

31. I have played a fool

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Although the word 'death' brings certain aspects of sadness and depression, from time to time we can find some humor from people's epitaphs:

Epitaph 1: Here lies the bones of Mary Jones
for her life had no terrors;
She lived an old maid
She died an old maid
No runs, No hits, No errors.

Epitaph 2: Here lies Anna Belle who finally have learned to keep her mouth shut.

Epitaph 3: "I told you I was sick."

Epitaph 4: "I have played a fool." That would be an epitaph for Saul who once was the first king of Israel.

Charles Spurgeon said once, "A good character is the best tombstone."

Though Saul had great potential as a king of Israel, he completely lost it because of his sinful disobedience. He was the tallest and most handsome man in Israel. He would have been a frequent cover model for Israel GQ magazine. He had a charisma that grabbed people's attention. His family was influential and rich. He had it all humanly speaking, except an obedient heart to God. Yet Saul's autobiography ends with, "I have sinned, I have played a fool and I have erred exceedingly."

A. THE SAME SONG, THE SECOND VERSE

1 Samuel 26:1-6 Now the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is David not hiding in the hill of Hachilah, opposite Jeshimon?" 2 Then Saul arose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph. 3 And Saul encamped in the hill of Hachilah, which is opposite Jeshimon, by the road. But David stayed in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. 4 David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul had indeed come. 5 So David arose and came to the place where Saul had encamped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army. Now Saul lay within the camp, with the people encamped all around him. 6 Then David answered, and said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother of Joab, saying, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you."

What do you see here?

The Ziphites were from Ziph, 4 miles southeast of Hebron. They traveled about 25 miles north to report to Saul at Gibeah. These are the same people who came to Saul in chapter 23. I don't know what the Ziphites had against David and his guys. But somehow they were determined to get themselves into trouble by reporting the whereabouts of David to Saul. I am sure that they were panicking when David became a king.

Saul already forgot his promise to David in chapter 24 for sparing his life from the cave. It is like we are now listening to the same song, the second verse. However, this is the last conflict between David and Saul that is recorded in the Bible.

David, as a wise and capable commander, constantly monitors the movements of Saul. David knows where Saul is, but Saul does not know where David is.

I am sure that it was a disheartening thing for David to find out that Saul was after his trail again. In other words, Saul didn't repent truly. No surprise, here. Instead of waiting for Saul to come after them, David chose to go into the camp of Saul with just one more person.

B. ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY, BUT IS IT FROM GOD?

1 Samuel 26:7-12 So David and Abishai came to the people by night; and there Saul lay sleeping within the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. And Abner and the people lay all around him. 8 Then Abishai said to David, "God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear, right to the earth; and I will not have to strike him a second time!" 9 And David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?" 10 David said furthermore, "As the Lord lives, the Lord shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish. 11 The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed. But please, take now the spear and the jug of water that are by his head, and let us go." 12 So David took the spear and the jug of water by Saul's head, and they got away; and no man saw it or knew it or awoke. For they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen on them.

What is your interpretation of this?

David and Abishai put on their black Ninja suits with a night vision goggles and they slipped into Saul's camp.

Abishai seems to have had a bloodthirsty and trigger happy nature. He promised to David "One shot, one kill."

As I explained this before, just because a door of opportunities is opened in front of us, it doesn't mean God wants us to take that opportunity. We must put everything against the Word of God and make sure that it is from the Lord.

1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Like Abishai, overzealous friends or close supports can be as many baits of temptation as the enemies.

Abishai even makes it easy for David: "David, you don't have to kill him. I will do it. You don't have to feel bad about it in the slightest way." David could say to himself and everyone else, "I did not kill Saul."

Abishai also weaves into the matter an element of poetic justice. He was reminding David that it is the spear that was thrown at David in attempted murder before in 1 Samuel 18:10-11 and 19:9-10, would now be used as the instrument of the Lord's

righteous judgment. It all might have seemed to be perfectly given from the hand of God.

David could easily come up with an excuse: "My mama didn't raise no dummy. If it was the first time, shame on you. Now that it is the second time if I miss this opportunity to get rid of Saul again, shame on me."

We don't have to take things into our own hands. Whenever we begin to take things into our own hands without God, is when we really mess things up. Oh, how important to just learn to, "Leave it with the Lord! The Lord's my defense, He'll take care of it!"

David is completely depending on God's hand regarding Saul even though he had two opportunities to kill Saul and ends his fugitive life.

I am sure that Abishai could not understand what David could accomplish by trusting God. In our lives, if we tell our unsaved close families or friends that we'd rather depend on God's provisions or God's way, they think that we lost something in our heads. They don't understand God's way and learning to trust His sovereignty.

By the way, can you believe these two guys are standing right smack dab in the middle of three thousand enemy chosen soldiers and having this conversation? They were sleeping because the Lord gave them deep sleep.

We can be like the Moneylender Shylock in Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice", demanding our "pound of flesh." We can say, "They did this to me, therefore I will have my vengeance!" Or you can believe God when He says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay..."

You might say, "But they don't deserve that!" True, but neither do you or I, and God still forgave us. The apostle Paul reminds us in Ephesians 4:32, "*Just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*" Forgiven people should be forgiving people. Otherwise, we are grieving the Spirit.

C. LET'S TALK

1 Samuel 26:13-16 Now David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of a hill afar off, a great distance being between them. And David called out to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Do you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner answered and said, "Who are you, calling out to the king?" So David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? And who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy your lord the king. This thing that you have done is not good. As the Lord lives, you deserve to die, because you have not guarded your master, the Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the jug of water that was by his head."

David implies that he cares more for Saul's life than Abner, who was Saul's general and cousin, does.

The dramatic evidence of the water jug and the spear – like the evidence of the corner of Saul's robe in 1 Samuel 24:11 – was undeniable proof that David had the opportunity to kill Saul, but did not do it.

D. TIME TO FACE THE TRUTH, SAUL

1 Samuel 26:17-21 Then Saul knew David's voice, and said, "Is that your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king." 18 And he said, "Why does my lord thus pursue his servant? For what have I done, or what evil is in my hand? 19 Now therefore, please, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant: If the Lord has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering. But if it is the children of men, may they be cursed before the Lord, for they have driven me out this day from sharing in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.' 20 So now, do not let my blood fall to the earth before the face of the Lord. For the king of Israel has come out to seek a flea, as when one hunts a partridge in the mountains." 21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David. For I will harm you no more, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Indeed I have played the fool and erred exceedingly."

Please give me your interpretation of this portion.

David reveals his own heart's struggle under the pressure from Saul's relentless persecution. What hurts David the most is that he can't go to the house of God, and openly be with the people of God, and live his life after the Lord as he longs to.

Saul's "I have sinned," is not the same confession of sin as David's heartfelt confession after he was nailed by God through prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 12:13. Saul was confronted and he couldn't come up with any excuse, so he was admitting his sins in chapter 24 and 26. In chapter 15, we find him busy trying to save his "religious righteous image" in the presence of his people more than true confession and submission to God. But David confesses his sin and admits that he sinned against the Lord without any excuse.

How many of us know that we should not do what we are doing and yet continue? Whether it is a big sin or small sin, in God's eyes, it is a SIN, period.

Even Apostle Paul struggled with his sins.

Romans 7:15-16 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.

However, if we continue our sins with the knowledge of God's grace and mercy and thinking that God will forgive us later, it becomes a willful sin. The willful sin can bring more harm to us than the sin that was caused by ignorance.

Hebrews 10:26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

E. TRUE REPENTANCE REQUIRES CHANGE OF MIND

1 Samuel 26:22-25 And David answered and said, "Here is the king's spear. Let one of the young men come over and get it. May the Lord repay every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the Lord delivered you into my hand today, but I would not stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed. And indeed, as your life was valued much this day in my eyes, so let my life be valued much in the eyes of the Lord, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation." Then Saul said to David, "May you be blessed, my son David! You shall both do great things and also still prevail." So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

What do you get out of this?

Saul knew and understood that he did wrong, but he didn't repent from his sins. He didn't come to God and asked for God's forgiveness for his sins. Would God forgive him if he came to God with a contrite and broken heart? You can bet your life on it.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Repentance takes more than a confession of sins, but it requires turning away from it. How many times did Saul claim that he had sinned against God? But he truly didn't turn away from any one of them.

God knows exactly what we think in our hearts. We might be able to fool the people around us with our theatrical repentance which is nothing more than remorse which is being sorry that we got caught. But God sees us through with His infinite wisdom.

God says that He will not despise a contrite heart and broken spirit.

Psalm 51:16-17 For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart- These, O God, You will not despise.

This is the last time they faced each other until Saul died in the battlefield.

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) When we sin against the Lord, we need to repent from it right away.
- 2) True repentance demands an overhaul of our attitudes and thoughts.
- 3) Continuing willful sin will take us away from the intimate relationship with Jesus.