"** Sleepy Abner brushes his blurry eyes and tries to sort out his dizzy thoughts. Dazed and confused, Abner asked who is waking up the king.

**Verses 15-16 And David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? Pause right here – "You're a man, right?" What a burn! Who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not kept watch over your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy the king your lord. 16 This thing that you have done is not good. As the Lord lives, you deserve to die, because you have not kept watch over your lord, the Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is and the jar of water that was at his head."**

David calls it like it is, Abner's negligence in protecting the king of Israel did deserve death. And with that, we're once again taken back to the garden of Eden and the curse handed down to Adam. Death for failing to protect his wife from his enemy. He failed at his most basic duty.

**Verse 17 Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?"** Again, Saul responds with David's name and by calling him **my son**. He has come out to kill him, again, but once again calls him by name. Remember, the last time we saw Saul, Saul was crying and promising never to hunt David again. And remember the conclusion I made in that episode? Tears do not equate to trust.

In **verses 17-20** David responds to Saul and basically says if he's done wrong against the Lord, he'll offer a sacrifice. But if men are the cause for this conflict, let them be cursed **19 ...for they have driven me out this day that I should have no share in the heritage of the Lord, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.'**

David implies it was Saul, not God, and not other men to blame. Skillfully pointing this out without directly accusing Saul.

Dale Davis reminds us this would be a terrible place to develop a biblical theology of worship of God. After all, God can be worshipped anywhere. At least that's what we now know. But to be cut off from the public ordinances of worship was David's greatest grief.

Perhaps something for you and I to ponder – Would it grieve you to be kept from gathering in worship?

## SAUL'S IRONIC BLESSING

**Verse 21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, I have acted foolishly, and have made a great mistake."**

Once again Saul apologizes and goes on and on about how he's a changed man. He says all the right words. But God knows the heart and in the end, he dies in judgment.

And check this out, Saul even asked David to **return**, to come back home with him. How delusional?! There are some things you really cannot come back from, no matter how many tears are shed. Attempted murder is one. David wasn't buying it.

**Verse 22 And David answered and said, "Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and take it."**

David, wisely refused to put himself back into Saul's reach. I've said before and I'll say again, forgiving people doesn't mean staying in their orbit and being hurt by them. Saul cried big wet tears and turned around and tried to kill David again.

We're called to forgive. We're called to forgive 70 times 7. But we're not called to naively expose ourselves to abuse. This requires discernment. This sort of thing may not be something you can figure out on your own. You may need someone who cares about you and can help you understand what honors the Lord when it comes to forgiveness and trust. Forgiving someone versus letting them have free and easy access to your life.

We offer biblical counseling here and perhaps that's what you need if you're wrestling with when to put up boundaries to protect yourself and when to lower those boundaries in trust. Ultimately, whatever you do, you do because you put your trust in the Lord.

## PRECIOUS LIFE

**Verses 23-24 The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, for the Lord gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against the Lord's anointed. 24 Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the Lord, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation."**

Once again we get a glimpse of the heart of David. He was convinced the Lord blesses the faithful. This isn't a salvific statement, "*there is none who does good, not even one.*" *Psalm 53:3* David isn't appealing to the Lord to save him because he is morally, perfectly righteous. He's saying he will wait for the Lord to bless his faithfulness rather than taking matters into his own hands.

This is David saying, I'm going to put all my hope and trust in the basket of God's faithfulness. I'm going to do what's right even when I get the chance to do what's convenient, or do what feels good.

Why? Because I know in my heart that God isn't going to overlook that and He's not going to let me fall on my face and go, "You should have been more cunning. You should have exacted vengeance when you had the chance." That's not how the Lord acts. The Lord will never call us to contradict His Word.

When we take matters into our own hands, we often pay the price. When we trust Him to take care of us, we live with few regrets.

In his final words to Saul, David said, **may he deliver me out of all tribulation.** There's no better prayer you can pray for you have no better hope than in David's deliverer.

**Verse 25** records Saul's final words to David, ...**"Blessed be you, my son David! You will do many things and will succeed in them."**

There's some poetic irony to this statement. The great things David will do include replacing Saul as king. And for Saul's last words to be words of blessing after those multiple attempts on David's life, it just seems so unusual.

That is, until we remember that God is still at the center of the story, moving the hearts of kings in His hands like streams of water. David has now received a piece of the king's robe, the king's spear, the king's water, and the king's blessing. It's only a matter of time before he has the king's throne.

**So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place.** That's it. David's fight with Saul is over. He doesn't know it yet, but this the last time he'll have to contend with Saul.

Let's go back and close with the second to last thing David said to Saul. **Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the Lord,**  
**GREAT ASSURANCE**

What a line. David looks at the man who has hunted him, tried to kill him, lied about him—and says, ***your life is precious***. And then he lifts his eyes and says, *Lord...may my life be precious to You*. This isn't wishful thinking. It's confident assurance. This is the foundation upon which David built his life. It was because David knew his life was precious in God's sight that he was able to exercise self-control when given the chance to take Saul's.

Because when you know your life is precious to God, you don't have to take matters into your own hands. You don't have to force justice. You don't have to cling to control. You don't have to strike when you have the chance. You just trust Him.

David didn't spare Saul because Saul deserved it. He spared Saul because **God is sovereign**—and David trusted Him to handle what he could not. And that's where this lands for us.

Some of you are holding a spear right now. Not a literal one—but something just as real: words you could say, actions you could take, decisions that would "settle the score." You've got the justification; at least in your own mind. You've even got people around you saying, *"Do it."*

And the question is: **will you trust God, or take matters into your own hands?** Listen—if you believe your life is precious to God, you can trust the Lord with it. Because your future is not in the hands of anyone else; it's in His.

David knew something we need to know: When you take matters into your own hands, you often live with regret. When you trust God, you live with peace.

### **PUT DOWN THE SPEAR**

So here's the call: lay down the spear. Put boundaries in place, but trust the Lord with your enemies. Trust the Lord with your future. Trust the Lord with your life. Because it is—right now, in this moment—**precious in His sight**.

And because we're so prone to forget this, Jesus instituted a continual reminder of what He did to prove to you that your life is, indeed, precious in God's sight – we call it the Lord's Supper. Whenever we eat it we proclaim His death – and sometimes we're the ones who need to hear it most.