1 Samuel Lesson 19 (2021)

**Those Whom God Rewards**

1 Samuel 26:1-27:12

Key Verse: 26:23-24

*23The 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. 24As surely as I valued your life today, so may the Lord value my life and deliver me from all trouble.”*

David had been living as a fugitive for many years. Once he was a national hero by defeating a champion from Gath named Goliath, a giant warrior, whose height was about 9 feet 9 inches (3 meters), but David had to run away from the king, Saul, because he tried to kill David out of jealousy and fear. Despite Saul’s murderous attempts, God protected David from all danger and provided him what he needed. Saul tried to kill David, but David spared Saul’s life, even though David had the perfect chance to take his life. Today, we are going to study 1 Samuel 26 and 27. In chapter 26, David had another chance to kill Saul, but he again spared his life. David knew that the Lord forbid him to lay his hands against the Lord’s anointed. David believed that God would reward him when he lived in the fear of the Lord. In chapter 27, David made a foolish decision to take refuge in the land of the Philistines, the enemy of Israel. We can see David’s two different decisions in this passage, one from the fear of the Lord and the other from the fear of man. In this passage, we may learn how we can live a truly blessed life through David. May God open our hearts and learn valuable lessons while listening to His words.

1. **David Again Spared Saul’s Life (26:1-25)**

1 Samuel 26 is very similar to the incident that occurred in 1 Samuel 24. We see that Saul’s behavior remained unchanged from the previous occasion*. Look at verse 1-2,* ***The Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah and said, “Is not David hiding on the hill of Hakilah, which faces Jeshimon?”  2So Saul went down to the Desert of Ziph, with his three thousand select Israelite troops, to search there for David.*** The Ziphites were the descendants of Caleb.(1 Chronicles 4:15-16) They belonged to the tribe of Judah, the same tribe as David. While David had been living as a fugitive, most of the time, he stayed in the territory of Judah because it was David’s own tribe. Probably, the people of Judah showed favor to David and had a good relationship with him while he was running away from Saul. We see that after Saul’s death, the men of Judah came to David and anointed him king over the tribe of Judah.(2 Samuel 2:4) However, not all of them showed favor to David. The Ziphites went to Saul and informed him where David was. They betrayed him formerly (1 Samuel 23:19), and David was almost captured by Saul. In this chapter, they betrayed David again. When Saul heard of it, he mustered 3000 of the special forces to search for David. Do you remember what Saul said to David when David spared his life in chapter 24? He said ***“You are more righteous than I.” “You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly (1 Samuel 24:17)***. He seemed to recognize his wrong doing and want to become a good person. However, when he was informed where David was, he changed his mind and he searched for David again.

When David heard that Saul was pursuing him, David sent out scouts and learned where Saul was. Then David himself set out and went to the place where Saul had camped. At that time, Saul was staying in an open field and 3000 special forces were encamped around him, providing him a wall of protection. Saul might think that it would be safer to stay in the open field than a cave, remembering the danger he encountered in the previous event. Look at verse 6, ***6David 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.*** David’s thought of going down to the camp, guarded by 3000 soldiers, seemed to be very dangerous, but David, accompanied by Abishai, ventured into Saul’s camp in the night. Abishai was David’s nephew along with Joab and Asahel, the sons of David’s sister, Zeruiah (**1 Chronicles 2:16**).

Look at verse 7, ***7So 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.*** Saul might think that he was powerfully protected because he had three thousand of his chosen soldiers surrounded him. But, in reality all his preparation was useless and he was utterly defenseless. According to *verse 12b,* ***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.*** While David and Abishai crept through their camp, no-one in Saul’s army woke up. How was it possible that all three thousand soldiers slept without an exception, especially in a battle field? However, it happened because the Lord put them into deep sleep. When Saul pursued David with 3000 special trained forces, David was obviously in danger. But ironically, not David, but Saul became vulnerable and defenseless. When the Lord was not with Saul, all his effort was in vain.

Look at verse 8, ***8Abishai 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.”***  Abishai thought that it was a perfect opportunity to kill Saul since all of their enemies were in a deep sleep. If they killed Saul at the spot and crept away, no one would notice them. Abishai tried to convince David that it was a God’s given chance. He knew David spared Saul’s life last time, so he didn’t urge David to do anything. He asked David to allow him to do the job. He needed just one strike. Look at verse 9-11, ***9But David said to Abishai, “Don’t destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed and be guiltless? 10As 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. 11But 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.”*** David was clear that he did not want to lay his hands against Saul and also did not allow Abishai to destroy Saul. David refused to shed Saul’s blood with his hands, believing that God himself would bring judgment on Saul in his time. Did David apply this principle to everyone he was dealing with? Not really. When we see David’s whole life, he did not act in this manner all the time. One time, a man reported to David that he killed the king Saul, thinking that Saul was David’s enemy and expected a great reward from him, but David executed him without hesitation. (2 Samuel 1) David did the same to those who killed Ish-Bosheth, son of Saul, who succeeded as a king after Saul. (2 Samuel 4) I think it depended on David’s situation, his position and/or whom he was dealing with. However, in Saul’s case, David spared Saul’s life because he was “the Lord’s anointed”. We find the phrase “the Lord’s anointed” numerous times in chapter 24 and 26. David said in *Verse 11a,* ***“But the Lord forbid that I should lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed.”*** By killing Saul, David could end his long fugitive life. The temptation to kill Saul might be very strong for David. But, he remembered God who had forbid him to do so. David had the fear of the Lord and he again spared Saul’s life.

Through David, we can think about what the principle of our lives is. Is it the fear of the Lord or something else? Jesus teaches his disciples what it means to live before God. Our God is unseen, but sees everything, even things that have been done in secret, and he will reward us accordingly. (*Matthew 6:6, 18*) When Jesus saw how the religious leaders practiced their religion, Jesus knew that they did not have the fear of the Lord. Their words and practices had a form of religion, but they were no more than a performance to show before people. Their hearts were far away from God, full of greed and hypocrisy. Jesus warns us of the yeast of Pharisees. There is a saying, ***“The true test of a man’s character is what he does when no one is watching.”*** We have to examine ourselves about what we do when no-one is watching because that is our true character. And it shows whether we are living before God or living before people. We have to know that if we don’t have the fear of the Lord, we are driven by our desires and will end in destruction.

***Look at verses 13-16***, Instead of killing Saul, David left the camp bringing Saul’s spear and water jug as sufficient proof that he was in Saul’s camp. Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the hill some distance away.  He called out to Abner, the commander of Saul’s army and rebuked him, saying he deserved to die for failing his job by not keeping watch over Saul. To prove what he said, David asked him, ***“where are the king’s spear and water jug that were near the king’s head?” (16b)*** While David spoke to Abner, ***Saul recognized David’s voice and said, “Is that your voice, David my son?” (17)*** In his conversation with Saul, David expressed his agony. David appealed to Saul’s conscience. There were two things he stressed: **The first**, even though David was innocent, Saul pursued him like a rebel. David added if God had something against David and incited Saul to do so, then God would accept an offering to reconcile with him, but if someone falsely accused David, then God’s curse would be upon that person. (18-19a) **The second**, David was driven from his God and the land of his inheritance, and wandering in the deserts and mountains. David pleaded Saul for his life and for his blood to not fall to the ground far from the presence of the Lord. (19b-20)

Look at verse 21, ***21Then 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.”*** When Saul realized that David spared his life again, as before, he again admitted his sin, that he had acted foolishly and made a terrible mistake (26:21). Look at verses 22-24, ***22“Here is the king’s spear,” David answered. “Let one of your young men come over and get it. 23The 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. 24As surely as I valued your life today, so may the Lord value my life and deliver me from all trouble.”***  David believed that God rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. David would go through hardships, due to sparing Saul’s life again. But he believed that God would certainly reward him when he followed God faithfully.

Look at *verse 24 again,* ***“24As surely as I valued your life today, so may the Lord value my life and deliver me from all trouble.”***  David did not say to Saul “I valued your life today, so may you value my life.” When David spared Saul’s life, it was not because he expected something good back from Saul, but he trusted God and His reward, not Saul. David was faithful to God because he put his hope in God not in man. If his action was based on expecting something good back from Saul, David could not spare Saul’s life at that time, because Saul had changed his mind many times already. We have to understand that people are vulnerable and not trustworthy. If our loving actions toward others are motivated by expecting something good from others, it is impossible to keep loving others because people may not repay us as we expect. Therefore, Jesus teaches us in ***Luke 14:13-14, “But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”*** Jesus’ teaching reminds us that our ultimate reward is not from people, but from God. Also, *Hebrews 11:6 reads****,6And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*** The nature of our faith is to believe that God exists and He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. When we have such a faith, we can please God. In this generation, living by faith is challenging, ungodly teachings and value systems smearing even into Christian communities. However, I believe that our God is living and will surely bless and reward those who earnestly seek by putting their hope in Him. I pray that God may raise many genuine disciples of Jesus Christ in our ministry.

1. **David Among the Philistines (27:1-12)**

Look at verse 1, ***But David thought to himself, “One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand.”*** We don’t know if any events happened to David to think of such an idea after chapter 26 or how long had passed between 1 Samuel 26 and 27. We see that there is a very different mood between the two chapters. In chapter 26, David showed his faith in God believing that God would value his life as he valued Saul’s life. He had the fear of the Lord, not the fear of men. However, in Chapter 27, David was apprehensive of being destroyed by Saul. He was discouraged by running away from Saul for many years. Verse 1 begins with ***“But David thought to himself”***. This gives us a clue as to where the discouragement came from. He felt that he would die in Saul’s hands if he remained in Israel. When he was caught in his own thoughts, he did not remember what God had done for him. It was God who anointed him as the king of Israel. It was God’s promise to establish him as the king of Israel. He would not die in the hands of Saul until God fulfilled all of his promise to him. David should remember that it was God who kept him safe in the land of Judah in the midst of Saul’s murderous pursuit. *1 Samuel 23:14b reads****, “Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands.”*** However, David failed to see God’s promise and what God had done in his life. He was discouraged, not because God had changed his mind about David or lifted his protection on him, but his perspective toward God and his situation had changed.

Look at verse 2, ***2So David and the six hundred men with him left and went over to Achish son of Maok king of Gath.*** David’s discouragement led him to compromise. He and his followers went to the king of Gath to seek his protection. This was not the first time David went to Achish, king of Gath. Many years ago, David fled from Saul and went to him. (*1 Samuel 21*) At that time, a servant of Achish reminded the king what David did to them, saying ***“Isn’t he the one they sing about in their dances: “’Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands?” (1 Samuel 21:11)*** David was very much afraid of Achish, king of Gath. So, he pretended as a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard and he was able to escape from him. However, Achish welcomed David and his men at this time and allowed them to settle down in Gath. Achish thought that he might make David and his men into his servants since they brought their families together to live there as permanent residents. He could use them as his fighting men. David’s plan seemed to work well. Look at verse 4, ***4When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.*** He didn’t need to run away from Saul any more. Finally, David found peace in his life. Furthermore, Achish gave him Ziglag, a Philistine town near Judah for his dwelling place.

However, David’s life in Ziglag was very different from while he was in the land of Judah. Look at verse 8-9, ***8Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.) 9Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish.*** David took raiding parties to the surrounding towns for flocks and clothes; not out of provocation or self-defense, but to rob them for his own benefits. When Achish asked him where he raided, he told him a lie that he raided against the towns of Judah. And to cover up the lie, he killed all the men and women from the towns he raided. Somehow, David gained trust from Achish, verse 12 reads, “***12Achish trusted David and said to himself, “He has become so obnoxious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant for life.”***  David’s life in the land of the Philistines seemed to work for him. However, David’s life was not the same, robbing and killing became his lifestyle. (*27:11*). Before, David had never cared about finding favor in the eyes of a Philistine ruler, the enemy of God’s people, but now he used every means to get favor from the king. In chapter 27, there was no mention about “God”, “the Lord” or “prayed”, even once. His life seemed not aligned with God’s will. Furthermore, in the near future, when the war broke out between the Philistines and the Israelites, David positioned himself along with Achish to fight against his own people Israel. If God didn’t intervene at that time, we don’t know what would happen to him.

In conclusion, David was a man after God’s own heart. However, he experienced ups and downs in his life. It was not because God left him, but his attitude to God and his perspective to his situation had changed. David didn’t know when his fugitive life would end. It looked like it would last longer than he expected, so he followed his own thought to escape the situation. However, in reality, his fugitive life would be ending soon in 16 months (1 Samuel 27:7). Like David, at some points of our life, we feel like we are going through a dark tunnel where there is no end. However, God is leading each one of us according to his perfect and good plan. Ironically, In those times, we experience God the most. We knew that David’s life in the wilderness was not an easy one, but many of his beautiful Psalms were written during those days. He praised God for His faithfulness and goodness, he expressed his trust to God and His provision. When David focused on his life to get away from troubles and hardships, he was caught in his own thoughts and he put himself in danger. We have to remember that God’s purpose in our life is not getting away from troubles and having an easy-going life. God wants us to experience Him and to receive him as our great reward. Last week, we had UBF Leaders’ Conference and World Mission Report. We studied the book of Philippians during the conference. While I was preparing this message, a few verses came into my mind. *Philippians 3:8****a “What is more everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.”*** *Philippians 3:10* ***“I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.”*** When Paul says that he wants to know Christ, *“know” means “knowing through personal experience or first-hands acquaintance*.” So, knowing Christ is more than a mental satisfaction or comfort through accepting Jesus’ forgiveness in our head. It is through obeying his words and committing our life to Christ. Paul was willing to give up everything for the sake of Christ. He had participated in the suffering of Christ to know him because he knew that knowing Jesus Christ was the most blessed life. In our lives as followers of Christ, we should focus on knowing Christ in every situation. When I look at my life, my focus was not on knowing Christ all the time, often my focus was on how to solve problems or how to secure my life in this world. Whenever I lost focus, I was caught in my own thoughts. I have to say to myself each day, “I want to know Christ” so my focus should be on knowing Jesus Christ in each and every situation. I pray that God may help each of us to focus our lives on knowing Jesus Christ, which is incomparable to anything in the world, so that we may experience the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus in our lives.