

## EXPLORING GOD'S WORD – WEEK #21

### 1 SAMUEL 20 THROUGH 2 SAMUEL 3

#### 1 SAMUEL 20

Jonathan and David set up a signal with arrows to indicate whether Saul was angry at David or not. At dinner, Saul flew into a rage at Jonathan saying, "David must die" and threw a spear at his son. Jonathan delivered the signal and David went on the run.

**It has well been said that faith is living without scheming. In the midst of the trials of life, we must beware lest we become weary, stop trusting God, and start scheming. We may be inclined to judge David, but perhaps we have done some scheming ourselves. David and Jonathan lied to Saul, and it almost cost Jonathan his life. Jonathan had been altogether too optimistic about his father, and this experience helped to open his eyes. Jonathan tried to mediate between David and Saul instead of taking his stand with God's anointed.**

#### 1 SAMUEL 21

David asked Ahimelek the priest for bread for his men. Ahimelek gave him all that he had – the consecrated bread. Doeg the Edomite witnessed this. Ahimelek gave David Goliath's sword. David traveled to Gath and met King Achish. David acted insane around the king to fool him so he could stay.

**DEPARTURE.** David lived as an exile for about ten years, during which time Saul tried to kill him and Saul's followers lied about him. Many people in Israel actually believed that David was a rebel against the king and that David was trying to destroy Saul. David had to leave his reputation with God and trust Him to silence the accusers.

**DECEPTION.** It is disappointing to see David depending on lies for protection. He lied to the priest and to the king, but he could not lie to Doeg: "For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light" (Luke 16:8). Whenever you think you have "pulled off" a smart deal, you will find a Doeg ready to give you trouble (1 Sam. 22:9ff.; see also Ps. 52). "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal truthfully are His delight" (Prov. 12:22).

#### 1 SAMUEL 22

Saul was furious at his men since they had done nothing to stop David. Doeg told Saul about Ahimelek giving David bread. Saul had Ahimelek brought to him and accused him of treason. After none of Saul's officials agreed to kill Ahimelek, Saul asked Doeg who killed the priest then eighty-five other priests and a whole town of priests. Abiathar, Ahimelek's son, escaped and told David about the massacre.

**What a motley group gathered around the exiled king (1 Cor. 1:26–30)! A. W. Tozer used to say, "Don't follow any leader until you see the mark of the oil on his forehead." David had the anointing of God, and he represented the future in Israel. Yes, he made mistakes and was sometimes discouraged, but he was God's man and God used him. Contrast Saul's approach to leadership. He could not challenge his men to a holy cause, so he tried to bribe them (v. 7) and play on their sympathy (v. 8). He depended on spies like Doeg, and he was not afraid to murder innocent priests just to let people know who was in charge. Saul was unwilling to kill the wicked Amalekites, but he murdered God's priests. Saul was fighting a losing battle, and he was desperate. God in His providence gave David two great gifts: the ephod (1 Sam. 23:6) and a priest. He could always seek the will of the Lord as he planned his strategy. You have the Word of God and an**

**interceding High Priest in heaven. Do you seek the mind of the Lord as you make decisions?**

### **1 SAMUEL 23**

David inquired of God if he should save the city of Keilah from the Philistines. God gave him permission. Saul pursued him but God never gave David over to him. Jonathan met with David to encourage him. David slipped into En Gedi.

**GUIDANCE.** A gifted leader like David might have been tempted to depend on his experience; instead, he turned to the Lord for the guidance he needed. Even the counsel of his men did not sway him once he knew the mind of the Lord.

**TREACHERY.** David rescued the citizens of Keilah, yet they planned to turn him and his men over to Saul! Do not expect everybody you help to appreciate what you have done. Do you appreciate what others have done for you?

**LOVE.** Although his father was out to kill David, Jonathan was brave enough to visit David and encourage him. That is what friendship is all about (Prov. 17:17). How tragic that Jonathan's hopes for the future were destroyed by his father's sins, but at least Jonathan was willing to be second man.

**PROVIDENCE.** Ziph belonged to Judah (Josh. 15:24), so the citizens should have been loyal to David. They were obviously trying to curry favor with Saul, and they did not believe that David was their future king. God used an invasion of the Philistines to rescue David when it looked as if Saul's forces would win. No matter what men may do, God works out His purposes, and His providence does not fail.

### **1 SAMUEL 24**

In a cave in En Gedi, Saul went in to relieve himself. David, hiding in the shadows, crept up and cut off a corner of Saul's robe. As Saul left, David, conscience-stricken, stepped out and apologized to Saul for his act. Saul could not believe David was being so kind to him, when he was being so vindictive towards David. Saul admitted that David was more righteous than he was and would ultimately be king.

**CIRCUMSTANCES.** People interpret events differently, depending on what they have in their hearts. Saul thought circumstances were safe, so he laid aside his spear and went into the cave. David's men saw a great opportunity for David to avenge himself, but David saw an opportunity to show mercy. David may have been Saul's enemy, but Saul was not David's enemy (v. 19).

**CONSCIENCE.** David's conscience was so tender that he was troubled after he cut off a corner of Saul's robe. He was humiliating the king, and David knew what it meant to respect authority. A sensitive conscience is a great treasure and a valuable guide. Don't lose it!

**COWARDICE.** Saul's tears were superficial and his conviction temporary; otherwise, he would have welcomed David and transferred the monarchy to him. He knew that David would be king, but he opposed it as long as he could. His greatest concern was that David spare his descendants, which David promised to do. However, it was Saul's sins, not David's revenge, that destroyed his family.

### **1 SAMUEL 25**

Samuel died. David approached Nabal, a rich livestock owner, for food for his troops. Nabal told him to get lost. Nabal's wife, Abigail, quickly prepared food and met David's troops marching to kill Nabal. David was touched by her kindness. After hearing what Abigail did,

Nabal died and David married Abigail, in addition to another woman, Ahinoam. Saul had given Michal away to a man named Paltiel.

**These events remind us we can live on several levels.**

**WE CAN RETURN EVIL FOR GOOD.** Nabal did that when he refused to share his food with David's men. His name means "fool," and that is exactly what he was (Prov. 17:13).

**WE CAN RETURN EVIL FOR EVIL.** David planned to do that before he was stopped. It is the natural thing to do because most of the world lives that way, and our hurt feelings cry out for revenge. And yet David had just shown mercy to Saul who had treated him far worse than had Nabal! How easy it is to lose perspective in the heat of anger.

**WE CAN OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.** God used Abigail to prevent David from becoming a murderer. She reminded David of Nabal's true character (vv. 23–25) and of David's efforts to do God's work (vv. 26–29). She also told him he would suffer when he remembered the incident in the future (vv. 30–31). This is good counsel to heed the next time you consider seeking revenge. Ponder Proverbs 20:22 and 24:29.

## 1 SAMUEL 26

David snuck into Saul's camp with Abishai. Abishai wanted to kill the king but David stopped him. They stole Saul's spear and water jug, then called out to Abner, Saul's bodyguard, telling him he was inept in protecting God's anointed. Saul was once again convicted by David's loyalty.

**Saul's tearful words did not mean much, for he continued to pursue David. In His mercy, God gave Saul another opportunity to repent, but the king's heart was too hard. Even while he slept, Saul kept his spear next to him to remind everybody that he was king. David took the spear from him, a significant action. Abishai, David's nephew, was a brave man; but brave men are not always wise. He said, "You missed your first opportunity, so don't miss this one!" But David knew that God's hand, not his own, would have to strike Saul. David's speech was designed to make Saul examine his heart. Was Saul chasing David because God told him to do so, or because he believed the lies his flattering officers told about David? Twice before, Saul had said "I have sinned" (1 Sam. 15:24, 30), but his words were not sincere then or on this occasion.**

## 1 SAMUEL 27

David hid out with the Philistines to keep distance between he and Saul. King Achish allowed David, his six hundred soldiers and their families to live in Ziklag. David would live there then head out to conquer Geshurites, Girzites and Amalekites. He killed everyone he attacked so no one could inform on them. Each time he returned to this Philistine controlled area.

**David won a great victory over Saul, only to be overwhelmed by despair. Such feelings are not unusual; you cannot have mountaintops without valleys. However, when you are feeling low, it is a dangerous thing to "talk to yourself" and make important decisions. David should have talked to the Lord. He and Abiathar could have sought the mind of God together. David made some foolish decisions because he did not pause to inquire of the Lord. He stopped serving God and started thinking about survival: "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it" (Mark 8:35). He trusted the enemy for protection and did not trust the Lord. As a result, he had to scheme, kill, and lie to survive. When you are discouraged, ask a trusted Christian friend to pray with you, and seek the Lord's direction. Take time to talk about your feelings with your friend. You will gain a clearer perspective. Make no impulsive decisions about significant matters. Follow this advice:**

**“Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart” (Ps. 27:14).  
 “When the outlook is discouraging, try the uplook!”**

## **SAMUEL 28**

Achish, king of Gath, asked David to fight against Israel, as his lifetime bodyguard. Saul, unable to hear from God through a prophet, dreams or Urim, visited a medium at Endor. She called up a spirit who was Samuel. Samuel chastised Saul saying this was exactly why Israel was taken from him. He promised that tomorrow Saul and his sons would be given over to the Philistines. Saul mourned.

**Saul had been fighting the wrong enemy for so long that when the real enemy appeared, the king was unprepared. God was not with him, and prayer was not answered (Prov. 1:20–33). When Saul began his reign, it was “the dawning of the day” (1 Sam. 9:26), but now he was walking in the darkness. Saul did not disguise himself (v. 8); he revealed his true self. Throughout his reign, he had been pretending, and the truth was coming out. Depending on demonic forces, the medium planned to impersonate Samuel, but the Lord permitted Samuel to appear. The friend Saul grieved in life, he called for in death. Too late do we learn to appreciate those who tried to help us. Too late do we humble ourselves. Saul’s disobedience in the past led to darkness in the present and defeat and death in the future. When God gave him opportunities to repent, he ignored them. He did not “seek the Lord while He may be found” (Isa. 55:6).**

## **1 SAMUEL 29**

The Philistine commanders grew uneasy about David joining their ranks and asked the king to dismiss him. Achish defended David but relented and asked David not to join in battle.

**David was out of place, but God in His mercy cared for him. This is an encouragement to us when we sin, but it must not become an excuse for sin. That would be tempting God. The king never once detected what was going on, so David must have been a gifted actor. However, what value is there in being successful at deception? Hypocrisy and lying destroyed King Saul. The Lord used the song that got David into trouble with Saul (1 Sam. 18:7–9) to get him out of trouble with the Philistines. Saul was not David’s enemy, and David did not want to meet him on the battlefield and fight against his own people. But when you fraternize with the enemy, you create difficult problems. Let us be grateful for Psalm 103:10–14.**

## **1 SAMUEL 30**

David and his men arrived in Ziklag and found that the Amalekites had burned the city and captured all the women and children, including David’s wives. Some of his army were too weak to fight and stayed back while the others defeated the Amalekites and retrieved their families and everything stolen from them. David defended those who stayed behind and allowed them to share in the plunder.

**Relieved that he had been discharged from the war, David returned to Ziklag only to find tragedy. There are times when one problem follows hard on another. Had Saul slain the Amalekites as God commanded (1 Sam. 15), this raid would not have occurred. Our disobedience can cause problems for others. A crisis does not make a person: it shows what a person is made of. Like his men, David wept and sorrowed, but unlike some of his**

men, he did not look for a scapegoat. In times of crisis, express your feelings honestly, but do not look for somebody to blame. Rather, get your strength from the Lord (v. 6) and seek His will (vv. 7–8). He is in complete control. God uses the weak things of the world, even a sick boy who was left to die. When we do the possible, God does the impossible. The tragedy became victory, with profit for everybody.

## 1 SAMUEL 31

Saul fought the Philistines. Jonathan and Saul's two other sons were killed and Saul was wounded by archers. He asked the armor bearer to kill him, but the armor bearer refused. Saul fell on his own sword. The Philistines beheaded Saul and hung his body on the wall at Beth Shan. They put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths. The people of Jabesh Gilead removed Saul's body and gave him a proper burial.

**DEFEAT.** David won a battle and divided the spoils; Saul lost a battle and was stripped by the enemy. Gideon camped near Gilboa before his great victory over the Midianites (Judges 7:1), but Gilboa would forever be associated with the defeat of Saul. Are you leaving behind monuments to victory or to defeat?

**DEATH.** Death reigned over Israel: their soldiers died, Saul and his armorbearer died, and Saul's sons died. Such is the high cost of one man's rebellion: "For to be carnally minded is death" (Rom. 8:6).

**DISGRACE.** Had Israel won, God would have been glorified. Instead, the pagan idols were honored, and the dead were desecrated. It is bad enough to die in a losing battle, but not to be buried was an even greater disgrace.

**DEVOTION.** The brave men of Jabesh Gilead risked their lives to give Saul and his sons a decent burial. After all, Saul had rescued their city forty years before, and they were showing their gratitude (1 Sam. 11:1–11). David later honored them for their feat (2 Sam. 2:4–7).

## 2 SAMUEL 1

An Amalekite said he found Saul on his spear and Saul asked the man to kill him. The Amalekite said he did and brought David Saul's crown. When David heard the news, he tore his robes and had the messenger killed who said/lie that he killed Saul, God's anointed. David sang a lament for Saul and Jonathan.

**Saul was head and shoulders above everybody else, but he was not heart and soul yielded to God.** Robert Murray M'Cheyne said, "It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus." The Amalekite tried to deceive David and win his favor, for his account contradicts the inspired record (1 Sam. 31). He did not know David! Saul was not David's enemy, so David could not rejoice over Israel's inglorious defeat. Do you have enemies whose sorrows make you happy? If you do, carefully consider Proverbs 24:17 and Romans 12:14–15. David said only good things about Saul and praised him as a mighty warrior. Saul's treatment of David had been diabolical, but David's treatment of Saul was always kind and considerate. Saul listened to men's lies and lost his crown; David obeyed God's Word and gained a kingdom.

## 2 SAMUEL 2

David anointed king over Judah. Meanwhile, Saul's son Ish-bosheth was declared king of Israel by Abner, Saul's commander. David's and Saul's army fight a little twelve-on-twelve battle. Abner kills Asahel, Joab's brother, who refused to stop chasing him, even after Joab warned him. Joab and Abishai pursued Abner, who called for a truce.

David's tribe of Judah anointed him king and set up his headquarters in Hebron. But Abner, Saul's cousin (1 Sam. 14:50) and commander of his army, made Saul's son king in open defiance of God's will. Whenever we fail to submit to God's will, we cause division and bring destruction (James 3:13–4:1). Three murders will occur before David becomes king of all the people: Asahel's (chap. 2), Abner's (chap. 3) and Ishbosheth's (chap. 4). All of that blood would not have been shed if the leaders had only submitted to God's chosen king instead of seeking their own advantage. Joab and Asahel were related to David, so there were both family and national considerations. Had everybody put the glory of God and the good of the nation first, tragedies would have been avoided.

## **2 SAMUEL 3**

Abner, offended by Ish-Bosheth's comment that he slept with Saul's concubine, defected to David's side. David asked for Michal back, while her husband cried. Joab, after he heard Abner came to David's side, called Abner a spy. He and his brother Abishai killed Abner for killing their brother Asahel.

**Trusting in the Lord, David went "from strength to strength" (Ps. 84:7). He was God's anointed and knew that God would fulfill His promise and make him king over all Israel. When you walk by faith, you can wait on Him. Abner also grew in strength (v. 6), not the strength of the Lord but political power. He had more authority than the king, for he had made Ishbosheth king. Abner's use of power to please himself was his downfall. David's way of life was reconciliation; he was a peacemaker. But Abner and Joab lived by retaliation: "All who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matt. 26:52). Abner had murdered Asahel, and his sin had found him out. But Joab's deed was wicked, and David dissociated himself from it. Imagine Joab avenging his brother's blood at Hebron, a city of refuge! David was strong, yet he was weak (v. 39)! When we are weak in ourselves, the Lord can be strong through us (2 Cor. 12:7–10). We cannot control circumstances and people, but we can control what we say and do.**

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