

# David Spares Saul's Life

Key Verse:

**"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."**

Romans 12:20

**Read: 1 Samuel 24:1-22**

**Further: Psalm 119:1-8**

Once again, David and his 600 men were 'on the run' from King Saul. Saul had been told that David was hiding in the wilderness of En Gedi, near a place called the "Crag of the Wild Goats." So with 3,000 hand-picked men, Saul set off into the desert to try and capture him. Little did he know that soon his life would be in the hands of the very man he was pursuing!

**RESTRAINT**

In this particular area there were large caves in the rocks, which were sometimes used as sheep pens. King Saul entered one of these to go to the toilet. Unknown to him, David and his men had earlier taken refuge in the same huge cave, and right at that moment were hiding far at the back in the darkness! From there they could see Saul clearly and David's men suggested that surely this was his God-given opportunity to kill Saul (v4).

David though, had no intention of harming the King. However, seeing an opportunity to resolve the conflict between them, he quietly crept up behind Saul and cut off a piece of his robe. He then whispered to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lift my hand against him." This dissuaded his soldiers from attacking Saul and showed David's immense respect for God and His authority - something sadly missing in Saul.

**REVELATION**

As Saul left the cave to rejoin his troops, David followed him outside and called out to him, "My lord the King!" We can imagine Saul's stunned surprise as he turned to find himself face to face with David! Bowing humbly before Saul, David made a heartfelt appeal. He urged him to ignore the evil men who were falsely accusing David of trying to harm the King. He told him that instead of trying to hurt Saul, he had in fact, just spared his life - even though others had encouraged him to kill him!

Despite being treated terribly and persecuted by Saul, David still graciously acknowledged Saul as "the Lord's anointed" and assured him that he would never harm him.

As overwhelming proof of this, David held up the piece of King Saul's robe. "Look with your own eyes!" he challenged Saul. "I have not sinned against you, even though you hunt me down to take my life." Then appealing to God to judge between their behaviour towards each other, David assured him that even if God were to judge Saul, "my hand will not touch you!" This was a wonderful demonstration of David's godly generosity and gracious treatment of Saul - a man determined to harm him. What an excellent example he is to us all!

**REMORSE**

Hearing David's words, Saul remorsefully broke down and wept. He affectionately called David 'his son' and confessed, "you are more righteous than I, for you rewarded me with good, while I treated you wickedly. The Lord delivered me into your hand and yet you did not kill me." Saul even acknowledged that God had given the kingdom of Israel to David, and begged him not to destroy his family in Israel; as was the typical practice of powerful kings in those days. David generously and faithfully promised to honour Saul's request.

At this point, Saul rejoined his waiting troops and returned to his palace. David however, gathered his men together and returned to their wilderness hideout. Further readings in 1 Samuel reveal that David acted very wisely during this event. Despite Saul's apparent change of heart, he couldn't be trusted; sadly he was soon hunting David through the hills of Judah once again.

**RETURN**

Before we close this lesson, look at the first verse of chapter 25. There we read, "And Samuel died. Then all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him at his home in Ramah." Death had finally come to this great man of God – just as death comes to each one of us. May we all be followers of God like Samuel was, when our turn comes!

After Samuel's funeral, David returned to the vast wilderness in the south of Israel. No doubt he thought that with Samuel gone, no-one would restrain Saul. So for greater safety he stayed in Paran, an even more inhospitable and remote area than En Gedi.

Extra: Explain why David didn't kill his enemy when he had the opportunity.

Level 5 lesson 29

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why was David hiding?	.....
2. What did David's men suggest that he should do to Saul?	.....
3. How did David prove that he would not harm Saul?	.....
4. What did Saul confess when he saw how David had been kind to him?	.....
5. Why did David go back into the wilderness?	.....

My Name is ..... Age .....

# David & Nabal

Read 1 Samuel 25:2-20; 23-38

Further reading: Proverbs 31:10-31

Key Verse:

**“A king’s wrath is a messenger of death, but a wise man will appease it.”**

Proverbs 16:14

Level 5 lesson 30

Extra: How would you describe Abigail: her work, wisdom, courage, etc?

Even while David and his men were out hiding in the wilderness, they were not idle. They provided a great service for Jewish farmers and herdsmen in the area, offering protection from attacks by the Philistines, wild animals and also the many robbers who lived as fugitives in the wilderness. Sometimes this meant real danger and difficulty for them. It is good to see that rather than lying around bored all day, these men found something constructive and helpful to do. Our story today revolves around one particular farmer, Nabal. He was a very wealthy man who owned thousands of sheep and goats. His wealth, however, certainly hadn’t made him happy. Instead it seems he was a bad-tempered, mean and miserly man, known for his bad behaviour (v3). His wife Abigail, by contrast, was an intelligent and wise woman of godly character.

**REQUEST** One day word reached David that Nabal had started shearing his sheep. This was quite an occasion on the farm (to say nothing of a huge job), with large mobs of sheep to be mustered and penned, and slowly shorn with hand shears! No doubt visiting shearers helped with the task, too. Of course, all this required the preparation of much food to feed the hungry workers.

David sent ten of his young men to Nabal to help with protection, and requested some food provisions in exchange. Nabal’s shepherds were very grateful for the protection and free help. It made their job safer and meant that none of Nabal’s flocks were lost or stolen. Nabal though, had no appreciation, and treated David’s request with contempt. “Who is David?” he asked, professing ignorance. He denounced David as simply a runaway slave (v10), rather than the heir to the throne! Then he rudely refused to give the men anything. We read a little later that Abigail knew exactly who David was, therefore Nabal certainly did; so his comments were deliberate insults!

**RESENTMENT** In due course, David learnt of Nabal’s response and he was mad! He resented Nabal’s ungrateful, mean-spirited reply and the contempt with which he had treated his request.

“Put on your swords!” he told his men - indicating exactly what kind of vengeance he would wreak on Nabal and his household. Nobody would forget this lesson in a hurry!

In the meantime, a servant of Nabal realised that trouble was brewing! He had witnessed Nabal’s shameful treatment of David’s men and ran to Abigail. He told her of their honesty and friendliness, and that their protection had been like “a wall around us both by night and day.” He warned that Nabal’s rude behaviour was about to be severely punished and that “disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no-one can talk to him!”

**RESTRAINT** Abigail immediately loaded up several donkeys with provisions of bread, wine, meat, corn, raisins and figs; and set off with her servant to intercept David. David was already underway with 400 men, determined to punish Nabal and his household. Fortunately, Abigail met him in time! She quickly dismounted from her donkey and bowed low before David with her face to the ground. Then Abigail appealed to David for mercy, apologising for Nabal’s foolish, ignorant behaviour, and explaining that she had been unaware of what had happened. Offering David her gifts, she then pleaded with him not to do what he had planned, but to trust the Lord to exact vengeance on Nabal. David was a righteous man and God’s servant, so she ended her appeal by urging David not to hastily commit a crime that he would look back upon with regret when he became Israel’s next king. What excellent advice! Wouldn’t we all be wise if we refrained from everything that would cause us remorse in the future!

**RESULTS** In the face of such a humble, earnest and wise appeal, David’s anger disappeared. He blessed God for sending Abigail and thanked her for intervening. He realised that she had kept him from committing a crime against innocent people. What a brave, wise woman! But what about her brutish husband Nabal? Finding him drunk upon returning home, Abigail withheld telling him anything until the next morning, but then the shocking news caused his heart to fail. Ten days later “the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.”

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1(a) What was David’s request to Nabal?

(b) Why did he make this request?

2. Why did Nabal respond in the way he did?

3. How did Abigail save the situation?

4. What was David’s reaction to Abigail’s appeal?

5. How can we avoid things that would cause us trouble later on?

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# David & Saul: Last Interview

## Read 1 Samuel 26

### Further reading: Psalm 2

#### Key Verse:

**“But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you.”**

Luke 12:20

Extra: Comment on Saul’s lack of conviction about his sin.

Level 5 lesson 31

In reading our Scripture passage today, it soon becomes clear that David acted wisely in avoiding King Saul. David’s old enemies, the Ziphites, had tipped off the King that David was hiding in the hills of Hakilah. Despite his tearful ‘repentance’ and confession of his sins toward David, Saul quickly gathered 3,000 hand-picked men and pursued him again! Saul’s promises not to hurt or pursue him any more were broken. What a sad reflection on Saul’s character, that he could be so false and untrustworthy!

On several occasions throughout his life, Saul had displayed a similar lack of conviction about his sin before God. As a result, his ‘repentance’ was merely an outward display, not a real change of life. Today you can learn from Saul’s story that true repentance requires you to have godly sorrow and turn from your sins; not just feel sorry you got caught!

#### SLEEPING MONARCH

Saul and his army pitched their tents near the hill of Hakilah and began their search for David. He, in turn, had heard rumours of Saul’s approach and sent his own spies to confirm this. Sadly, he learnt that Saul had gone back on his word and was indeed pursuing him! Approaching two of his most trusted and able men, Ahimelech and Abishai, David asked them, “Who will go down with me into Saul’s camp?” Despite the obvious danger, Abishai agreed immediately. What loyal devotion to David his leader!

So, in the dead of night, they made their way to Saul’s camp. There, surrounded by his body-guards, they found Saul. He was sleeping next to Abner, the captain, with his famous spear stuck into the ground at his head. Abishai immediately wanted to seize the opportunity and kill Saul. “God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day,” he said to David, “now let me smite him with the spear!” But although this was the very spear which Saul had thrown at David on a number of occasions, David refused to allow Abishai to use it against Saul. “Don’t kill him,” he said respectfully, “who can stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed and be guiltless?”

#### SHOCKING NEWS

David preferred to leave Saul’s fate in God’s hands. He knew God would deal directly with Saul in His own time.

Clutching Saul’s spear and water bottle, the two men sneaked away into the darkness, leaving Saul and his army sleeping soundly. This was actually God’s protection of David and Abishai, as v12 tells us clearly that God had put them all into a deep sleep. When they reached the top of a hill a safe distance away, David shouted out to wake up the sleeping army. Waving Saul’s spear and water bottle, he taunted Abner for not keeping a better watch over the King, telling him he was not fit for his job! Saul, awakened from his deep slumber, recognised David’s voice, and guiltily called, “Is that you, my son David?” “Yes it is, my lord the King,” replied David, “but why are you still chasing me? What wrong am I guilty of?” He pleaded with the King not to stain his hands with innocent blood, and claimed it was unworthy for the King of Israel to pursue a mere “flea”.

#### SAD CONFESSION

Once again King Saul professed his sorrow and remorse. “I have sinned, I have played the fool and have erred exceedingly,” he cried. David had shown generosity and kindness in sparing his life a second time. He reminded Saul that the Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness, and simply prayed for the Lord’s continued blessing and protection on Saul’s life. Saul in turn blessed David and predicted a great future and ultimate triumph for him. Then the two men parted, never to meet again.

Yes, Saul had sinned, played the fool, and erred exceedingly. How sad that for all his accomplishments, his life was largely a failure. “I have sinned” though, is certainly true of us all. “I have played the fool; I have erred exceedingly” is particularly true of those who continue to reject the Saviour. The greatest fool in the world is the man or woman, boy or girl, who goes on day after day without acknowledging Jesus as Lord and serving God. May this never be true of any of you! Instead, you can make a wise decision here and now to believe in Christ as your Saviour and ask Him to save you from your sin. Our sin condemns each of us in this life, just as it did Saul. In fact, our sin will ultimately bring us to eternal ruin if we do not accept the forgiveness God offers us in Jesus Christ.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What can we learn from Saul’s repentance?

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2. Abishai wanted to kill Saul. What did David prefer to do?

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3. What sad confession did Saul make?

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4. Who is the greatest fool in the world?

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5. How may we follow David’s good example?

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# Ziklag Taken & Retaken

## Key Verse:

**“As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man...they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away.”**

Matthew 24:37-39

Extra: What can we learn from David's response when faced with a tragic situation?

Level 5 lesson 32

## Read 1 Samuel 30

### Further: Psalm 56

Realising Saul could never be trusted, David and his men sought refuge in Philistine country. These years as a fugitive from Saul must have been very difficult and frustrating for David, as he patiently waited for God's judgement on Saul. We can imagine that there were perhaps times when he was disheartened, or wondered if God had forgotten him. But God had not forgotten David; even in the land of the Philistines he provided and cared for David and his men. They were allowed to settle in a town called Ziklag, which King Achish gave them. From there, David made raids on the enemies of the Philistines other than the Israelites, although he pretended to Achish that he'd attacked the Israelites. Then one day, the Philistines decided to mount a concerted attack on King Saul. Gathering an enormous army together they marched off towards Israel. David and his men joined King Achish and his troops at the rear of the huge procession. It appears that David was ready to join with the Philistines in fighting King Saul, (ch 29:8) but God prevented him. The Philistine rulers noticed David and his men marching at the rear and were not happy at him being part of their army. They knew David's record and didn't trust him or his men. They feared David would attack them from behind in the heat of battle; and they were probably right - after all, "blood is thicker than water!" So, despite King Achish's protests, David and his men were sent home.

### PLUNDERED

They arrived home to find a scene of total devastation. In their absence, the Amalekites had raided Ziklag and destroyed the town completely. They had driven off all the livestock, and taken all the women and children as prisoners, including both David's wives and family. What a catastrophe! How would you have felt in such a situation? David and his men were no different. We read that even these hardened soldiers, "wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep." As they recovered from their initial shock and grief, some men began to angrily blame David, and even talked about stoning him! Faced with all this, what did David do? Verse 6's answer is marvellous: "David encouraged himself (found strength) in the Lord his God." This verse gives a great insight into the character of this mighty man of God, and it is a wonderful example for US when WE face big problems.

No doubt David prayed and told the Lord about all the loss, grief, and his men's unfair criticism and bitter anger toward him. We can be sure that his knowledge of God's faithfulness, love, and promises (committed faithfully to memory from his childhood) sustained and rejuvenated him at this time. This is OUR answer too; when the events of life threaten to overwhelm us, our God is always only a prayer away.

### PRAYER

Before making any rash, 'heat-of-the-moment' decision David firstly consulted Abiathar the priest. In this he again showed remarkable wisdom and restraint which we do well to notice. It is so important to always seek God's will in our lives! Is it YOUR practice to ask the Lord's guidance in the big decisions you have to make in life? It was certainly David's!

Instructed by Abiathar to proceed, David set off with his 600 men to find the Amalekites and recover their families and possessions. Arriving at the brook Beson, 200 of his men were too exhausted to carry on, and were left there to recover. Now with only 400 men, David continued the chase, and finally came across an Egyptian slave, nearly dead. It turned out that he had been a part of the Amalekite raiding party and was able to lead them to where the Amalekites were camped. To celebrate their victory they were having a huge party, with the spoils of battle; feasting and dancing.

### PICTURE

What a picture of this poor world! They were in terrible danger and completely unaware of it! People today are also eating, drinking, and partying while judgement is near at hand! Read the Key Verse, and think about it. See that you are not like this. Make sure you have trusted Christ as Saviour, and thanked Him for bearing God's righteous judgement for your sin on Calvary's Cross. Hebrews 2:3 asks, "How shall we escape (the judgement of God) if we neglect so great salvation?" We won't - unless we first trust in Christ!

### PUNISHMENT & PRESERVATION

So David attacked the partying Amalekites and God gave him and his men a wonderful victory. They were able to return to their homes with their families and possessions intact - not one person or possession had been lost! As a tribute to God's marvellous care and provision, David sent gifts to the people in that region (where he had previously roamed) saying, "Here is a present for you from the plunder of the Lord's enemies."

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. How was David prevented from fighting against Saul's army?

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2. How did David show remarkable wisdom and restraint?

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3. What were the Amalekites doing when David and his men found them?

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4. In what ways were they a picture of many people today?

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5. How did David acknowledge God's care and provision?

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