

The Hand That Would Not Strike

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1 Samuel / Love; Trust / 1 Samuel 26

Saul spared by David a second time. No questionable means need be employed to help out God's plans for our advancement.

[Saul was spared by David a second time. No questionable means were employed to help out God's plans for our advancement; God can weaken the strongest and make foolish the wisest on our behalf. Wait for his time.]

Text: *1 Samuel 26*

Call: *"The grass withers and the flower fades,"*

Response: *"But the word of the Lord endures forever."*

The Hand That Would Not Strike

1. The Love of David - A Love That Waits (v1-12)

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Introduction

As we come to 1 Samuel chapter 26, it's important to recall the weight and wisdom of chapter 25. There we witnessed the death of the prophet Samuel, a solemn moment marking the end of an era in Israel's history. We also saw David in conflict with Nabal, a man of folly and arrogance, whose harshness nearly provoked David to bloodshed. But God, in His mercy, raised up Abigail, a woman of discernment and grace, who interceded and turned David's heart from vengeance. In the end, God Himself avenged David, striking Nabal and vindicating His servant without David lifting a hand. Abigail became David's wife, and so did Ahinoam, setting a course of marital sin and irregularity that would follow David and his family into later years.

Now, in chapter 26, David faces a familiar test. The Ziphites betray him again. Saul, who once wept and confessed, returns to his sin like a dog to his vomit. But David, shaped by grace and seasoned by trial, responds not with vengeance, but with love. He spares Saul a second time. And more than that, he trusts not in Saul's remorse, but in God's justice.

This chapter reveals two great pillars of godliness: the love of David toward his enemy, and the trust of David in the timing and righteousness of God. My prayer is that through this text, the Lord would teach us to walk in both.

1. The Love of David (v1-12)

David, driven by his love for God, showed mercy to Saul by sparing his life, even while wrestling with strong temptations to choose another path. This chapter teaches us that true godly love does not ignore sin, nor does it react in bitterness. It acts in wisdom, patience, love, and mercy, the fruit of a heart that fears the Lord more than man.

1.1 The Betrayal and the Burden (v1-4)

Verse 1 sets the scene with a familiar wound, "Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, 'Is not David hiding himself on the hill of Hachilah...?'" This isn't the first time the Ziphites have betrayed David, they did the same thing in chapter 23. But now, they return with the same treachery, bringing the same temptation to Saul, whose repentance in chapter

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24 had seemed genuine. Their betrayal is more than a historical footnote, it illustrates how temptation works. Sin is persistent. The world, the flesh, and the devil do not take time off while we pursue holiness. Old sins can return, whispering to us like the Ziphites to Saul: “We miss you. Come back.”

This chapter opens with a vivid picture of the spiritual battle we all face. It’s not only about avoiding new sins; it’s about standing firm when old ones resurface.

Verse 2 reads, “So Saul arose and went down.” Here we see God’s hand at work. Last week, we saw God strike down Nabal for a lesser offense, yet Saul, the greater enemy, remains. Why? Because David’s sanctification is not yet complete. The difference between Nabal and Saul is not the size of the sin but God’s purpose. With Nabal, God vindicated David quickly; with Saul, God prolongs the trial to refine David’s character.

God’s sovereignty extends not only over who afflicts us but also how long the affliction lasts. Every delay, disappointment, and trial sits under His personal hand. Nothing in your life is accidental. The hand that lets Saul rise is the same hand holding David firm.

Verse 3 tells us, “Saul encamped on the hill of Hachilah.” Even Saul’s steps are not random. God ordains every hill, every camp, every move of the enemy. God had trained David in chapter 25, and now He orchestrates this moment, using the spear and jug as instruments to deliver His lesson. Every detail, the hill, the timing, even the day, is under God’s sovereign direction. Just as God chose this moment for David and Saul, He chooses moments in our lives for teaching, encouragement, and sanctification.

Verse 4 says, “David sent out spies and learned that Saul had indeed come.” David’s love begins here, quietly, in wisdom and restraint. Why send spies? Because love is measured by careful action, not impulse. Wisdom verifies truth before acting. [Proverbs 18:13](#) warns, “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.” [John 7:24](#) commands, “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.” [James 1:19–20](#) reminds us to be “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

David had heard Saul’s repentance in chapter 24. He wanted to believe it, but he sought the truth first. This is godly love; it’s wise, careful, and charitable. In our flesh, we assume motives and react in fear, but biblical love is patient, discerning, hopeful, and God-

dependent. It “believes all things” ([1 Cor. 13:7](#)), not blindly (we will see the wisdom and discernment later in the chapter) but charitably, trusting God to work in the hearts of others.

David doesn't blindly trust Saul or rush to condemn him. He balances caution with compassion, thinking before he speaks, waiting before he acts, and leaving ultimate judgment to God. This is a masterclass in Spirit-filled love. Acting without knowledge is foolish and unloving; restraint is mercy.

This restraint reflects Christ Himself, the One who bears patiently, discerns perfectly, and never misjudges His people. In marriage, in friendship, in church life, we are called to this same love: don't assume motives, don't react in frustration, instead we hope, wait, extend mercy, and trust God to work in the hearts of others.

1.2 The Boldness and the Bait (v5-8)

As we come to **verse 5**, David has just confirmed Saul's intent through the spies, and now moves in to inspect the situation personally. He does not act on rumor or assumption; he goes to see for himself. This is boldness with prudence. David does not send a boastful message or stir up panic from a distance; instead, he approaches the scene, discerns the reality, and places himself where the truth can be confirmed. There is risk in this step, his being so close to the enemy's camp at night, but there is also responsibility. Godly courage often requires that we go and look, that we face the danger rather than imagining it from a safe distance.

In **verse 6**, David makes a decisive move and asks the challenging question, “Who will go down with me?” He does not presume to act alone, instead he invites partnership in a dangerous task, testing the hearts of those around him. This moment reveals David's leadership, he seeks companionship, counsel, and shared responsibility. Scripture reinforces this principle repeatedly, both in narrative and in wisdom literature. [Proverbs 15:22](#) reminds us, “Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.” In the church and in life, faithful leaders do not act in isolation, they move with deliberation alongside others who share the same reverent purpose. I want to display this before Awakening in all that we do. Pastor Mike is not, and I am not, acting alone on some personal mission of desire or pride as we guide, direct, and lead the church, and neither is David in our text. This kind of leadership finds its perfect expression in Christ, who, though He was God, took the form of a man and

subordinated all His actions to the wisdom, counsel, and guidance of the Father. As [John 5:19](#) declares, “The Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” Christ models the ultimate example of humility, obedience, and dependence, a pattern we are called to follow in leadership and in life.

When we get to **verse 7**, the scene becomes even more compelling. In the darkness of night, with Abner and all the soldiers asleep, temptation begins to rear its head. Saul’s failure to resist sin has already been revealed in verses 1-4, and now the trap is being set with the most enticing bait for David. We need to see it, recognize it, and call it what it is, so that we can govern our lives by the righteousness of God rather than the darkness of the night. The first piece of bait is the cover of night itself. Secrecy often encourages sin. There is something about hidden moments, the hush of a sleeping enemy camp, that makes wrong seem easier, that tempts the heart to rationalize what daylight would never allow. The surrounding silence becomes a false ally, whispering to David and to us that no one will know, that the act can be done without cost or consequence. This is the tempter’s appeal: act now in private and you can avoid the consequences.

It is not just the night and the sleeping army that make this moment dangerous; the spear lies right at Saul’s head, almost as if it were placed there for David to take. It is a stark reminder that David was not coordinating this moment himself. Can you see it as God’s providence at work? God has provided the opportunity, yet David must still choose obedience. The text shows how vulnerable we are when temptation is dressed up as opportunity, and it teaches us to rely on God’s righteousness rather than our own impulses.

When we arrive at **verse 8**, it becomes clear who has not been trained by the lessons of chapter 25, Abishai. Instead of offering companionship, counsel, and shared responsibility, he adds fuel to the temptation for David, taking it to a fever pitch. Abishai urges David to strike, arguing that God has delivered Saul into their hands and that the act would be swift and unseen. This is classic temptation. Rather than recognizing disobedience to God, the opposite is rationalized, and rebellion is dressed up as divine permission. Abishai promises everything the flesh desires, ease, secrecy, and even the appearance of God’s approval. “Here is a gift from God, David,” he seems to say. “The circumstances permit it, it will be simple, it will not cost you anything.”

Church, this is how temptation often appears in our own lives. We are led by our flesh and circumstances to imagine that God approves what pleases us. We are tempted by shortcuts and the lie that sin can be clean, quick, and untraceable. Abishai offers David exactly what Satan offered Christ, a way that seems to satisfy justice without the cost of obedience.

David's response, which we will explore in the next section, demonstrates the difference between simple courage and Spirit-filled restraint. Temptation often comes in its most convincing form, presenting a plausible and pious-sounding argument that appeals to convenience and ease. The lesson for us is clear. Do not let secrecy, comfort, or opportunity become the stage for sin in your life. When temptation presents itself as a quick or convenient solution, pause, seek clear evidence of God's will from his word and Godly counsel, remember His timing, and refuse to take action that belongs to Him alone.

1.3 The Boundaries and the Benevolence (v9-12)

In **verse 9**, David gives his verdict on the situation and Abishai's words; instead of gratification in his flesh, he sets clear and unmovable boundaries. He will not harm Saul, the Lord's anointed. This is a powerful lesson for us. When sin whispers, "You can get away with this," we must instead trust the promise of God, "I can deliver you from that sin." David shows that true righteousness knows limits. It does not rationalize, it does not seize opportunity for personal gain, and it respects God's authority above all else. His restraint reflects a heart surrendered to God's justice rather than his own. We need to see that this moment points beyond David, too. There would come another Son of David, surrounded by enemies and tempted to take justice into His own hands, yet He refused. When they struck His cheek, He turned the other. When they nailed Him to the cross, He prayed, 'Father, forgive them.' David's restraint gives us a glimpse of Christ's greater glory, the righteous King who conquers not by taking life, but by giving His own."

In **verses 10 and 11**, we see the careful attention David shows to detail and the measured way he confronts the situation. He does not act impulsively. He does not strike out of fear, anger, or desire for vengeance. Instead, he acts with wisdom, discernment, and patience. The same God who has guided him through past trials continues to direct his steps, reminding us that godly love is both bold and restrained. This same faith finds its fullness in Jesus Christ. [1](#)

[Peter 2:23](#) tells us, ‘When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly.’ David trusted the Lord’s timing; Jesus embodied perfect trust in His Father. And because He trusted unto death and rose again, we can rest in the Father’s justice without fear.

Verse 12 provides commentary from the Holy Spirit, showing us that this entire sequence of events was orchestrated by God. David and Abishai were able to enter the camp of an army that was actively hunting them, walking directly up to the most protected individual in Israel. How could this happen? Because God is sovereign even over sleep. He controlled the army, the timing, and the very moment of opportunity. Nothing occurs outside His providence. Church, take note: the same God who directs the steps of David and protects His servant today is at work in our lives. God’s power and purpose extend over every detail, even the small and unseen ones, and His hand is always present to uphold His people.

David’s actions in these verses give us a model of a life guided by obedience to God. He could have seized the moment, this golden opportunity, for personal gain, but he chose mercy, love, and faithful restraint. This teaches us that love pleasing to God is not impulsive or self-serving. It is measured, careful, and dependent on His sovereign direction. True godliness blends courage with restraint, action with reverence, and opportunity with obedience to God’s will.

Here is the final push for this first section, verses 1-12, and the love of David displayed for us. The flesh, the world, and temptation make constant promises:

You can have this.

You should have this.

You can get away with it.

Nobody will know.

The way we fight these lies matters. We cannot depend on human decision, moral strength, or even helpful tools like Life 360 or Covenant Eyes to pull ourselves up by the bootstraps. Tools are fine, but they cannot be the source of our confidence. We cannot rely on our own effort to secure victory. When the enemy and our own flesh whisper these false promises, we fight with better promises. Awakening Church, can you see that?

The reason we can know victory over not just one temptation but any temptation is that God gives us a better promise, and He cannot lie. [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) tells us, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

The circumstances can never be too good.

The person can never be too attractive.

The money can never be too much.

The God who does not lie has promised we can endure it. The question is, who will you believe? Will you believe the lies, or will you believe the Lord? Believe the promises, pray for help, and flee temptation! David believed and loved the Lord. That is where his trust was placed. The trust of David brings us to the second portion of the sermon, verses 13-24.

2. The Trust of David (v13-24)

As the scene shifts, David now models a second great pillar of godliness: trust. He trusts not in Saul’s remorse, not in appearances, and not in human promises, but in God’s righteous judgment and perfect timing to vindicate him. The love of David guided his actions; now his trust governs his response. Godly trust does not act impulsively or seek instant justice. It waits, it observes, and it rests in the sovereign hand of God.

2.1 The Challenge and the Charge (v13-16)

In **verse 13**, we see David exercising discernment and wisdom in how he approaches Saul. He begins by putting significant distance between them. This is not fear, and it is not a lack of love. It is a necessary consequence of sin. The distance highlights the brokenness of the relationship between David and Saul, and more broadly, the brokenness in the world. Earlier, when we spoke about love, about “believing all things,” we emphasized approaching others with hope, without assuming the worst of motives. But no Christian, not even David, is called to exercise love without wisdom. Love must be charitable, yes, but it is never simple. David shows us that love is often disciplined, careful, measured, and restrained, rather than

impulsive. [Proverbs 22:3](#) reminds us, “The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.” Love and wisdom walk together.

Verses 14 through 16 reveal an important contrast. Who would you expect David to wake in this moment? Surely Saul, the one he came to confront. But David does not call out directly to Saul. Instead, he calls to the army and to Abner, Saul’s commander. Here is the lesson for the Christian. Even when we look for examples of what to do, sometimes God shows us what not to do through the failures of others. Saul had entrusted his protection to men who were asleep, negligent in their duty. David positions himself as a protector, faithful even when those around Saul fail. He challenges Abner’s negligence and displays the stolen items as proof of how easily Saul could have been taken. David, the hunted, remains disciplined, cautious, and faithful, while those entrusted with Saul’s safety fail to act.

What does this teach us? In our lives, the things Saul trusted for protection, the armies and sleeping commanders, may not look like soldiers or battlefield guards. They appear as positions, relationships, financial security, routines, or habits that seem protective. We are often tempted to place confidence in people, plans, or things that promise safety. But just as God demonstrated His sovereignty over Saul’s sleeping guards, so Christ will one day show the emptiness of all earthly protections.

Leaders, bosses, or political systems we think will protect us can fail. Even kings and armies in Scripture fell when God willed it.

Wealth and investments can give a sense of safety, but markets crash, businesses fail, and money cannot prevent hardship or death.

Friends, family, and spouses may fail us in critical moments. Even trusted companions can betray or disappoint.

Strong bodies or athletic skill cannot guarantee protection from illness, accidents, or enemies.

Modern tools like cameras, alarms, or monitoring software give a sense of control, but without God’s providence, they cannot keep us from sin, failure, or harm.

Even good things like church attendance or personal discipline are not a substitute for trusting God as our Protector.

There is only one Commander to trust, one Protector who is faithful, one who never fails, and that is Christ. Our security, our confidence, and our joy cannot rest in the seeming strength of

men, but in the steadfast faithfulness of our Lord. Awakening Church, He has proven Himself faithful time and time again, and He is the One in whom we place our hope.

2.2 The Cry and the Comparison (v17-20)

In **verse 17**, Saul attempts the “my son” approach with David, but David will have none of it. This is not a moment for father-son sentiment. Because Saul has taken David’s wife and given her to another, those titles carry no rightful weight. Saul is attempting the same manipulation he has used before. In chapter 24, he spoke words of comfort and wept, trying to appeal to David’s heart. Now, after pursuing the same sin again, he repeats the words, but the tears are gone. The text makes it clear that Saul’s heart has grown harder over time.

Here is a sobering lesson for us. Repeated sin dulls the conscience. Scripture repeatedly shows that the more sin is indulged, the less it stirs sorrow, the less it moves the emotions, and the more the heart grows callous.

Over time, sin sears the conscience, dulling our sensitivity to God’s law and truth, just as Paul warns in [1 Timothy 4:2](#), where people are described as having their consciences seared with a hot iron. This is why we encourage real and regular confession, with events like family devotions and discipleship groups.

[Hebrews 3:13](#) “But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

Awakening Church, we need to take note. Time and repeated rebellion can harden the soul, making words and appearances deceptive.

In **verse 18**, David does not focus on Saul’s words of address or the outward courtesy of calling him “my son.” He does not allow the titles or flattery to distract him. Instead, his attention is fixed on the reality of Saul’s injustice toward him. David declares his innocence, presenting the truth of his actions and character before Saul.

In **verses 19 and 20**, David presents two possibilities for Saul’s relentless pursuit. First, it could be the Lord, using Saul as an instrument to test or correct him. In that case, David submits humbly, saying that if it is God’s hand at work, let Him accept a proper offering, trusting fully in His justice and mercy. Second, if Saul is being influenced by others, advisors, flatterers, or envious voices, David does not accuse Saul directly. Instead, he places the

responsibility on those who would manipulate another to carry out their own malice. He prays that they be held accountable for the harm their schemes have caused, especially for the sorrow David experiences from being cut off from public worship, from the tabernacle, the festivals, and the priestly ministry, the very places where Israel encounters the presence of God.

David's response reveals his true priorities. His deepest longing is not for family, comfort, or personal peace. His greatest desire is the ability to freely gather with God's people in worship, to stand in the presence of the Lord. While Saul's heart is increasingly hardened and dark, David's heart is exposed as one devoted above all else to God. Here is a man shaped by grace, showing us that ultimate longing and true life are found not in earthly comfort or security, but in God Himself.

2.3 The Confession and the Confidence (v21-25)

When we read **verse 21**, Saul finally confesses his wrongdoing, and not only that, he even calls it sin. After all the pursuit, the schemes, and the attempts to manipulate and intimidate David, Saul acknowledges his guilt. He even gives David an invitation to reconciliation: "Return, my son David." So now we have two realities working side by side: the call for forgiveness and the call for reconciliation. From our perspective, because we have the benefit of the written Word of God, we know that this confession is not necessarily heartfelt repentance. The text shows that Saul's heart remains darkened by envy and pride. Through this situation, though, David teaches us an important distinction: there is a difference between forgiveness and reconciliation.

The Christian is commanded to forgive, and it is true that the ultimate goal of forgiveness is full restoration. Yet wisdom requires that we consider the effects of sin and the reality of human brokenness as we approach reconciliation after forgiveness. Even the desire for reconciliation, and how quickly or forcibly it is handled, can reveal much about the heart. The nature, depth, and consequences of the sin must all be considered with biblical discernment. Scripture calls us to forgive, to hand over justice and vengeance to God, and to refuse to harbor hatred or resentment. We are called to return good for evil whenever possible. But Scripture does not demand that trust be restored immediately or that a relationship be rebuilt without wisdom and caution.

With all that being said, in **verses 22 and 23**, we see David's response in action. He returns the spear and the jug, the very symbols of potential violence. He does not seize them for himself or retaliate in any way. His actions reveal discernment, restraint, and wisdom. Obedience to God never requires retaliation, even when an enemy appears weak or remorseful. David's caution reminds us that Christian love and trust in God are not naive or careless. They are deliberate and grounded in a settled confidence that God will act justly.

Here, the gospel pattern shines through again. The guilty one stood exposed (Saul), the innocent one holds the power of judgment (David), yet chooses mercy. We are Saul, we are guilty and condemned. Christ is David, innocent, merciful, withholding the punishment we deserve. And where David spared Saul's life, Jesus went further, giving His own life to spare ours. That is the mercy of the greater David. That is the beauty of Jesus Christ.

Finally, in **verses 24 and 25**, David declares his trust and confidence in the Lord. He says, "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." This is a deep confession of faith. David does not reach for quick vindication or try to shape the outcome of his encounter with Saul. He rests completely in the justice and mercy of God. His heart is aligned with the purposes of the Lord, knowing that God alone sees every motive, every deed, and every heart.

Saul ends the exchange with a blessing, but David's confidence is not in Saul's words. He knows that true peace cannot come from men who speak without repentance. The confidence of the believer is never finally in the promise of man but in the faithfulness of God. For us, this is the lesson: we are not living for the peace that Saul offers. We are not sustained by the empty blessings that pass from the lips of men. We live for the blessing and peace that only Christ can give. Because I know that Christ will one day say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant," I can endure the curses or the hollow blessings of a world full of Sauls.

4. Application And Call To Christ

The world will whisper lies: "You will find joy in comfort. You will find peace in control. You will find satisfaction in the approval of others." Sin promises these things, but they are all illusions. Every fleeting pleasure fades. Every temporary security cracks. Every human

approval leaves the soul empty. True victory over temptation, true satisfaction, and lasting peace are found nowhere but in God Himself. Only He can fill the heart, satisfy the deepest longing, and give joy that endures when all else fails.

David shows us a glimpse of godly living: love that restrains, mercy that blesses, trust that waits. He faced the chance to strike, to seize what seemed rightfully his, to act in his own strength, yet he chose patience, obedience, and the Lord. But David could only foreshadow the greater reality: Jesus Christ.

Church, look at the spear still in the ground, David's hand trembling, Abishai whispering, "One thrust, and it's over." But David refused to seize the crown by blood. Why? Because he feared a greater King. And that King is now on the throne. Jesus didn't dodge the spear, He took it. While we were His enemies, He climbed the hill, laid down His life, and absorbed the wrath of God. He didn't strike back. He didn't call legions. He trusted His Father's timing, cried "It is finished," and rose victorious. That same power now lives in you. The Spirit who raised Christ raises dead rebels into sons.

You don't need vengeance. You don't need control. You need Christ. So drop the spear. Renounce the lie that sin will satisfy. Confess where you've trusted men, money, or your own strength. Look to the cross, where justice was served, mercy was poured out, and your future was secured. Today, the King calls you by name. Not "my son David," but "My child, come home." Will you keep running with Saul's army, chasing shadows, clutching spears? Or will you fall at the feet of the One who was pierced for you?

Awakening Church, the gospel call of Christ is Repent and Believe.

Live like men and women already vindicated. Love your enemies. Trust your King. Walk in His victory.

Christ has won. Now live like it.

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Come to Christ.

He receives rebels, and makes them royalty.

5. Questions For Study

Please be encouraged to use these questions in family devotion throughout the week and Awakening discipleship group discussions.

1. How does David demonstrate love that waits even in the face of repeated betrayal?
2. In what ways does careful discernment show that love is not naive or impulsive?
3. How can we follow David's example of mercy instead of seizing opportunities for personal gain?
4. Why does David refuse to place confidence in Saul's words or repentance?
5. How does trusting God's timing and justice shape the way we respond to those who harm us?
6. What does it look like to leave judgment in God's hands rather than taking it into our own?
7. How does Christ exemplify the love and trust that David shows in this passage?
8. Are we seeking approval and peace from men, or from God alone?
9. How can trusting Christ enable us to endure opposition, betrayal, or empty blessings in life?
10. How can you follow David's example by responding with love, mercy, and trust in God today?