

THE LORD REWARDS US FOR OUR FAITHFULNESS

1 Samuel 26:1-25

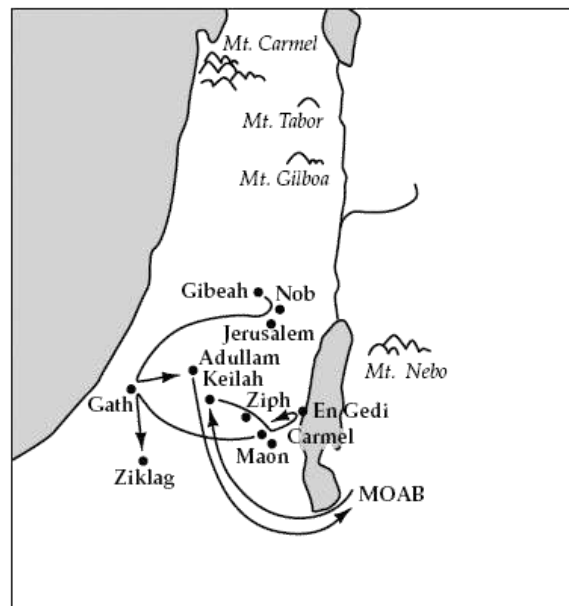
Key Verses: 26:23-24

The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness. The LORD delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble."

In Chapter 26, we learn that David spared Saul's life again, saying, "The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness." There are all kinds of rewards that we seek in this world. When I searched the term (rewards) on Google, many credit card links were displayed. But David wasn't referring to a 2% cash back when he mentioned God's rewards. Let us think about what it means that God rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness.

First, David spares Saul's life again (1-11). Look at verses 1-2. *The Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Is not David hiding on the hill of Hakilah, which faces Jeshimon?"* So Saul went down to the Desert of Ziph, with his three thousand chosen men of Israel, to search there for David. King Saul resumed his pursuit of David to capture and kill him. After the cave incident at En Gedi, Saul confessed that David was more righteous than he, because David had a chance to harm him but did not. He said to David he was sorry to have treated him badly. But it turned out that he didn't really mean what he said. He did not repent his jealousy and hatred towards David. He was still the same man. When the people in Ziph informed him that David was hiding in their region, Saul again mobilized his elite force of 3,000 men to go down to the Desert of Ziph to hunt down David. He set up his camp beside the road on the hill of Hakilah facing Jeshimon.

David was staying in the desert. He continued to wander in the desert, with no place to lay his head comfortably. He could not live a normal life. He could not sleep peacefully at night, as he did not know when Saul and his men would catch up with him. There were Saul's informants everywhere.



When David was told that Saul had followed him to Ziph, he sent out scouts and learned that the king had definitely arrived there (4). So he set out and went to the place where Saul was camped in the middle of the night when everyone was asleep. David took with him Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother on this covert operation. It was a daring operation, like the one by the American Navy Seal Team that flew to a Pakistani

village under the darkness of the night to capture and kill Osama Bin Laden. It was a dangerous mission. The two men squad, David and Abishai, infiltrated deep into the enemy camp. If anything went wrong, they would be a sitting duck, surrounded by the elite soldiers in a matter seconds, with no way out.

When David and Abishai arrived there, however, Saul was lying asleep inside the camp with his spear stuck in the ground near his head. Abner, the commander of Saul's army, and his soldiers were lying around him as well, fast asleep. Marching through the desert must have taken a toll on them. They were exhausted. Even the elite soldiers could not overcome their exhaustion. Their security broke down badly. From David's standpoint, it seemed like this was another God-given opportunity to take out his adversary and solve his life problems with one swift action.

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 my spear; I won't strike him twice" (8). Abishai's assessment of the situation was reasonable. They were on a military mission deep inside the enemy camp. David was presented with an opportunity to remove the source of all his troubles with one quick strike. Abishai volunteered to do exactly that for him. David didn't have to do anything. The blood wouldn't be on his hand. Abishai said he would pin King Saul to the ground with one thrust of his spear. One strike would be enough. He wouldn't need to strike twice. It would be over in a split second. Then David would no longer have to be constantly on the run through the wilderness. He would be king as he had been anointed by Samuel according to God's will. Even Saul knew this. His son Jonathan knew this. Why not take this opportunity to fulfill God's purpose for his life? It seemed certainly that God was leading them in that direction.

But David said to Abishai, "Don't destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the LORD's anointed and be guiltless? As surely as the LORD lives," he said, "the LORD himself will strike him; either his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. 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" (9-11).

David ordered Abishai not to destroy the king. In his instruction, David mentioned the Lord five times. The key point of his instruction was: "the Lord forbid that I should lay a hand on the Lord's anointed." This was what he had said to his men in the cave at En Gedi. Once again, David showed his respect and honor for the king, not because the man Saul deserved it, but because he was the Lord's anointed. "Who can lay a hand on the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?" he asked. David refused to crown himself king by taking the life of the sitting king with his own hands. Many worldly kings



would not hesitate to do that in a heartbeat. But David would not grab the kingship like other worldly kings. He trusted in God. He was willing to wait on God and his time.

Instead of avenging himself with his own hands, David trusted the Lord that God will deal with King Saul with his justice. He said, “As surely as the Lord lives, the Lord himself will strike him; either his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish.” David was willing to wait on God for his time, because he trusted in God. He accepted God’s words, “It is mine to avenge” (Heb 10:30). He didn’t go ahead of God, even though it meant that his fugitive life would continue in the foreseeable future. He sang in Psalm 54:4: “Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me.” David told Abishai to collect Saul’s spear and water jug as evidence for their presence there (11).

Second, Why didn’t you guard your lord the king? (12-16) No one in Saul’s camp saw or knew about the secret operation by David and Abishai as they took the king’s spear and water jug and left. They were all sleeping, because the Lord had put them into a deep sleep (12). David crossed over to the other side of the camp and stood on top of the hill some distance away from Saul’s camp. Then he called out to the army, especially Abner the commander. When Abner replied, David rebuked him for failing to protect the king. He said to Abner, *Why didn’t you guard your lord the king? Someone came to destroy your lord the king. What you have done is not good. As surely as the LORD lives, you and your men deserve to 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?*” (15-16). Even as he was hunted down by King Saul, David remained loyal to the king to the end. He rebuked Abner for failing to guard his master.

Third, The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness (17-25). Saul recognized David’s voice and said, “Is that your voice, David my son?” David replied, “Yes it is, my lord the king.” Then, once again, David appealed to the king. “Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done, and what wrong am I guilty of? 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, men have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD! They have now driven me from my share in the LORD’s inheritance and have said, ‘Go, serve other gods.’ 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” (18-20).

As he had done in En Gei, David asked the king why he continued to pursue to kill him when he was innocent. David tried to help Saul to see things from God’s point of view. What was Saul’s reply? Look at verse 21. *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 erred greatly.”* Again, King Saul said something to the effect of his repentance. Again, it was not genuine. He called David his son again and again. But he never gave up hunting him down and killing him. David knew this. He knew that he couldn’t trust the king or what he said.

So, who did David trust? How did he base his life and future on his faith in God? Let us read verses 23-24. *The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness. The LORD delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble.*" This was the punch line of David's personal testimony before King Saul. The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness—David believed this truth.

People tend to seek rewards from other people who are in high positions or from their own efforts. Doeg the Edomite killed not only the priests in Nob but also their families and pets because he wanted a handsome reward from King Saul (22:18-19). The people of Keilah and Ziph wanted to turn David over to Saul for rewards. They sought rewards from men. But David was different. He believed that it is God who rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness.



What does it mean to be righteous? What does it mean to be faithful? To be righteous is to have a right relationship with God. (We are made righteous only by the blood of Jesus). It is doing what is right before God's eyes. To be faithful is to trust in God and obey his words. It is persistently doing what is right before God, even when one faces severe challenges in life. During his wilderness training thus far, David did what is right before God. He was also faithful. David believed that God rewards those who are righteous and faithful. He believed in this truth and was willing to base his life and future on this faith. Of course, this does not mean David would never make a mistake in his life. In fact, we will see how he stumbled in the next chapter. But David believed that it is God who would reward him if he did right before God and remained faithful to God. What if David didn't believe this? He could have gotten instant rewards by getting rid of the evil king and taking over his kingship right there and right then. He wouldn't have to suffer any longer, constantly running for his life. But David believed that God rewards everyone for his or her righteousness and faithfulness. He did not lay a hand on the Lord's anointed. He was willing to wait on God and his time.

Joseph in Genesis is a good example of someone who was rewarded for his righteousness and faithfulness. He was sold by his jealous brothers to merchants traveling to Egypt. The 17-year old boy became a slave in a foreign country, away from his family and friends. We can imagine how lonely and homesick he felt as he struggled with his severe language problem. But he didn't become crooked. He did what is right before God. He was with God and God was with him. He remained faithful to God to the end and God richly rewarded him.

King Saul also did the right things before God at the beginning. God used his courage to protect the people of Jabesh Gilead from their cruel enemy. But Saul did not

remain faithful to the Lord. He became proud and disobeyed the word of God. We learn that it is important for us to be faithful to the end.

I thank God for helping Chris to grow to be a man of faithfulness. For example, he has been the most faithful participant in our men's early morning prayer on Tuesdays ever since he started to join us a couple of years ago. Some of us might say "But that's a very small matter." Yes, but our faithfulness must begin with small things. In his parable of the ten minas in Luke 19, Jesus said to his faithful servant, "Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities" (Lk 19:17, ESV). Likewise, I pray that we may be faithful in small things like our personal and group prayers, 1:1 studies and other ways of serving the Lord. God will surely reward us.

So what is the ultimate reward we can receive from God? If you remain loyal to your company for 30 years and retire, you will be rewarded with a good retirement package and a certificate of appreciation. If you work out regularly in gym, you will be rewarded with good muscle tones and fit body. If you study hard for your classes, you will be rewarded with good grades. These are all good things to have and we should strive to get them. But these are not the ultimate reward for our believers. After living a life of faith and mission to the end, St. Paul said that the crown of righteousness was in store for him (2Ti 4:8). He also said that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ro 6:23). If you work hard all your life but remain in sin, you will get a big paycheck in the end. The check will say in big block letters "Death." Death will swallow up everything accomplished by him or her. But if we remain faithful to God to the end, we will receive the gift of God, the ultimate reward, eternal life in the kingdom of God. Unlike all other rewards that this world offers, this ultimate reward is only one that will not spoil or fade away. It is the only reward that is truly worthwhile for us to pursue.



This was the last face-to-face meeting between David and Saul. Look at verse 25. *Then Saul said to David, "May you be blessed, my son David; you will do great things and surely triumph." So David went on his way, and Saul returned home. Once again, they seemed to have parted amiably, but the fear and suspicion towards each other still remained. King Saul still wanted to hunt down David and kill him. David and his men knew that they had to continue to run away from Saul and his men.*

From today's passage, we learned that God rewards every person for his or her righteousness and faithfulness. May God help us to have a right relationship with God and do right things before his eyes! May God help us to be faithful to the end!