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1 SAMUEL 26:1-31:13

Today, we finish our study of the **Book of 1 Samuel**. In our brief time in this book, we've gotten to know several well-known men of the Old Testament. We've gotten to know **Samuel** and **Saul** and **Jonathan** and **David**. I hope we can say we know these men better for having looked at their lives these past three months.

We have a lot of Scripture before us today, and I know we're only going to be able to skim the surface, but let's see how much we can cover...

Last week we saw that things hadn't changed between Saul and David. We saw that Saul was still seeking to kill David and that David had spared Saul's life once already, and today we'll see David sparing Saul's life again.

Chapter 26 tells us that Saul and his men went out looking for David and instead of Saul finding David...**David found Saul**. David sent out his spies and they found where Saul and his men were camping. In fact, they found Saul and his men lying in a circle **asleep!** Saul was sound asleep with his spear stuck in the ground at his head...and all his men were sleeping around him.

David's man, Abishai wanted to kill Saul right there...in fact, Abishai said, "Hey David, God has delivered Saul into your hands!"

But, look what David said,

Verses 9-12...

Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the mountain at a distance and David called to the people and to Abner, Saul's general...

Verses 13-16...

What a man of honor David was! Twice he's been close enough to Saul to kill him and twice he's refrained from doing so.

There are many lessons here...but I only want to mention a couple...

We said several weeks ago that God had a work to do in David's life. God needed to bring David through some testings and some trials. After all, God had anointed David to be the next king of Israel...God had a big job for David to do and he needed to be taught some things.

God continually tests His children. **WHY? I mean, think about it...David had already passed this test in chapter 24. David had already refused to kill Saul in chapter 24...but what happened in chapter 25? David flunked that test, didn't he?**

Remember last week how he became irate and was ready to kill Nabal and all of Nabal's men because his ego had been wounded?

God doesn't test us to find out what we're made of! **God is omniscient.** God **already** knows what we're made of. God doesn't test us to reveal to **Himself** what we are...God tests us to reveal to **us** what we are. **See, He knows more about us than we know about ourselves.**

Deuteronomy 8:2-5...

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God already **knew** what was in their hearts...He needed to teach **them** what was in their hearts. By the way, did God ever leave them during this teaching process? NO! He was with them in a pillar of fire and a pillar of cloud, wasn't He?

I also want to say this...God never tempts us to do evil. Satan tempts us...God tests us! God tests us so that the dross will be pushed aside and the pure gold might shine through. So, I want you to know this morning that if you're going through a test right now...if you're in the fires of testing right now and I know some of you are...God hasn't left you. He's right there with you controlling the temperature of the crucible in which you find yourself...and he's turning it up just high enough to skim the old dross from your life!

Old Job knew he was being tried and tested and he said after God had tried him, he would come forth as gold. Will we?

I know you've all heard about the refiner's fire. The refiner never leaves the crucible...he simply turns up the heat and keeps skimming off the dross and then he turns up the heat some more and skims off more dross and he repeats that process until he can see his image when he looks into the gold or the silver.

And that's exactly what God does to His children. He heats up their circumstances a little at the time and each time His child submits, a little more dross is skimmed off...and one day He looks into the crucible and He sees that we have been conformed to the image of His dear Son...

Another lesson we can learn from this passage is that God wants His children to submit to His will.

You can never go to enough **study courses** to have victory...
You can never read enough **books** to have victory...
You can never listen to enough **tapes** to have victory...
You can never listen to enough **sermons** or **lessons** to have victory...

The key to victory is submission to the sovereign will of God!

Where do we go to find God's will? We find God's will in prayer and in His precious Word!

Saul was David's enemy. He was also the man keeping David from the throne. Saul was the man who was trying to kill David. Although David had been anointed king of Israel, Saul was still occupying the throne.

And Saul was in the position he was in because of the sovereignty of God.
And David said three times in Chapter 26: "I will not raise my hand against the Lord's anointed."

It made no difference that Saul wasn't **acting** like the Lord's anointed. It made no difference that **God's Spirit had been removed** from Saul and an **evil spirit from God** had come upon him.

The fact was that God had not removed him from the throne. He was still king of Israel. He was still David's king and David wasn't going to stretch out his hand against Saul. David knew God would remove him in due time.

The rest of this chapter tells us that Saul again promised David he would not kill him...Saul was a liar...Saul consumed with killing David and David knew it!

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Chapter 27 tells us that David again ran off down to the land of the Philistines and he and his two wives and his men lived with the enemy. The word of God is so very honest about its heroes, isn't it?

I guess one of the reasons we love David so much is because His life is so much like our own...so full of hills and valleys.

I mean...what a victory he had in **chapter 26** and here he is running off to the King Achish for protection. King Achish was so glad to have David he gave David the city of Ziklag and do you know what David did? For almost a year and a half, David and his men attacked the territory around Ziklag and he didn't leave anyone alive from these raids. David took the **sheep**, the **cattle**, the **donkeys**, the **camels** and the **clothing** but **he killed the people**.

God didn't want David living in Philistia. God would have provided for David in Israel. God doesn't want His children living with the enemy. God doesn't want His children becoming so like the children of Satan that one cannot tell the difference.

It's so sad, really it's so tragic in the life of a child of God when he yields to the pressures of Satan. David was fearful and this fear had driven him into enemy territory. This spirit of fear didn't come from God!

Let me ask you...have you ever had your own beliefs tested? Have you ever gone...even for a season...to the camp of the enemy? Maybe you thought it would be easier than being an outsider at the office or fearing the loss of your job or promotions. Has this ever happened to you?

Well, as we said, King Achish loved it that David lived there in his territory. He believed this would only serve to make David his servant forever. It was while David was with the Philistines that Achish ordered David to go with the Philistines against his own people.

Do you see the mess David has gotten himself and his men into? Here he is about to go to battle against the very people of whom he has been anointed king!

We'll come back and touch on this in just a minute, but let's look at Saul's visit to the witch of Endor.

Let me just remind you what's happening here...The Philistines are coming against Israel. Saul is afraid of the Philistines. Saul inquires of the Lord and the Lord does not answer. WHY?

Well, we don't have time to go back to **Chapter 22**, but if we did we would see that Saul had been responsible for killing all of the prophets of God except one, and that one had escaped and sided with David. Think about this...

All of these men of God...All these God-called prophets...men through whom God spoke, and through whom God ministered to His people...Saul had all of them brutally murdered. Chapter 22 says, "...and he killed 85 men who wore the linen ephod."

When the pastor preached through this book he said this would be *equivalent to the unpardonable sin* of which the Lord Jesus spoke in the **New Testament**. To do what Saul did in **chapter 22**

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would be like blaspheming the Holy Spirit of God in the *New Testament*. Saul had stepped across the line.

Proverbs 1 tells us that when the wisdom of God is not sought there will come a day when the wisdom of God will say, ***“I stretched out my hand, and no one paid attention; and you neglected all my counsel...”***

Beloved, do you know what this is saying? It's saying that we can stray so far from God and we can close our ears so often to God's reproofs and God's will and God's wisdom that one day God says we will seek Him but we will not find Him. We will cry out in fear and He will laugh at us.

We simply cannot come to God any old time we get ready.

We must come to God while He's calling us, because there will come a day when His Spirit will quit striving with us...

So...Saul sought God but God didn't answer, so he decided to seek out a medium. Saul, himself, had removed all the mediums and the spiritists from the land of Israel. Saul had to go through enemy territory to get to her, so he took off his crown and his royal robes and he disguised himself and he went to her and said, "Now, I want you to have a séance...and I want you to call up someone from the dead."

Chapter 28:11-19...

Now, what really happened here? Well, let me quickly give you three interpretations of this passage of Scripture.

- 1) There are those who believe that this witch of Endor actually *herself* in **her own power** infiltrated the place of the righteous dead and called out of that resting place of the saints of God this man, Samuel.
- 2) There are those who believe that this witch did **not** call up Samuel, but that God **used** her. These folks believe that God called up Samuel in order to deliver His message of judgment upon Saul.
- 3) There are those who believe **the witch** did not contact Samuel and **God** did not contact Samuel, because this wasn't Samuel at all, *but a demon impersonating Samuel*.

Now, which one of these interpretations is correct? I DON'T KNOW!! I believe it's one of the latter two I just gave you and we could go over various and sundry reasons why either could be true, but we just don't have the time...

I truly don't believe the main point of this story is Samuel. I believe the main point of the story is Saul's being so far away from God that he can't even get a word from Him when he sought it.

And the other main point of the story is that Saul was doing something strictly forbidden in Scripture. In fact, the **Book of 1 Chronicles** tells that Saul died **because he did not keep the word of the LORD and because he asked counsel of a medium**.

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Well, let me quickly summarize for you the rest of this book and then maybe we'll have time for a little practical application.

Chapter 29 tells us that indeed the Philistines came against Israel. David was spared from fighting against his own people because the men in the Philistine didn't trust him. That's what it looked like humanly speaking...however I believe it was the grace of God protecting David from becoming a traitor.

Chapter 30 tells us that when David and his men returned to Ziklag they found the Amalekites had made a raid on their land and their families and had captured all the women and children. David asked the Lord what he should do and God told David to go after them...so David and his men went after the Amalekites and defeated them and brought back all they had taken.

Chapter 31 tells us that Saul and his sons, including Jonathan, were killed in battle. Actually Saul was badly wounded and chose to fall on his sword rather than fall into the hands of the Philistines.

We go from David's victory to Saul's end. We see Saul's sin not only affect him, but his family...even Jonathan.

Now, what lessons can we take with us from the **Book of 1 Samuel**? I want us to briefly look at each of the major characters of this book and see if we can take a nugget or two of application with us today...

I believe the main lesson we can learn from the life of **Saul** is

1) The way we finish is much more important than the way we begin...

When the people came to Samuel and demanded a king, Saul became their king...and he stood shoulders above all the other people. Saul was loved by Samuel...But Saul didn't listen to God. Time and time again Saul disobeyed God and he ended up a **bitter, jealous, vindictive, fearful old man**.

Most importantly, Saul ended up **under the wrath of God**. I don't believe Saul was a saved man. Commentators disagree on this. Some say, "Yes, Saul was saved...he is merely a picture of a carnal Christian." **But, I believe Saul portrays for us a picture of someone who knows the truth, has heard the truth over and over, but has rejected the truth.** We all know folks like that, don't we?

What about you? Is your end going to be less than your beginning?

Have you allowed the Holy Spirit to do a work of sanctification in your life? Have you allowed anyone or anything to come between you and God?

Did you know that if there was ever a time in your life when you were closer to God than you are right now...that you're a backslider!

There's nothing sadder than to see someone who starts off well in his spiritual journey and backslides along the way and doesn't repent and then ends up way off course!!

2) God expects us to minister faithfully where He places us...

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We learn a great lesson in this area from God's precious old prophet, **Samuel**. Samuel spent his life faithfully ministering to and touching the lives of the people of Israel. Everything God called Samuel to do, he did. When the people demanded a king, Samuel felt rejected, but he took it before the Lord and obeyed God and anointed Saul, loved Saul and was available to Saul for counsel and help.

What about you? Are you serving the Lord faithfully in the place He has put you? Do circumstances dictate your service, or does commitment to the Lord dictate it? As we talked about last week, are you faithfully touching the lives of those in your circle of influence?

3) God expects our friendships to be loyal...

Jonathan loved David. David had little to offer Jonathan...David, in fact, was the reason Jonathan would never take the throne, but Jonathan loved David anyway. And he was loyal to him. He stood up for David...He did all he could to save David's life.

What about you? Are you a loyal friend? Do you look at a friendship in terms of what the other person can do for you? Or do you reach out and extend your love and friendship and help to those who really don't have much to offer you in return?

4) God expects us to trust Him all the time...

David was such a godly young man. He trusted God out in the fields as he took care of his father's flocks. He trusted God when he came against Goliath with only a slingshot and five smooth stones.

But there were times when David's trust slipped by the wayside! And when it did, David got into trouble, didn't he?

What about you? Do you trust God every day? Is your trust greater today than it was yesterday? Do you have a wimpy trust? **I have to admit that sometimes I trust God with everything, and then something happens and my trust is like David's.**

5) God expects our lives to be examples to our children...

David's greatest failures aren't recorded in **1 Samuel**, they're recorded over in **2 Samuel**. But we know that his greatest sins...his adultery and murder...largely disqualified him from correcting and disciplining his own children when they committed the same sins. Instead of being able to say as Paul said, "**Be imitators of me...do as I do**", David had to say, "**Do as I say, not as I do.**"

What about you? Are you hypocritical in what you teach your children and grandchildren? Are they able to examine your life and say, "I want my life to count for the Lord as her life counts for the Lord...I want to pattern my life after her life. She really practices what she preaches."

I don't believe we can leave a greater legacy for our children and grandchildren and those around us than a godly life lived to the glory of God!

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6) God expects true acknowledgment and repentance when we sin...

Even though David walked out of God's will on many occasions, he always turned back to God with great remorse and sorrow. This is why David was called "a man after God's own heart."

What about you? First of all, I want to ask you...are you truly God's child, as David was...or are you pretending to be His child, as Saul did?

If you're living a lie as Saul did, why not come to Jesus today...admit you're a sinner and you need His precious blood to cleanse you from all your sins?

If you know you're saved...are you living in His will? If not, I urge you to confess your sins and repent and enjoy the sweet forgiveness of your Heavenly Father!

What a man of God David was! May we be better Christians today and tomorrow because of having studied just this little bit about this mighty man of God!