

Session 13 Proven Character: Responding to Pressure (1 Sam. 26)

I. PROVEN CHARACTER

- A. **Review:** A key issue in David’s life was what he looked to as his “primary source” of promotion and resource related to fulfilling God’s will in his life. He did not need Saul’s favor to fulfill God’s will for his life. We often look to people as our primary source, instead of seeing them as secondary.
- B. Jesus entrusted Himself to the Father to be vindicated in the right way and in the right timing. The Lord will provide for and/or vindicate His people in His time and way. We entrust to God our future and all of our mistreatment by trusting in His leadership to answer in His way and in His timing.
- ²³While being reviled, He [Jesus] did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. (1 Pet. 2:23; NAS)***
- C. God gives us many opportunities to say yes to His leadership. Proven character includes choosing yes *time and time again* in the face of pressure—persecution, temptation, or difficult circumstances. Transformation is not an automatic result of trials. It occurs as we *respond rightly* to God in faith.
- ³...knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character... (Rom 5:3-4; NAS)***
- D. **Tribulation:** Everyone experiences pressures, such as physical or emotional pain, financial lack, various fears, being mistreated, etc. Persecution is the pressure that is mentioned most in the New Testament. Pressure causes us to *ask questions* about the purpose of our life, the condition of our life and relationship to God, and why we should persevere in pursuing God without quitting. It causes us to rehearse the consequences of persevering in God and of giving up (quitting).
- E. **Perseverance:** This speaks of our *fortified resolve* to continually realign our heart to love, obey, believe, and pursue Jesus instead of giving up and giving in to sin and unbelief or drawing back from pursuing Jesus with all of our heart. Pressure causes us to work our “faith muscle.” Resistance training builds muscle. A butterfly’s struggle in a cocoon is necessary to develop its wings.
- F. **Proven Character:** This speaks of a long-term change in our attitudes and actions. When we persevere in choosing to obey and we trust the Lord’s leadership, it leads to change in our character.
- G. The testing of our faith produces perseverance, which causes our character to mature (Jas. 1:2-4). Our obedience is not complete or mature until it is walked out consistently in the face of pressure. Patience is not just the ability to wait; it also involves how we act while we wait.
- ³...knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience [perseverance]. ⁴But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete [in character and faith]... (Jas. 1:3-4)***
- H. David had three divine appointments in 1 Samuel 24-26 to determine if David would be like Saul. David was allowed to be in the “power position” on three occasions. He was given two chances to kill Saul—in *En Gedi* (24:5) and in the *Wilderness of Ziph* (26:8), plus he was in a situation to kill Nabal (1 Sam. 25). David managed his anger and trusted God with Saul in En Gedi (1 Sam. 24), but soon afterwards failed by responding in great anger to Nabal (1 Sam. 25). David learned from this and responded in a godly way the next time he was with Saul in the Wilderness of Ziph (1 Sam. 26).

II. DAVID WENT TO SAUL'S CAMP IN ZIPH (1 SAM. 26:1-5)

- A. The Ziphites informed Saul that David was hiding on the hill of Hachilah, just east of Ziph (26:1-2). David's movements were being closely watched by the Ziphites, to provide intelligence reports to Saul. This was the second time they sent a delegation to inform Saul where David was (23:19). They feared David, reasoning that, if he became king, he might take revenge on them.

¹Now the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is David not hiding in the hill of Hachilah, opposite Jeshimon?" ²Then Saul arose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph. (1 Sam. 26:1-2)

- B. In En Gedi, Saul wept in sorrow for treating David wrongly and admitted that he would one day be king (24:16-20). But now he sought to kill David again, showing that his sorrow was temporary.

- C. David went to Saul's camp to analyze the situation (26:3-5). Saul set up his military camp on the hill of Hachilah to gain a strategic view of the region (26:3). Abner was commander of the army.

³And Saul encamped in the hill of Hachilah, which is opposite Jeshimon...But David stayed in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. ⁴David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul had indeed come. ⁵So David arose and came to the place where Saul had encamped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner...the commander of his army. Now Saul lay within the camp, with the people encamped all around him. (1 Sam. 26:3-5)

III. DAVID AND ABISHAI ENTERED SAUL'S CAMP (1 SAM. 26:6-12)

- A. David and Abishai entered Saul's camp as the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall on them (26:6-12).

⁶Then David answered, and said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruah, brother of Joab, saying, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you." ⁷So David and Abishai came to the people by night; and there Saul lay sleeping within the camp...and Abner and the people lay all around him. ⁸Then Abishai said to David, "God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once..." ⁹David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless?...¹⁰the LORD shall strike him, or...he shall go out to battle and perish. ¹¹The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed. But please, take now the spear and the jug of water...and let us go." ¹²So David took the spear and the jug of water by Saul's head...and no man saw or knew it or awoke. For they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen on them. (1 Sam. 26:6-12)

- B. **Abishai:** He was the brother of Joab and the son of David's older sister Zeruah who had three sons: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. They were David's nephews (1 Chr. 2:16; 2 Sam. 2:18).

- C. **Ahimelech:** He was a Hittite mercenary like Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. 11:3, 6). It was unusual for a man from a Hittite family to be accepted into David's inner circle.

- D. **A deep sleep:** The Lord caused a sleep to fall on Saul and 3,000 men (26:12). How did David know that the Lord would cause this sleep to fall on 3,000 men? The Lord did this in part to test David. Abishai interpreted this unusual event as proof that God delivered Saul into David's hands (26:8).
- E. **Lord's anointed:** David did not look at Saul as his personal enemy, but as God's anointed king. David saw the Lord's authority on Saul. He was not afraid of Saul; rather, he trembled before God's authority because the Lord had commanded the Israelites not to curse their rulers (Ex. 22:28).
- F. **Guiltless:** Anyone who touched God's anointed king in a wrong way might suffer consequences.
- G. **The Lord shall strike him:** David prophesied that the Lord would one day strike Saul. About two years later, the Lord did, in fact, kill Saul in a battle with the Philistines (1 Chr. 10:14). The Lord did this in His own time and way just as He did when removing Nabal by death (25:36-39). The recent situation with Nabal undoubtedly strengthened David's conviction about this.

IV. DAVID SPOKE TO ABNER AND SAUL (1 SAM. 26:13-20)

- A. David shouted to Abner from the other side of the valley in the predawn darkness (26:13-16). They were at a great distance so they spoke loudly, allowing all the others to hear what was said. David asked Abner three questions that insulted him (26:15). Abner did not answer David.
¹³Now David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of a hill afar off, a great distance being between them. ¹⁴And David called out to...Abner...Then Abner answered and said, "Who are you, calling out to the king?" ¹⁵So David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? And who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy your lord...see where the king's spear is, and the jug of water that was by his head." (1 Sam. 26:13-16)
- B. David's appeal for reconciliation with Saul here is one of the best examples in Scripture (26:17-20). He applied what he learned from Abigail's appeal to him (25:24-31), which had kept David from a grievous sin. David appealed to Saul's heart by affirming his loyalty and presenting their conflict without accusing Saul. He focused on those who gave Saul false reports about him (22:10; 26:19). Rather than cursing Saul, David honored him calling him "my lord" and "the king" (24:8; 26:17).
¹⁷Then Saul knew David's voice, and said, "Is that your voice, my son David?" David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king." ¹⁸And he said, "Why does my lord thus pursue his servant? For what have I done, or what evil is in my hand?" ¹⁹Now therefore, please, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant: If the LORD has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering. But if it is the children of men, may they be cursed before the LORD, for they have driven me out this day from sharing in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.' ²⁰So now, do not let my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD. For the king of Israel has come out to seek a flea, as when one hunts a partridge in the mountains." (1 Sam. 26:17-20)
- C. **My son:** Saul called him "David, my son" as he did in their encounter in En Gedi (24:16; 26:17).

- D. **What have I done?:** David asked why Saul was pursuing him and asked for clarification of his sin (26:18). David suggested that if it was the Lord stirring Saul up against him, then let him repent and make a sacrifice to God asking Him to restore the broken relationship and end the strife. But if their animosity was the result of slanderous reports against David by men in Saul's court, then let the one who spoke falsely be judged by God. David described himself as Saul's servant, not his enemy.
- E. **Inheritance of the Lord:** David spoke of Israel as the Lord's inheritance—the land and the people. David pleaded with Saul not to let his blood be poured out on foreign soil outside the Promised Land (26:20), that is, not to continue to force David to live in exile.
- F. **To seek a flea:** David asked Saul to put it all in perspective—he was exerting so much effort to kill someone as insignificant as flea in terms of his intention of harming Saul (26:20, cf. 24:14).

V. SAUL'S LAST WORDS TO DAVID (1 SAM. 26:21-25)

- A. Saul repented again when he learned that his life had again been in David's hands (26:21). Saul's confession here was much stronger than what he said in 24:16-22. Abner and 3000 soldiers heard Saul's admission of sin and folly. The army could see that the Lord was with David.
²¹Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David. For I will harm you no more, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Indeed I have played the fool and erred exceedingly."
²²And David answered and said, "Here is the king's spear. Let one of the young men come over and get it. ²³May the LORD repay every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD delivered you into my hand today, but I would not stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed. ²⁴And indeed, as your life was valued much this day in my eyes, so let my life be valued much in the eyes of the LORD, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation." ²⁵Then Saul said to David, "May you be blessed, my son David! You shall both do great things and also still prevail." So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place. (1 Sam. 26:21-25)
- B. **Return:** Saul asked David to return to Gibeah, promising to not harm him (26:21). Many intentions of one's conscience may be sincere, but they are superficial and lack follow through.
- C. **David answered:** These were David's last words to Saul (26:22-24). David refused Saul's invitation to return to Gibeah because he did not trust him. He gave Saul's spear to a young man (26:22).
- D. **May the Lord repay every man:** David committed his cause into God's hands again (26:24) as he did in En Gedi (24:12, 15). This is the truth that David said the most in 1 & 2 Samuel (24:12, 15; 26:9-11, 23-24; 2 Sam. 2:1; 15:25; 16:11-12; 1 Chr. 12:17; 19:13; Ps. 31:5, 15). Asking the Lord to repay meant trusting Him to intervene to orchestrate the circumstances to establish His will in the conflict. David trusted the Lord as the just arbitrator to decide the right way for each party.
¹²Let the LORD judge between you and me, and let the LORD avenge me on you...¹⁵Let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case..." (1 Sam. 24:12, 15)
- E. **Be blessed:** In Saul's last words to David, he prophesied that David would have a great future and prevail in their conflict. Saul affirmed that David would be king (24:20) as Jonathan had (23:17). *No one could stop David from fulfilling the will of God for his life*—not Saul, nor the Philistines, nor Satan. The only man who could stop David was David, by resisting God's leadership in his life.