

# Selfish Pursuit Leads to Destruction

## 1 Samuel 26:1-26

<sup>1</sup> The Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah and said, “Is not David hiding on the hill of Hakilah, which faces Jeshimon?”

<sup>2</sup> So Saul went down to the Desert of Ziph, with his three thousand select Israelite troops, to search there for David. <sup>3</sup> Saul made his camp beside the road on the hill of Hakilah facing Jeshimon, but David stayed in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul had followed him there, <sup>4</sup> he sent out scouts and learned that Saul had definitely arrived.

<sup>5</sup> Then David set out and went to the place where Saul had camped. He saw where Saul and Abner son of Ner, the commander of the army, had lain down. Saul was lying inside the camp, with the army encamped around him.

<sup>6</sup> David then asked Ahimelek the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab’s brother, “Who will go down into the camp with me to Saul?”

“I’ll go with you,” said Abishai.

<sup>7</sup> So David and Abishai went to the army by night, and there was Saul, lying asleep inside the camp with his spear stuck in the ground near his head. Abner and the soldiers were lying around him.

<sup>8</sup> Abishai said to David, “Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I won’t strike him twice.”

<sup>9</sup> But David said to Abishai, “Don’t destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the LORD’s anointed and be guiltless? <sup>10</sup> As surely as the LORD lives,” he said, “the LORD himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. <sup>11</sup> But the LORD forbid that I should lay a hand on the LORD’s anointed. Now get the spear and water jug that are near his head, and let’s go.”

<sup>12</sup> So David took the spear and water jug near Saul’s head, and they left. No one saw or knew about it, nor did anyone wake up. They were all sleeping, because the LORD had put them into a deep sleep.

<sup>13</sup> Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the hill some distance away; there was a wide space between them. <sup>14</sup> He called out to the army and to Abner son of Ner, “Aren’t you going to answer me, Abner?”

Abner replied, “Who are you who calls to the king?”

<sup>15</sup> David said, “You’re a man, aren’t you? And who is like you in Israel? Why didn’t you guard your lord the king? Someone came to destroy your lord the king. <sup>16</sup> What you have done is not good. As surely as the LORD lives, you and your men must die, because you did not guard your master, the LORD’s anointed. Look around you. Where are the king’s spear and water jug that were near his head?”

<sup>17</sup> Saul recognized David’s voice and said, “Is that your voice, David my son?”

David replied, “Yes it is, my lord the king.” <sup>18</sup> And he added, “Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done, and what wrong am I guilty of? <sup>19</sup> Now let my lord the king listen to his servant’s words. If the LORD has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. If, however, people have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD! They have driven me today from my share in the LORD’s inheritance and have said, ‘Go, serve other gods.’ <sup>20</sup> Now do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the LORD. The king of Israel has come out to look for a flea—as one hunts a partridge in the mountains.”

<sup>21</sup> Then Saul said, “I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have been terribly wrong.”

<sup>22</sup> “Here is the king’s spear,” David answered. “Let one of your young men come over and get it. <sup>23</sup> The LORD rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness.”

*The LORD delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. <sup>24</sup> As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble.*

*<sup>25</sup> Then Saul said to David, "May you be blessed, David my son; you will do great things and surely triumph."*

*So David went on his way, and Saul returned home.*

## **Setting**

In the previous chapters, out of jealousy and anger, Saul wanted to kill David. With some help, David managed to escape, but had to constantly run or hide from Saul. God saved David from Saul multiple times, and Saul never got to capture David. In his last pursuit, by divine appointment, Saul went into a cave where David was hiding. Instead of killing Saul, David was convicted by God not to lay his hands on Saul, to trust that God is the righteous Judge that will bring justice. David then confronted Saul with a piece of Saul's torn robe, showing that he had spared Saul's life when he could have killed Saul.

### **1 Samuel 24:16-20**

*<sup>16</sup> When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" And he wept aloud. <sup>17</sup> "You are more righteous than I," he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. <sup>18</sup> You have just now told me about the good you did to me; the LORD delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me. <sup>19</sup> When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today. <sup>20</sup> I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. <sup>21</sup> Now swear to me by the LORD that you will not kill off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's family."*

Saul admitted his sin. He acknowledged that God had delivered Saul into David's hands, but David did not kill him. So, Saul stopped the pursuit and returned home. However, that did not last very long. In his stubbornness, Saul again went after David.

## **We Cannot Fight Against God**

- Instead of running away from Saul, David sent out scouts to confirm if Saul was near. He then goes to Saul's army camp with one of his men, Abishai. David's intention was to gain proof that he had no intention of killing Saul.
- When they arrived at the camp, Saul and all the soldiers were sleeping. Abishai saw it as an opportunity to kill Saul, and he thought that was what David wanted to do. But David rebuked Abishai. David would not cross the line that God has restrained him from. He would not turn against the king and kill him. Instead, David took the spear and the water jug near Saul's head and left.
- David took great risks in entering the enemy's camp. He was willing to go to the extent of risking his life to prove that God has delivered Saul into David's hands. If he wanted to, he could have killed Saul. David wanted to confront Saul's stubborn arrogance. Saul may have seen the cave encounter as a coincidence but here, David sets out to take something from Saul to show that the Lord was with David, and that Saul is foolish to go against God in pursuing David.

- The Lord was with David. Even with 3000 best troops protecting Saul, the Lord gave David success. (v. 12: *No one saw or knew about it, nor did anyone wake up. They were all sleeping, because the LORD had put them into a deep sleep.*) Saul is not as powerful as he thinks he is. He is not invincible. He may be the king of Israel, but God is the Sovereign One who rules over Israel. Saul cannot fight against God.
- As much as Saul wants to have things under his control, the truth is that things were never under his control in the first place. It was God who had appointed him as the first king of Israel, it is God who gave him success over his enemies, and it is God who would take away what was given to him because of his disobedience.
- The Lord has anointed David, and it is a matter of time before David would succeed Saul as king. But, Saul was stubborn and arrogant. He still wanted to secure his kingship. He foolishly pursued the things that were not his.

It is easy to quickly admit our mistakes and sin (like Saul did in chapter 24). But, like Saul, if we do not allow God to work out the sinful desires of our heart, if we do not spend time meditating His word, listening to His voice, our regrets will only be meaningless words. We will continue to chase after things that are not of God. We will continue to fight against God.

Reflection: What are some things that we regret with our words but do not repent with our heart?

## **We Cannot Deny Truth**

### David Confronts Saul

*<sup>18</sup> And he added, “Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done, and what wrong am I guilty of?”*

- David starts by questioning Saul’s purpose of pursuing David. In front of witnesses (Abner and the soldiers), David asked Saul to bring his charges against him. Everyone in Israel knew that David was innocent. Saul knew that David was innocent. Out of unrighteous anger, jealousy, and lust of power, Saul pursued David.
- David took Saul’s spear and the water jug as evidence that David does not want to kill Saul. Now, the soldiers can bear witness that David has no intention to kill Saul and is not creating a revolt against the king. Saul can no longer accuse David of any crime. He has no good reason to pursue David.

*<sup>19</sup> Now let my lord the king listen to his servant’s words. If the LORD has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. If, however, people have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD!*

- Now that David has made it clear that he is not guilty and there is no reason for Saul to pursue David, David speaks about God. David questions Saul if his pursuit is part of God’s will? Is it of the Lord or just of man? If God is behind the reason Saul is pursuing David, David is willing to set things right with the Lord. On the contrary, it was Saul who had problems with the Lord and was unwilling to set things right.
- It was clear that the pursuit was not of the Lord, so David tells Saul that it must be people inciting Saul to pursue David. Since David is innocent, and this is clearly not

from the Lord, those who instigated Saul's pursuit must be cursed and judged before the Lord.

*They have driven me today from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other gods.' <sup>20</sup> Now do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the LORD.*

- David talks about worship. During the Old Testament times, worship is connected to the geographical location of the tabernacle and the temple. The Lord's presence is represented by the tabernacle and the temple. In his pursuit, Saul has driven David farther away from the tabernacle and even out of the land of Israel. David is unable to share in the Lord's inheritance, in worshipping Yahweh.

*The king of Israel has come out to look for a flea—as one hunts a partridge in the mountains.”*

- David emphasizes that he is not an important person that the king should spend so much attention on. He has proven that he is not a threat. He is only a partridge in the mountains. There is so much land in Israel, David is pleading for Saul to leave him alone, to allow him to stay quietly in a small part of Israel without bothering Saul.

The truth is that the Lord has appointed David as the next king of Israel. Just as David understood that it is not his place to lay hands on Saul, Saul also needs to acknowledge the truth that he will not be able to lay his hands on David. Saul knew that God was no longer with him, and the Lord was with David. Saul knew that his pursuit stems out of selfish intentions, and David was the righteous one between them. Yet, he was still stubborn and arrogant. The Lord is using David's confrontation to let Saul know that he will not succeed. Saul cannot deny the truth and he cannot fight against God.

## **We Must Find Security in Our Worship Towards God**

<sup>21</sup> *Then Saul said, “I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have been terribly wrong.”*

<sup>22</sup> *“Here is the king's spear,” David answered. “Let one of your young men come over and get it. <sup>23</sup> The LORD rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. The LORD delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. <sup>24</sup> As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble.”*

<sup>25</sup> *Then Saul said to David, “May you be blessed, David my son; you will do great things and surely triumph.”*

*So David went on his way, and Saul returned home.*

- Saul responded in regret and repentance, like he did previously in chapter 24. However, David puts his trust in God instead of Saul. (<sup>24</sup> *As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble.*)
- David returns Saul's spear, and parted ways with Saul. That was the last time David and Saul met.

- Confrontations may not always be accompanied by reconciliation. David was prepared to confront Saul. But, Saul had a terrible track record, and David is wise not to immediately trust and return with Saul.

*They have driven me today from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other gods.'*<sup>20</sup> *Now do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the LORD.*

- In running away from Saul, David spent a long time away from the tabernacle of the Lord. That had made him value the Lord's presence. Written in many of his psalms, David expresses his deep longing to be in the presence of the Lord, to behold the beauty of the Lord. David yearns to return home so he could worship the Lord at the tabernacle.
- David found the greatest treasure, the presence of the Lord. He found security in his worship towards God. David faced many challenges in his life, but it was in the place of worship that David receives grace, joy, hope, and strength from the Lord.
- The gospels tell us that Jesus always took time out of his busy schedule to pray. He would go to the mountains to be alone with the Father. He faced many intense oppositions and was eventually crucified. It was his prayer life that sustained Jesus. It was his relationship with the Father that gave him security. Unlike Saul who sold his soul to the devil, when Satan tried to tempt Jesus, Jesus would not bow down to any other gods. When he was tempted to not take the cup of suffering of the crucifixion, the Father gave him strength to do the will of God. Jesus' devotion was only to the Father.

## **Closing**

Saul admitted his sin, but he could not let go of the pursuit of power. Even though he knew that it was not part of God's will, he was driven and consumed by anger, jealousy, and lust for power. We are witnesses of what happens when people are power driven. They would do anything to climb the ladder. They would cheat and lie; they would use and manipulate people for their benefit. They do not care about anyone except themselves. And when they are in power, they would do anything to make sure that they do not lose their power. The political situation in many countries are examples of people consumed by the lust of power.

Our insecurities can drive us to pursue things that will destroy us. We have all pursued the wrong things in our lives. It usually starts with us ignoring the voice of God. We try to shut off the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Then, we try to justify with all kinds of reasons that what we are doing is not wrong, and we deserve the things we are pursuing. But, deep inside, we realize that the things we pursue are never enough. It only gives us momentary happiness. We no longer have the joy of the Lord. We lose out on all the joy and blessings from the Lord. It becomes very frustrating, and we become consumed by the pursuit. We are no longer with the Lord; we are no longer the people that Jesus has come to redeem and bless. We end up very miserable, like Saul.

The good news is God confronts us repeatedly. God desires for his people to repent and return to him. He is like the Father in the parable of the prodigal son who waits and welcomes us back. But, if we are unwilling to turn back to God, if we are stubborn to insist in our wicked and sinful ways, we will be like Saul, our pursuit will itself be our judgment. We will

be condemned by our own actions that lead to destruction. Our selfish pursuits lead us deeper and deeper into a pit until it is completely dark, to destruction.

Questions to ponder:

- What are our insecurities driving us to do?
- What are we pursuing? Why are we stubbornly pursuing these things?
- What is stopping us from pursuing God?

## Prayer

1. We will respond to God's confrontations of our selfish pursuits
2. We will stop being stubborn and arrogant
3. We will allow God heal our insecurities: allow God to be our security
4. We will commit to pursue God

### Church

1. The Lord will be our strength and comfort. We will not be moved by what is happening around us.
2. The Holy Spirit will enable us to do His work. May we take time to be in presence of God filled with the Spirit.
3. God will continue to shape our lives through His word.
4. God will help us touch lives for His glory in our work place, schools and homes.
5. Even though we are unable to meet physically, we will grow in love and unity.
6. Ministries: Life Explorers, Redeeming Roses, Destiny Kids & Teens, Sunday School, Lifeline Youth, Worship Team, Pulpit Ministry & Church Leadership
  - God will open doors for us to reach others.
  - God will help us do His work during the MCO.
  - God will help us raise leaders.
7. God will continue to meet our needs and grant us wisdom to be good stewards of our finances and resources.

### Covid-19

1. Children, Parents and Teachers
2. Healing and quick recovery for those who are affected.
3. Wisdom for Government
4. Economy/those who are out of work

### Healing

1. Suba

### Malaysia

1. God will guide the leaders of our nation.
2. Healing that brings unity. God will raise His church to be His instrument of reconciliation.
3. God will restore Justice and Compassion. The leaders will look into the needs of the poor and vulnerable. We will care for the foreigners.
4. Revival in the Church of Malaysia