



KINGDOM POLITICS

Forty Daily Devotions
From the Book of 1 Samuel
(Based on the NKJV)

Introduction

It is important to read the Book of 1 Samuel with the story from the Book of Judges fresh on our minds. Judges concludes with this statement: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). The Book of 1 Samuel introduces the days when there *was* a king in Israel. The first part of the story centers on Israel’s first king, Saul, and then concludes with the introduction of God’s chosen king, David. Saul represented the kind of person that the people of Israel might want as a king. He was strong, tall, and probably quite handsome. Israel soon learned that the king *they* wanted was not the king that *God* wanted. It was only after letting His people try things their way that God then gave them the king that He wanted in David. Although Saul and David are the most prominent people in this historical book in the Bible, we will also read about some other people that God used in mighty ways to help His people. In this book, we will see that the stories of more common people like Hannah and Samuel are as important to God’s plan as those who served God as kings. As we read through this book, we will see that the struggles we face as we seek to serve God in our own days and times are very familiar with those faced by Samuel, David, and others listed in God’s mighty “Hall of Fame.”

Daily Reading Schedule

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
1	1 Samuel 1	4/03/23
2	1 Samuel 2:1-11	4/04/23
3	1 Samuel 2:12-36	4/05/23
4	1 Samuel 3	4/06/23
5	1 Samuel 4	4/07/23
6	1 Samuel 5	4/08/23
7	1 Samuel 6	4/09/23
8	1 Samuel 7	4/10/23
9	1 Samuel 8	4/11/23
10	1 Samuel 9	4/12/23
11	1 Samuel 10	4/13/23
12	1 Samuel 11	4/14/23
13	1 Samuel 12	4/15/23
14	1 Samuel 13	4/16/23
15	1 Samuel 14:1-26	4/17/23
16	1 Samuel 14:27-52	4/18/23
17	1 Samuel 15:1-16	4/19/23
18	1 Samuel 15:17-35	4/20/23
19	1 Samuel 16	4/21/23
20	1 Samuel 17:1-21	4/22/23

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
21	1 Samuel 17:22-41	4/23/23
22	1 Samuel 17:42-58	4/24/23
23	1 Samuel 18:1-16	4/25/23
24	1 Samuel 18:17-30	4/26/23
25	1 Samuel 19	4/27/23
26	1 Samuel 20:1-23	4/28/23
27	1 Samuel 20:24-42	4/29/23
28	1 Samuel 21	4/30/23
29	1 Samuel 22	5/01/23
30	1 Samuel 23	5/02/23
31	1 Samuel 24	5/03/23
32	1 Samuel 25:1-22	5/04/23
33	1 Samuel 25:23-44	5/05/23
34	1 Samuel 26	5/06/23
35	1 Samuel 27	5/07/23
36	1 Samuel 28	5/08/23
37	1 Samuel 29	5/09/23
38	1 Samuel 30:1-15	5/10/23
39	1 Samuel 30:16-31	5/11/23
40	1 Samuel 31	5/12/23

Day 1: 1 Samuel 1:1-28

“For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD...” (1 Samuel 1:27-28)

Hannah is such a well-known Bible character that it is hard to believe she is only mentioned here in 1 Samuel one and then only twice more in chapter two. The Hebrew name “Hannah” means “grace” or “favor,” and her story is one of a woman who truly lived up to her name! Hannah was greatly loved by her husband, Elkanah, but her days were filled with sorrow because she was childless. Times were different for women in those days, and a woman who could not provide her husband with a child – preferably a male child – was treated with great disrespect and dishonor. Verse 11 finds Hannah referring to her barren state as an “affliction.” In that same verse, as she prayed to God, Hannah asked that He might “remember” her and “not forget” her. Prior to King David bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, the Tabernacle was at Shiloh. Hannah’s story includes an account of a visit to Shiloh where she promised God that, if He were to give her a son, she would devote him fully to God’s service. God did not forget Hannah. Verse 19 specifically states that, upon their visit to worship in Shiloh, Elkanah and Hannah “rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and returned...to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah...and the LORD remembered her.” We will see that, just as God remembered Hannah’s *prayer*, Hannah remembered her *promise* to God.

Prayer Emphasis: Review your life to see if you have kept the promises you have made to God. **Refuse** to use promises to barter with God when you are in desperate need of an answer to prayer. **Believe** that God always keeps His promises and **strive** to do the same toward Him.

Day 2: 1 Samuel 2:1-11

“And Hannah prayed and said: ‘My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD. I smile at my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation.’” (1 Samuel 2:1)

The last verse of 1 Samuel 1 finds Hannah and Elkanah back at the Tabernacle in Shiloh where “they worshiped the LORD” (1:28). While there, Hannah began to make the necessary arrangements to keep her promise to give her son to God and His service. During her time of worship, she prayed, “My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD.” Hannah is about to make a great sacrifice to and for God, yet her heart is rejoicing. As a mother, you can rest assured that she was not rejoicing at the prospect of giving up her son. Her own testimony was that her rejoicing was “in the LORD.” In the Bible, the “horn” was often used as a picture of strength and power (see Psalm 75:4-5). In Bible times, people often thought the strength of a bull or ox could be determined by the size of its horns. I often smile as I read Hannah’s words, “I smile at my enemies” and wonder if it was Peninnah (Elkanah’s other wife) that she had in mind as she prayed those words to God. Yesterday, we read where Hannah’s rival “provoked her severely, to make her miserable” and she had done so on a regular basis (See “year by year” in 1 Samuel 1:6-7). Proverbs 16:7 says, “When a man’s (or woman’s) ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” Apparently, living in a way that pleases God will also help us to be at peace with our enemies!

Prayer Emphasis: Ask God to fill you with the kind of joy that allows you to be at peace with your enemies. **Remember** the words of James 4:10: “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will *lift you up*.” **Add** to that 1 Peter 5:6: “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may *exalt you in due time*.”

Day 3: 1 Samuel 2:12-36

“Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the LORD.” (1 Samuel 2:12)

While some translations refer to Eli’s sons as being “corrupt,” “wicked,” “worthless,” or even “scoundrels,” several translations refer to them as “sons of Belial.” It often surprises people to learn there was no actual person in the Bible named “Belial” and the word is not actually a proper name. The term “son of Belial” simply meant the person so-called was considered to be worthless and unreliable. We came across this word twice as we read through the Book of Judges. In Judges 19:22 and 20:13 we read about some “perverted” men. These “perverted” men are identified as “sons” or “children of Belial” in the KJV and a few other translations. In today’s focus verse, the NKJV translators chose the word “corrupt” to express the weaknesses of Eli’s sons. Much emphasis is placed on parents providing a good environment for children these days. However, a good environment is obviously not enough! We must never forget that Adam and Eve sinned against God by making some foolish, wicked choices while living in a perfect environment! In the case of the sons of Eli, we have two boys who grew up under a godly leader and in the environment of the Tabernacle and all its dedicated workers. Our focus verse defines the symptom: “Now the sons of Eli were corrupt.” It also provides the cause: “They did not know the LORD.”

Prayer Emphasis: In all your efforts to minister to others, **remember** that true ministry begins at home and your own children should be your most important disciples! **Determine** to be the same kind of person at home that they see you being at church.

Day 4: 1 Samuel 3:1-21

“Now the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation.” (1 Samuel 3:1)

Looking back at some of the verses we have already read in our brief time in 1 Samuel, we see this is the third time we are being told that Samuel “ministered to (or before) the LORD.” We first saw that phrase in 1 Samuel 2:11 and then again in 2:18. The first time God breathed the Hebrew word that is translated “ministered” in our focus verse was back in Genesis 39:4, where we are told that Joseph “served” Potiphar while he was under his care. This is the same word used to describe the work Aaron and his sons did as priests. In Numbers, this same word was used to describe the consecrated work of the Levites as they assisted the priests and “ministered” in the Tabernacle. With that in mind, look closely again at our focus verse and see that we are told that Samuel “ministered” to the LORD in the same way as all of those mentioned earlier while he was a “boy.” While most translations render the Hebrew word here as “boy” or “child,” some use the term “young man” in their place. While we are not sure how old Samuel was when the events of this story transpired, we do know that he was quite young. How interesting it is to see the difference between young Samuel and the two sons of Eli that we read about yesterday. Back in 1 Samuel 1:27 we read where Hannah declared, “For this child I prayed.” One might get the idea that she prayed for Samuel because she so greatly desired to have a child and then continued to pray for Samuel because she wanted him to be the kind of man who would live to see her vow to the Lord fulfilled. Never underestimate the power of a praying mother!

Prayer Emphasis: Remember, the times in which Samuel lived were earlier described as times when “everyone did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). **Refuse** to compromise on your commitment to God and His Word. **Dare** to be different and “minister to the Lord” on a daily basis.

Day 5: 1 Samuel 4:1-22

“...Eli...died, for the man was old and heavy. And he judged Israel forty years.” (1 Samuel 4:18)

Like Hannah, Eli is a well-known Bible character whose name is found only in 1 Samuel and then again in only one other place in the remainder of the Bible. It seems we have noted some of the darker times in this man's life (the corrupt actions of his sons) without giving equal time to the many good qualities that the Bible story indicates he possessed. Our focus verse states, “he judged Israel forty years.” Only one other man ever served God in that capacity after Eli – and that man was Samuel. Eli's “forty years” in that office was 17 years longer than any term served by any other person (Jael served 23 years). He was called of God to serve as a High Priest (1 Samuel 2:27-28) as well as a judge (1 Samuel 4:18). He was godly enough to turn his eyes upon a weeping woman (Hannah) kneeling and worshiping in the Tabernacle and to bestow upon her a priestly benediction by saying, “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him” (1:17) but human enough to seemingly turn a blind eye to the sin and selfish actions of his own sons. No father can fault Eli unless he has walked in those same shoes. We cannot allow 40 years of ministry to be darkened by these few aforementioned events that God recorded for our own warning and admonition.

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to allow your parental love to override your parental responsibilities. **Display** godly character in your own life and **exercise** godly discipline in your home, when necessary. **Love** your children and **lead** your children to follow you as you follow Christ.

Day 6: 1 Samuel 5:1-12

“Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.” (1 Samuel 5:1)

There is much to be said about the ark of God being removed from Ebenezer to Ashdod. The word used as the name of the place where the ark was being kept (Ebenezer) literally translates, “the stone of help.” Later, in 1 Samuel 7:12, we will read where God again uses this word and translates it for us! Ashdod was one of the five principal cities of the Philistines. Ashdod is mentioned 21 times in the Old Testament and was a city of great importance. It, along with four other cities (Gaza, Gath, Ekron, and Ashkelon), made up what was referred to as the Philistine Pentapolis. Ashdod was at its strongest during the times of King Saul. It is sad enough to see the ark fall into the hands of the Philistines, but it is sadder still to read what they did with it. We are told “the Philistines took the ark of God” and “brought it into the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon” (v. 2). Thus, the ark, the most important piece of furniture that God designed for His holy Tabernacle, was set up as a trophy to remind the Philistines of their victory over God's people. By setting the ark “by Dagon” the Philistines were showing great respect for the ark – but they were showing an even greater respect for their own false god. They were basically saying that their “god” was equal to or better than the God of Israel. I am sure that – at least at this point – the Philistines believed their victory over the Israelites was complete. Can you imagine the horror that must have filled their hearts when they arose and entered their temple to Dagon “early the next morning” and found their statue of Dagon “fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the LORD” (v. 4) as if it was bowing to the God of the Israelites?

Prayer Emphasis: Remember that God needs no person to bring glory to Himself! **Praise** God for allowing us to have a role in His being glorified in the eyes of men but **realize** we are the ones in need of Him, and not He in need of us!

Day 7: 1 Samuel 6:1-21

“Now the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.” (Samuel 6:1)

Seven months may not be a very long time, but I can only imagine that the seven months “the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines” were seven of the longest months in the lives of God’s people! A quick glimpse back at the plagues that came upon the Philistines after they disrespected the ark of God will reveal that God was serious about teaching these people a lesson. We read, “the hand of the LORD was heavy on the people of Ashdod, and He ravaged them and struck them with tumors” (5:6). In verse five, we learn this plague also had something to do with “rats.” The word translated “rats” here in the NKJV and other translations is translated “mice” in several others. This rodent, whether “mouse” or “rat,” was included as one of the “unclean” animals listed in Leviticus 11:29. In Isaiah 66:17, God once again reminded His people that these rodents were unclean creatures. Other than these two places, this word is not used again in the Old Testament anywhere except here in 1 Samuel 6. Some believe that the “tumors” were the result of a plague brought on by an influx of “rats” or “mice” that was supernaturally sent upon this people by God Himself. Verse six of today’s reading serves as a great reminder to us that the people of Canaan had heard stories of the great things God had done for His people and against their captors in Egypt! They quickly concluded that they needed to send the ark back to Israel and to send several considerable offerings along with it!

Prayer Emphasis: Waste no time lamenting over what you don’t have and take an inventory of what God has made available to you and then **use** it – to the best of your ability – in His grace and for His glory! **Refuse** to live a life of defeat and **dare** to make a difference in the world around you!

Day 8: 1 Samuel 7:1-17

“And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. He went from year to year on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places. But he always returned to Ramah, for his home was there. There he judged Israel, and there he built an altar to the LORD.” (1 Samuel 7:15-17)

The phrase “all the days of his life” reminds us that Samuel was a man chosen for God, from the time of his birth until the day of his death. This obedient son of a very faithful and obedient mother served God in several important positions during his life. We would do well to remember that this man and his remarkable ministry came to being because a once barren woman, Hannah, prayed to God for a child. When “the LORD remembered her” (1 Samuel 1:19), she became pregnant. God’s response to her prayers was the reason she named her son Samuel, which means, “the Lord hears.” Just as she had promised, after he was weaned, Hannah presented her son to God at Shiloh where he learned and served under the ministry of the high priest, Eli. Samuel grew, both physically and spiritually. He eventually served God as a prophet and then, as we have read here in our focus verse, as a judge. Most of the judges we studied about in the Book of Judges served in only one area. We are told that Samuel had a “circuit” of regions that he served as judge. After ministering in all of those areas, “he always returned to Ramah.” Ramah was the city of his birth and youth (1:19; 2:11), and its name literally means “the heights.”

Prayer Emphasis: **Commit** now to yielding “all the days” of your life to God. **Submit** to His will and plan one “day” at a time. **Strive** to make your home a high place for your children and family. **Pray** for ministers who travel for the Lord’s work and ask God to protect them along their way.

Day 9: 1 Samuel 8:1-22

“Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, ‘Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.’”
(1 Samuel 8:4-5)

Samuel was one of the godliest men in the Bible, but today’s glimpse into his life will reveal a lot about his humanity. As Samuel grew older, and his life drew nearer to the end, he “made his sons judges over Israel” (v. 1). As far as we know, these were the only “judges” ever appointed by man. Consequently, there is no mention of God’s Spirit ever coming upon them or of them ever serving as deliverers to Israel. Verse four indicates that Samuel had given up his role as a circuit-riding judge, and the people were now coming to him at his home in Ramah. It might have been that Samuel’s age was beginning to limit his ability to serve in the cities he had been ministering to, so he made Joel and Abijah his self-appointed assistants. Joel means “Jehovah is God” and Abijah means “God is my Father.” Unfortunately, neither of these two young men lived up to their names! Verse three states, “His sons did not walk in his ways.” But it says much more than that! Not only did they *not* do what Samuel would have done, they did things that Samuel would *never* have done. Verse three goes on to say, “they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.” It was then that “the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel” demanding that the office of judge be replaced with that of a king (v. 5).

Prayer Emphasis: **Pray** for leaders who will faithfully follow God’s will and Word. **Pray** first that we would have such leaders and, second, that God would hold them faithful to His calling and direction. Let someone in our church leadership know that you have prayed for them today.

Day 10: 1 Samuel 9:1-27

“There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish...a mighty man of power. And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders and upward he was taller than any of the people.” (1 Samuel 9:1-2)

Israel wanted a king, and they were about to get one! They stated they wanted a king “like all the nations” (8:5), and they were going to get one that pretty much met that order. The phrase, “a mighty man of power,” in the first of our focus verses refers to Kish, Saul’s father, and not to Saul himself. It is obvious that Saul came from a very influential family, and he was born into great wealth, but Saul had more going for him than that. He was also a “handsome person” who stood “taller than any of the people.” Unfortunately, all these statements were made in regard to Saul’s financial and physical qualifications with nothing being said about his spiritual qualifications. If Israel was to have a king who was like that of “all the nations,” then he was going to be the kind of man that worldly people would choose. It is important to note that Saul *looked* like a king but it is also important to note that he did not *live* like a king. The name “Saul” means “asked of God.” When the people asked for a king like that of “all the nations,” that is exactly what they got. Little did they know that the man who became their first king would be a man who, like most of the Israelites at that time, “did what was right in (his) own eyes” (see Judges 21:25). God used an everyday circumstance to orchestrate the meeting of Saul and Samuel. Three lost donkeys were used to get Saul to the place where he would meet Samuel.

Prayer Emphasis: **Refuse** to write anything off to coincidence. **Believe** that God can use common and ordinary circumstances and situations to bring us to where we need to be and to accomplish His mighty will. **Remain alert** in all things and **look** for God’s hand everywhere you go and in everything you do.

Day 11: 1 Samuel 10:1-27

“Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man.” (1 Samuel 10:6)

After some fairly common circumstances brought Saul face-to-face with Samuel, he was told that some very *uncommon* things were going to begin to happen in his life. Samuel prepared Saul for something he may not have ever experienced until this very important time in his life. He told Saul, “the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you, and you will prophesy...and be turned into another man.” Two key ingredients to a transformed life are mentioned in this statement. The word “prophesy” means to speak the Word of God. The “Spirit of the LORD” that was to come upon Saul was none other than the Holy Spirit of God. Through these two great spiritual influences, Saul was to “be turned into another man.” Some translations say Saul would be “changed” into another man while one goes so far as to say that he would be “transformed” into a different person. The word that is translated “turned” in our focus verse is translated “become” in at least one other place in the Bible. The word that is translated “another” is first found in Genesis 4:25 where, after the death of Abel, God gave Adam and Eve “another” son. Before his meeting with Samuel, and his subsequent anointing, Saul was probably not a very spiritual man. Therefore, for God to use him, he had to be “changed” or “turned into another man” by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Prayer Emphasis: Allow God’s transforming power to flow through your life as you spend time reading and meditating on His Word and walking under the direction and filling of His Holy Spirit. **Never underestimate** what God can do through a life that is submitted to His will.

Day 12: 1 Samuel 11:1-15

“Then Samuel said to the people, ‘Come, let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there.’ So all the people went to Gilgal, and there made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal...” (1 Samuel 11:14-15)

A quick look back at 1 Samuel 10:27 will reveal that there were some who were not ready to accept Saul as king. The Bible reveals there were some who questioned his ability to “save” or deliver them. Remember, Saul was the first king to reign after the time of the judges and the judges who ruled before him were sent to deliver, or save, God’s people from the hands of their enemies. It seems that the people saw a great difference in the lives of those who served as judges and this man who was to now serve as their king. A look back at the verse in chapter 10 also revealed that some of the people “despised him” and paid him no homage. After the Ammonites “came up and encamped against Jabesh Gilead” (11:1), God used Saul and his armies to utterly destroy that powerful enemy. We are told Saul’s forces “killed Ammonites until the heat of the day” and “those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together” (v. 11). After that great victory, the people were ready to deal harshly with those who earlier questioned Saul and refused to follow him. However, Saul intervened on the behalf of his critics (vs. 12-13). Samuel saw this as an opportunity to unite all of the people behind Saul and planned an official coronation for him in Gilgal. It wasn’t that Saul *was not* Israel’s king before this. He already, under God’s direction, had been anointed as king by Samuel (1 Samuel 10:1) and recognized as king by much of the nation of Israel (1 Samuel 10:24).

Prayer Emphasis: **Recognize** your responsibility to pray for those who are in national leadership and **pray** for them whether you like them or not. **Believe** that prayer can make a difference in all situations. **Refuse** to criticize any leader for whom you have not faithfully prayed.

Day 13: 1 Samuel 12:1-25

“Now Samuel said to all Israel: ‘Indeed I have heeded your voice in all that you said to me, and have made a king over you. And now here is your king, walking before you...’” (1 Samuel 12:1-2)

Almost every translation of the Bible begins 1 Samuel 12:1 with a connecting word such as “now,” “and,” or “then” to indicate what is now happening is a continuation of the events we have been reading about. After Saul’s victory over the Ammonites in 1 Samuel 11, Samuel knew that it was God’s plan for Israel to look to this king for leadership. His words were meant to help God’s people make the transition from Samuel’s leadership to Saul’s leadership. One cannot read these words without being reminded of another great man (John the Baptist) who knew when the time had come for him to step back and allow for another to assume the role of leadership. His words, “I have heeded to *your voice*,” provide some indication that Samuel wanted Israel to know that it was not *his* idea to appoint and anoint a king over Israel. Samuel’s statement of “my sons are with you” in verse two indicates that his sons had been relieved and removed from their positions as judges and they were, along with every other Israelite, to submit to Saul as king. Samuel would go on to say, “I have walked before you from my childhood to this day” (v. 2). That statement refers to the fact that Samuel led God’s people in the same way that a shepherd would “walk before” or lead his sheep. Now Saul was to assume that divine responsibility and shepherd the people.

Prayer Emphasis: Seek to transition well when it is time for others to assume roles of leadership. **Remember** that godly advice is much more valuable than human criticism. **Invest** in those whom God is calling into church leadership and **pray** for them daily.

Day 14: 1 Samuel 13:1-23

“And Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, ‘Let the Hebrews hear!’” (1 Samuel 13:3)

Pay careful attention to the words you are reading today because in them you find the first mention of one of the Bible’s greatest characters, Jonathan, Saul’s son. Throughout his record in the Bible, this young man proved himself to be a highly organized, skilled military leader. One of the greatest things to note in Jonathan’s life is his humility. He obviously led God’s people in a great victory, but had done so in such a way that the people said, “*Saul* had attacked a garrison of the Philistines” (13:4). One cannot help but notice how eager Saul was to take the credit for this victory. The Philistines reacted strongly to Israel’s rebellion. The Bible states that Israel became “an abomination to the Philistines” (v. 4). If Israel was willing to live in subjection to the Philistines and follow their rules, the Philistines were willing to allow them to dwell peaceably in what they considered to be *their* land. Jonathan’s attack made a bold statement to the Philistines that God’s people were no longer willing to live in subjection to anyone but God. As long as Israel kept in its *place*, the world had been willing to allow them to live in *peace*. But now that Israel was no longer willing to live under the Philistine’s *rule*, they were considered *rebels*. God’s enemies have not changed. They are still attempting to tell God’s people where and how they can worship and follow Him. It is time for God’s church to stand up and say that we are not going to submit to anyone but God!

Prayer Emphasis: Show and tell the world where you stand but **be prepared** for the world to stand against you! Jonathan means “God has given.” **Seek** to be a “gift” from God to your family, your friends, and your church.

Day 15: 1 Samuel 14:1-26

“Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, ‘Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few.’ So his armor bearer said to him, ‘Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you, according to your heart.’” (1 Samuel 14:6-7)

Early in today’s Bible story, we find King Saul “sitting...under a pomegranate tree” (14:2). I find it interesting that “Ichabod’s brother” was with Saul at the time (v. 3). We first read about Ichabod in 1 Samuel 4:21 when a child was born to Eli’s daughter-in-law at the time the ark was captured and taken away to a foreign land. Out of her grief, the woman named her child “Ichabod,” which means “the glory has departed.” One must wonder if this association with the name “Ichabod” might give some indication that the glory of Saul’s reign as king was soon to depart. Nevertheless, while Saul was *sitting*, his son, Jonathan, was busy *standing*! There are three important points to be made about Jonathan from our focus verses. First, Jonathan *stood against* God’s enemies. He said to his associate, “Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised.” Second, in doing this, Jonathan clearly *stood up* for God. He believed “nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few.” He believed in God’s promises and power to the point that he was willing to risk his own life for the One in whom he trusted. Finally, because Jonathan stood against God’s enemies and stood up for God’s power, he most naturally *stood out* to his followers. His courage became contagious, and his armor bearer seemed to be willing to follow him anywhere.

Prayer Emphasis: Determine to be obedient to God’s commands even when you do not fully understand what He is doing. **Realize** that every spiritual victory must come from His mighty hand. **Do** what He commands you to do, and you will soon see Him doing all that He has promised to do for you.

Day 16: 1 Samuel 14:27-52

“Then Saul built an altar to the LORD. This was the first altar that he built to the LORD.” (1 Samuel 14:35)

I find it difficult to pass over this important verse without taking the time to consider – or reconsider – the preeminence of prayer. While the NKJV and other translations simply state “this was the first altar that (Saul) built to the LORD,” several others take a little more specific position when they read, “It was the first *time* he had built an altar to the LORD.” How strange it seems that it has taken Saul this long to approach God at an altar, but we have read before where Saul seemed to lack interest in spiritual matters. Back in chapter nine, when his servant wanted to visit with the “man of God,” Saul simply wanted to return home to his father. Then in chapter 10, we saw how the people reacted with great surprise to Saul spending time with the prophets and even prophesying along with them. Building an altar was a right and good thing to do but building it after-the-fact was a wrong way to approach God. How sad it is when Christians only come to God when they feel as if they need to take some time to appease Him for the sinful way in which they have been living. We, like Saul, would do better to seek God’s face prior to making our plans and taking any action. Surely Saul knew better! And we, too, should know better! The best time to build an altar (go to God in prayer) is at the outset of our every endeavor for God and His glory.

Prayer Emphasis: Make it a rule in life to **pray first!** **Involve** God in your every spiritual decision and **remember** that all decisions have a spiritual impact and implication in your life. **Commit** now to daily Bible reading and prayer.

Day 17: 1 Samuel 15:1-16

“Samuel also said to Saul, ‘The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD.’” (1 Samuel 15:1)

The fact that Samuel spoke with such boldness to the king is a clear indication that he considered Saul to be only a political and military leader to God’s people and, even though Samuel was now “old and gray headed” (1 Samuel 12:2), he still considered himself to be Israel’s spiritual leader. And, as a spiritual leader, Samuel could not have given Saul any better advice than to “heed the voice of the words of the LORD.” But Samuel provided Saul with more than a generic command to “heed...the words of the LORD.” He followed that statement with a “thus says the LORD of hosts” statement that clearly identified the message he believed God wanted him to deliver to the king (v. 2). What follows has become one of the most preached about events in the life of King Saul. Even after God clearly commanded Saul to destroy all that belonged to the Amalekites, he failed to do so and returned with “the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good” because he was “unwilling to utterly destroy them” (v. 9). After the battle was over, “Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, ‘Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD!’” (v. 13). Imagine Saul’s surprise when Samuel asked, “What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?” (v. 14). I am sure Saul tried his best to sound as spiritual as possible when he attempted to convince Samuel that he spared “the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice to the LORD” (v. 15), but the story will continue tomorrow, and we will see that neither Samuel nor God were pleased with Saul’s disobedience.

Prayer Emphasis: **Pray** that God will fill your heart with a strong desire to “heed the voice of the words of the LORD.” **Remember** the importance obedience plays in our relationship with God and **choose** to live a life that pleases Him over all others.

Day 18: 1 Samuel 15:17-35

“So Samuel said...the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, ‘Go, and utterly destroy the sinners...and fight against them until they are consumed.’ Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?” (1 Samuel 15:17-19)

It would do every leader well to remember that good *leaders* must also be good *followers*. I have found this point to be more important in the spiritual realm than in any other realm in life. Even though Saul was a king, God still had the authority to send him “on a mission,” and when He sent Saul “on a mission,” He expected Saul to follow His commands fully. Although Saul accomplished *some* of what God told Him to do, he had not fully obeyed God. God’s question, “Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD?” is a clear indication that God considered Saul’s partial obedience as nothing less than total disobedience. It is also quite clear that God considered Saul’s partial obedience to be “evil in the sight of the LORD.” It is important to constantly remind ourselves that 1 Samuel follows on the heels of the times of the judges when “there was no king in Israel” and “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). It seems as if this attitude was slow to be removed from God’s people – even after He finally allowed them to have a king!

Prayer Emphasis: **Refuse** to settle for anything less than full and complete obedience to God and His commands. **Believe** that God deserves better than “good enough” and Christians with a “that’ll do” attitude towards ministry and service.

Day 19: 1 Samuel 16:1-23

“Now the LORD said to Samuel, ‘How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided myself a king among his sons.’” (1 Samuel 16:1)

Many years ago, I heard an evangelist say, “Sin will always take you farther than you want to go and cost you more than you want to pay.” We are nearing a time in the life of King Saul when he is about to learn a severe lesson about the awful price of disobedience. If someone picked up their Bible and randomly opened it to 1 Samuel 16:1, they would get the impression that Saul was dead. The word that is translated “mourn” in that verse is the same word that is translated “mourned” when it is first used in the Bible to describe Jacob’s reaction to the false news that his son Joseph was dead. However, Samuel was not mourning Saul’s death but his failure to be obedient to God. The final verse of yesterday’s reading mentioned Samuel not seeing Saul again “until the day of his death” and “Samuel mourned for Saul” (15:35). God’s command for Samuel to “fill your horn with oil” must have excited the old prophet and judge at the prospect of God anointing a new person to be king! As excited as Samuel might have been that God was ready to anoint a king of His own choosing, he must have been equally surprised that God would select that king from the small town of Bethlehem. God was very specific. Samuel was to go to the town of Bethlehem and to the family of Jesse. It was from “among his sons” that Samuel would find the man God had selected. There was another reason why Samuel might have been surprised to hear the new king would be from the family of Jesse. If you recall, Jesse was the grandson of Ruth and Boaz – and Ruth was a Gentile!

Prayer Emphasis: Believe that God always knows what He is going to do next. **Rely** on Him to reveal His plan to you in due time. **Fully commit** now to accepting and obeying God’s every command.

Day 20: 1 Samuel 17:1-21

“Now the Philistines gathered their armies together to battle, and were gathered at Sochoh, which belongs to Judah...and Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and they encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array against the Philistines.” (1 Samuel 17:1-2)

As I have mentioned before, the words “now,” “and,” or “then” often serve as connecting words to help us see what we are now reading is closely connected to or a continuation of what we read before. Most translations begin today’s first focus verse with the word “now” or “and.” It seems the enemies of God’s people might have had some knowledge of the problems of Saul, so they planned an all-out, full-force attack against him and his people while he was struggling with some serious spiritual and emotional issues. The fact that they “gathered their armies together” indicates they planned to send all their forces into what they hoped to be their final battle against Israel. While the Philistines “were gathered at Sochoh...Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together” and “encamped in the Valley of Elah.” A full reading of this chapter, and the famous story of David’s confrontation with Goliath, will help us see that Satan sends forth his best against us when he thinks he has caught us at our worst. But always remember God always has a plan! In this case He used a young shepherd boy with a sling to defeat a Philistine champion who stood somewhere between 8’5” to 9’2” and was strong enough to carry armor that weighed somewhere between 150 to 200 pounds!

Prayer Emphasis: Expect Satan to fight dirty! **Never** underestimate his hatred for God and anyone who chooses to follow God. **Remain** steadfast in your faith in spite of the circumstances that come against you.

Day 21: 1 Samuel 17:22-41

“...there was the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, coming up from the armies of the Philistines...and all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were dreadfully afraid.” (1 Samuel 17:23-24)

Today’s Bible reading begins with Jesse, David’s father, sending him to take some supplies to his older brothers who were gathered with the men who made up the Israelite forces that were facing the armies of the Philistines. As David talked with his brothers, “the champion” of the Philistines, “Goliath,” came forth to repeat his challenge that a man of Israel come forward to face him in battle. He issued this same challenge twice a day for 40 days (17:16). Upon their first glimpse of Goliath, and after his first challenge was issued to them, we read that “all Israel” was “greatly afraid” (17:11). After 40 days, the initial impact of this man’s presence had not weakened. Our focus verses end with the statement, “When they (the fighting men of Israel) saw the man” they “fled from him and were dreadfully afraid.” The word translated “dreadfully” here is the same word translated “greatly afraid” back in verse 11. This word is often translated “exceedingly” in many translations of the Bible and is used to describe situations where man’s emotions were basically off the charts, or beyond any measure known before. You might say the fighting men of Israel were more afraid than they had ever been in their lives. I am sure their confidence was not bolstered in the least when they saw the young champion that Saul chose to send out to fight against the Philistine giant. I think you know how the story goes from here!

Prayer Emphasis: Ask God for the kind of faith that overcomes fear. **Remember** that Gideon issued a statement that any soldier who was “fearful and afraid” could leave before the battle began and saw 22,000 of his army of 32,000 turn and go back home (Judges 7:3)! Follow David’s example and **recall** times in your life when God won a great victory for you in spite of the odds (17:34-37)!

Day 22: 1 Samuel 17:42-58

“And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him; for he was only a youth, ruddy and good looking.” (1 Samuel 17:42)

While most translations of the Bible state Goliath “disdained” David, some try to explain the giant’s attitude towards his smaller opponent by saying he “sneered at” him or “despised” him. One translation says he “looked down on David with disgust.” The word translated “disdained” here means to show “disrespect” for something or someone. The first time it is found in the Bible, it is used to express how Esau “despised his birthright” when he was willing to trade it for a bowl of stew (Genesis 25:34). The only other times this word is found in 1 Samuel it was used to describe the way the sons of Eli chose to “despise” God by showing no respect for His regulations regarding the offerings made to Him by the people and when the people “despised” and began to show no respect for Saul soon after he became their king (1 Samuel 2:30 and 10:27). Some think the words “looked about” indicate David was so much less than Goliath expected that he had a hard time believing the boy who was marching against him was Israel’s champion, so he was looking about to find his real opponent. It goes without saying that there was nothing about David that struck fear into the heart of Goliath! Goliath’s question, “Am I a dog?” (v. 43) is an indication that this giant considered his doing battle with a boy to be an insult.

Prayer Emphasis: Pray for our youth! **Understand** that many of them are facing their own “giants” every day as they attend school and live in homes where their parents do not support their church attendance. **Give** them a warm smile and some words of appreciation and encouragement at your next opportunity.

Day 23: 1 Samuel 18:1-16

“Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul...Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.” (1 Samuel 18:1 & 3)

A quick glimpse back at the closing verses of chapter 17 will help us match the “then” to the “when” of today’s first focus verse. You have to love the fact that yesterday’s reading concluded with David returning “from the *slaughter* of the Philistine” (17:57) and entering into a debriefing meeting with King Saul. Today’s verses begin at the point when “he (David) had finished speaking to Saul” and go on to describe for us what might have been the most remarkable and memorable friendship in the Bible. Jonathan was the son of Saul and a man who earlier had his own one-man war against the Philistines when he and only his armor bearer attacked them and killed 20 men (14:6-14). Jonathan and David had a lot in common. They were approximately the same age, though Jonathan was probably a little older. They were both brave men who were bold in battle. Both displayed a great faith in God, and were both men of action. Most importantly, both young men had a real, personal relationship with God. Jonathan and David *could* have chosen to focus on their obvious differences. Jonathan was the first-born son of a king (1 Chronicles 9:39), and David was the last-born son of a farmer. This made Jonathan more than *a* prince, but *the* crown prince that would most naturally be the next king of Israel. Whether your Bible says their souls were “knit,” “joined,” “bound,” or “one in spirit” the idea is they found a common purpose in their desire to bring honor and glory to God.

Prayer Emphasis: When it comes to friendship, or any other relationship, **choose** wisely! I firmly believe Christians should only date, marry, and establish close friendships and relationships with other Christians who are committed to serving the Lord.

Day 24: 1 Samuel 18:17-30

“Thus Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal, Saul’s daughter loved him; and Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul became David’s enemy continually.” (1 Samuel 18:28-29)

It is obvious that David was growing closer and closer to God and in his importance to the history of the nation of Israel. At the same time, his relationship with Saul was continuing to deteriorate, and Saul was withdrawing further and further from David. How sad it is to read that “Saul became David’s enemy.” The word “became” implies that things were once different between Saul and David – they had not always been enemies. The word “enemy” implies Saul began to view David in the same way he viewed people, like the Philistines, who battled against him. The statement really says a lot more though. It goes on to say, “Saul became David’s enemy *continually*.” The word translated “continually” in our second focus verse is most often translated “day” in the Bible. The second most popular translation of that word is “time.” The idea the Holy Spirit is impressing upon us is that because of fear and jealousy, the relationship between Saul and David had come to the point where there was never a “day” or “time” that Saul did not hate him and seek to do him harm. It is not natural that Christians wage war against other Christians. Nothing could possibly please Satan more than to see believers at odds one with another and refusing to forgive one another for their trespasses and sins.

Prayer Emphasis: Remember that the decision to forgive someone is not based on emotion but instruction. **Choose** to forgive and forget and leave the judging to God. **Rest** in the knowledge that God will discipline His own children and He does not need our help in doing so.

Day 25: 1 Samuel 19:1-24

“Now Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David; but Jonathan, Saul’s son, delighted greatly in David.” (1 Samuel 19:1)

Saul’s jealousy and hatred for David put Jonathan in a difficult place. We already read where Jonathan loved David and learned that God made a wonderful bond of friendship between these two men that was sealed by a covenant (1 Samuel 18:1-4). Even though Jonathan was the official crown prince of Israel, and the next in line to the throne, he knew David was destined to be God’s choice as the next king. Now he found himself in a place where his father demanded that he kill David. Saul’s unchristian attitude toward David put more than his own son in a difficult place – it also put “all his servants” in a difficult place. Back in 1 Samuel 18:5 we read where “David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely...and he was accepted in the sight of *all* the people and also in the sight of Saul’s servants.” The word “all” was important in that verse, and it is as equally important in today’s focus verse. The “all” in our focus verse indicates that there was no one to whom Saul had anything good to say about David. It is always disheartening to hear one Christian criticizing and condemning another Christian, but it is sadder still to meet a believer (so-called) who has nothing good to say about other believers! The saddest part is that Saul did not want to remain alone in his hatred for David. He desired for others to hate David to the point that they would take his life if they were ever afforded an opportunity to do so.

Prayer Emphasis: **Realize** that we are always putting other believers in a difficult place when we demand they choose sides in our personal differences with others. **Refuse** to be overly critical and never allow jealousy and personal resentment to lead you to attack your fellow Christians.

Day 26: 1 Samuel 20:1-23

“And you shall not only show me the kindness of the LORD while I still live, that I may not die; but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever...” (1 Samuel 20:14-15)

Today’s focus verses contain a part of the covenant that Jonathan desired for David to make with him. He requested that David show “the kindness of the LORD” to him and his family as long as he lived and that David would do everything possible to protect Jonathan’s life. However, the promise was to go farther than that. Jonathan also made this additional request of David: “You shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever.” In other words, Jonathan was asking David to do all that he could for him as long as he lived and then to watch after his family after he was gone. There is much more to this second request than meets the eye. In ancient times, when one family dynasty replaced another, it was the common practice of the incoming family to kill all potential heirs or rulers from the outgoing family. Jonathan knew David and his descendants would one day rule over Israel so Jonathan wanted David to promise that neither he nor his descendants would kill or mistreat his descendants. So David and Jonathan made a covenant in which Jonathan pledged to protect David’s life if David would pledge to protect the lives of Jonathan’s descendants. One has only to read the beautiful story of Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 9:1-9) to see that David later honored the covenant he made with Jonathan. 2 Samuel 21:7 tells us, “The king (David) spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan...because of the LORD’s oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.”

Prayer Emphasis: **Look for** an opportunity in which you might show “the kindness of the LORD” to someone today. **Determine** to keep your promises to God and to others. **Value** your friends and **seek** to be loyal to them at all times and in all situations.

Day 27: 1 Samuel 20:24-42

“...and they wept together, but David more so. Then Jonathan said to David, ‘Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the LORD, saying, May the LORD be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever.’ So he arose and departed...” (1 Samuel 20:41-42)

As far as I know, the Bible never focuses on the friendship between two men like it does on the friendship enjoyed by Jonathan and David. When the time came for them to part, “they wept together.” As far as they knew, they might never see one another again. In fact, as far as we know from the Bible, they met only one other time, which was shortly before Jonathan’s death. The Holy Spirit does not hesitate to mention the fact that David wept “more so.” There were probably many reasons for David to weep at this important time in his life. First, he probably wept because of his *friend*, because of the many sacrifices that Jonathan made and because of those he would make in the future. I am sure David believed Jonathan had been a better friend to him than he had been to Jonathan. Also, David probably wept because of his *future*. He knew that by fleeing from Saul, he was resigning himself to the life of a fugitive. He knew he was going to be cut off from everything that had been important to him, including his dearest friend. Yet there is another reason for which David probably wept. He might also have wept because of his *faith*. Even though this was a very sad moment for David, he could “go in peace” because he believed, whether present or apart, Jonathan was his true friend, and he could be depended upon to be David’s friend to the end. He had faith that his friendship with Jonathan was a “forever” friendship that God put within their hearts and their bond to one another was based on much more than human kindness.

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to be the kind of person who takes friendships for granted. **Thank God** for your true friends and **pray** for them on a regular basis. **Tell** someone how much their friendship means to you today.

Day 28: 1 Samuel 21:1-15

“Then David arose and fled...and went to Achish the king of Gath. And the servants of Achish said to him, ‘Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of him to one another in dances saying: Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?’” (1 Samuel 21:10-11)

First Timothy 6:9-12 includes some of the final words Paul ever wrote. In those final words the aged apostle advised his good friend, Timothy, to have the wisdom to know when to *flee*. Speaking of this world’s possessions, the “desire to be rich,” and “the love of money,” he told Timothy to “*flee* these things.” He then went on to advise Timothy to have the wisdom to know when to *follow*. He admonished Timothy to “pursue (follow after) righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience (and) gentleness.” But Paul was by no means finished. He also advised his good friend to know when to *fight*. He urged his young preacher friend to “*fight* the good fight of faith.” There is great wisdom found in knowing when to flee and when to fight. For David, this was a time to flee. Because of his experience with Goliath, David knew he could fight. I am certain he knew he would fight many battles for God in the future, but for now, it was time to flee. I am also certain that it was only God who helped him to discern this – and only God who could sustain him when he did. Sometimes it takes more courage to flee than it does to fight, and it certainly takes great wisdom to know the difference.

Prayer Emphasis: Trust God to give you the *courage* to allow men to think you’re a *coward*. **Pursue** only those things that bring honor to God. **Remove** yourself from any situation that is more for your personal benefit than God’s ultimate glory.

Day 29: 1 Samuel 22:1-23

“David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam...and everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him. So he became captain over them. And there were about four hundred men with him.” (1 Samuel 22:1-2)

Once again, we encounter the word “therefore” in our Scripture reading. We have often been reminded to ask ourselves an important question when we see this word in the Bible. When we see the word “therefore,” we should always ask ourselves what God put it “there for.” In this case, the therefore refers to the fact that David learned he had no permanent place with the people of “Achish the king of Gath” (21:12), so he “*therefore* departed...and escaped to the cave of Adullam.” Adullam means “refuge,” and refuge was exactly what David needed at this critical time in his life. He knew he couldn’t stay where he was, but he also knew he couldn’t yet be where he wanted to be. So, God prepared a place of refuge for David to hide until it was God’s time for him to be elsewhere. We do not know exactly what David was thinking when he was hiding in “the cave of Adullam,” but we do know David eventually learned that his “refuge” was not to be found in a *place* but in a *person*. The next time you read through the Book of Psalms, look for the many times David referred to God as his “refuge.” In Psalm 71:7, the psalmist (probably David) said to God, “You are my strong *refuge*.” God may direct us to many places in this life that will provide us with a time of *respite* from our trials and tribulations, but He alone is to be our *refuge*. David learned this important lesson, and we would do well to do the same.

Prayer Emphasis: Believe that our only true *refuge* is found in our *relationship* with God. **Refuse** to expect people to provide that which can only come from God. **Lower** your expectations of people and **raise** your expectations of God.

Day 30: 1 Samuel 23:1-29

“Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, ‘Shall I go and attack these Philistines?’ And the LORD said to David, ‘Go and attack the Philistines, and save Keilah.’” (1 Samuel 23:2)

Once we have learned the importance of the word “therefore” in the Bible, it becomes a reflex action to ask the appropriate question that should come to mind when we read it. In this case, David was once again facing a decision about whether it was time to *flee* or to *fight*. When David learned of the hostile actions the Philistines were taking against the city of Keilah, I am sure his instinct was to *fight*. However, David learned long ago that his actions, and reactions, were not to be based on *human instincts* but on *heavenly instructions*. “*Therefore* David inquired of the LORD” seeking His divine guidance on whether or not he should “go and attack” the Philistines. David might have had a pretty good idea that he was to soon transition from *fleeing* to *fighting* when, after he “inquired of the LORD” for David, Ahimelech gave him the “sword of Goliath the Philistine” (22:9-10). Nevertheless, David knew his response to the actions of the Philistines could not be based on anything less than clear instructions from God. In this case, “the LORD said to David, ‘Go and attack the Philistines, and save Keilah.’” Even though God made His intentions known to David, David’s men obviously had not heard from God themselves because they were fearful of engaging the Philistines in battle at that time (23:3). So, to be doubly sure of God’s desires, David unashamedly “inquired of the LORD once again” (23:4) before going to Keilah.

Prayer Emphasis: Seek full assurance from God before taking any action that might endanger the lives and welfare of others. **Refuse** to allow men to have the final say in what you do or how you live for God.

Day 31: 1 Samuel 24:1-22

“Look, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, ‘I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD’s anointed.’” (1 Samuel 24:10)

When an opportunity to kill Saul was presented to David, his men clearly believed he should do it. They “said to him, ‘This is the day of which the LORD said to you, Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you’” (24:4). However, David had been long removed from the attitude that earlier prevailed during the times of the judges when “in those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). At least for David, there was now a “king in Israel,” and David was not going to dishonor that king without God’s express permission. Again, it may have been David’s *instinct* to destroy his enemy, but he was not going to do it without God’s *instruction* to do so. Earlier in this chapter, we are told David “restrained his servants” and “did not allow them to rise against Saul” by telling them, “The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD” (24:6-7). It was time for David now to practice what he preached, so he spared Saul’s life and ignored his men when they “urged” him “to kill” Saul. However right it might have seemed in their eyes that David should kill Saul, David knew that it would never be right in God’s eyes, and he refused to do so.

Prayer Emphasis: Remember your *flesh* will often lead you to act in a way that is not according to *faith*. **Memorize** Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”

Day 32: 1 Samuel 25:1-22

“Then Samuel died; and the Israelites gathered together and lamented for him, and buried him at his home in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the Wilderness of Paran.” (1 Samuel 25:1)

Although this is not the last mention of Samuel in the book we are now reading, or in the Bible as a whole, it is, however, the record of Samuel’s death. However great a man Samuel might have been, he was still just a man. The Bible states that, “it is appointed for men to die” (Hebrews 9:27), and the time for Samuel’s “appointment” had arrived. We know Samuel was a man who was dedicated to God and His service, but as godly and committed as he was, he was not spared from death. It seems as if all other concerns were put on hold as “the Israelites gathered together and lamented” for this great man. He was “buried...at his home in Ramah.” After the funeral, David did what we all must do after such losses. We are told “David arose and went down to the Wilderness of Paran.” Like David, we must all remember that God’s work does not rest entirely on the shoulders of one man and His work is to continue even after the greatest of losses. God’s work may begin with one man, but it never ends with one man. Even though the people of Israel may not have fully appreciated or honored Samuel during his life (1 Samuel 8:1-7), they, at the least, took time to honor him at his death.

Prayer Emphasis: Heed the admonition of Romans 13:7 and “**Render** therefore to all their due...honor to whom honor.” One of the greatest truths that we will ever learn as Christians is that we are never commanded to *like* everyone, but we *are* commanded to *love* everyone.

Day 33: 1 Samuel 25:23-44

“Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant. For the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the LORD, and evil is not found in you throughout your days.” (1 Samuel 25:28)

The words recorded in our focus verse, and other verses throughout today’s reading, were spoken by Abigail, the wife of Nabal (see 1 Samuel 25:3). This woman’s name means “my Father rejoices,” and she certainly played a great role in helping David to live in such a way that his heavenly Father could “rejoice” in his decisions and actions. Yesterday we read where David sent some of his men to Nabal, asking for provisions which Nabal adamantly refused to give to them (25:8-11). When David’s men returned to him with Nabal’s negative and disrespectful response to his request for help, David told his men to get their swords and go with him to see Nabal. When Abigail heard of her husband’s selfish actions, she went to meet David and his men with an abundant supply of bread, wine, and grain. When she “saw David, she dismounted quickly from (her) donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground” (v. 23) humbly asking David to “hear the words of (his) maidservant” (v. 24). After her husband’s death, this woman became David’s wife and later dwelled with him at Gath (See 1 Samuel 27:3). She was with David when he was anointed king of Israel at Hebron (2 Samuel 2:1-2) where she bore David a son named, Chileab (2 Samuel 3:3). It is interesting David would name the child “Chileab” because the name means “restraint.” As great a man as David was in the eyes of God and His people, he was also a man who knew the wisdom of listening to the advice of a good woman. It is possible he may have named his son in honor of this valuable lesson on restraint that he learned from Abigail.

Prayer Emphasis: Allow today’s lesson to serve as another reminder to **pray** for the women in our lives. **Respect** the many godly women who have been used by God to teach us how to act and to react in certain situations and circumstances. **Pray** for the women’s ministries of our church today.

Day 34: 1 Samuel 26:1-25

“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.” (1 Samuel 26:11)

One must believe David knew the time was coming when God would deal with Saul. At the same time, David knew it was God’s place to decide when that time should come and exactly what actions were to be taken. Once again, David found himself with an opportunity to kill Saul. In verse eight, we read where Abishai encouraged him to do so. A careful look at the verse indicates Abishai was prepared to kill Saul on David’s behalf, but he would not do so without David’s permission. In that verse, he begged David to let him kill the king and assured him he would do it quickly with one blow. “But David said to Abishai, ‘Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD’s anointed, and be guiltless?’” (v. 9). David went on to say to his faithful follower, “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” (v. 10). That was when David wisely said, “The LORD forbid that I should stretch out *my* hand against the LORD’s anointed.” David was great enough to be a king but humble enough to know that God did not need him to accomplish His purposes with Saul.

Prayer Emphasis: Follow David’s example and choose to live by God’s instructions rather than human instinct. **Realize** that David once again chose to allow God to deal with his enemy on His own time and in His own way. **Seek** to **follow** that godly example.

Day 35: 1 Samuel 27:1-12

“And David said in his own heart, ‘Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines...’” (1 Samuel 27:1)

We have learned of many dangerous situations in David’s life as we have read our way through the Book of 1 Samuel. Back in 1 Samuel 17:34-37, we read where he was forced to fight with a lion and then a bear as he sought to protect his father’s sheep. In that same chapter, we read where he fought and killed the giant, Goliath. Since that time, we read where he was forced to flee from the hateful hand of Saul for many years. There is no question that David was forced to face many dangerous situations and many dreadful foes in his life, but he is now going to face two of the most fearsome enemies any believer can face – despair and discouragement. The words, “David said in his own heart” provide some indication that David never spoke these words to another human being. However, he was now ready to admit to himself that there was a strong possibility he was never going to escape “the hand of Saul.” Life had become so treacherous and dreadful to David that he considered living among the Philistines as his only hope for survival. So, David made the decision to leave the land of Israel to go and dwell among the Philistines. If Saul demanded for him to do so, David would not have left Israel for a pagan country, but now he is allowing despair and discouragement to become more powerful enemies than even Saul. How painful it is to see a believer conclude that he would be treated better, and more fairly, among the heathen than among his own brethren. It was then sad to read that David referred to himself as “your servant” when he spoke to the Philistine ruler (v. 5).

Prayer Emphasis: Recognize the power of discouragement. However implausible it may seem to us, there are many discouraged Christians who come to believe the world will treat them more fairly than God’s own people! **Refuse** to allow your own judgments and opinions to drive others away from church.

Day 36: 1 Samuel 28:1-25

“When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him...” (1 Samuel 28:5-6)

There are many sad statements made about Saul in the Bible, but what can be sadder than the comment that we have read about him today. At a time when the Philistines were encamped against Israel, Saul became “afraid, and his heart trembled greatly.” We read about Saul doing many things as we covered this book in the Bible, but praying has not been one of them. And now, when his *fear* drives him to do what his *faith* has not led him to do, Saul “inquired of the LORD.” Like many Christian’s today, Saul only turned to God in a time of great desperation. When he could not handle things himself, he finally decided to add God to the equation. Note the reception Saul received from God. We are told “the LORD did not answer him.” The closing words of verse six indicate that Saul sought advice from God through several avenues, but none brought an answer. We have read in 1 Samuel 24:16-20 where Saul admitted that he knew it was God’s will for David to be king, and in 1 Samuel 26:21 we read where Saul also admitted he had been foolish in his actions against David. Saul was a man who knew God’s will but intentionally dishonored it. He is now learning that God will sometimes turn a deaf ear to those who have refused to listen to Him.

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to treat God like some kind of glorified “Roadside Assistance” service. **Obey** His commands and **honor** His will in your life. **Avoid** allowing your own pride and arrogance to bring you to the kind of place where Saul found himself in today’s Scripture reading.

Day 37: 1 Samuel 29:1-11

“Then the princes of the Philistines said, ‘What are these Hebrews doing here?’” (1 Samuel 29:3)

It was strange enough to read about David moving to the land of the Philistines, but now we read that he is attending a gathering of that country’s military leaders where an attack on Israel is being planned. What makes this all seem so unbelievable is that this meeting was being held “at Aphek” (v. 1), which was where the Philistines defeated Israel many years earlier and captured the ark (4:1 & 10-11). Verse two records the parading of the troops, which represented the armies of the various nations and the fact that David and his men “passed in review at the rear with Achish,” king of Gath. When David and his men were noticed, “the princes of the Philistines said, ‘What are these Hebrews doing here?’” How sad it is to read that these Philistines could see what David refused to see and they could clearly remember what David chose to try to forget! He was different from them. He served a different God and he stood for different things. It is obvious that the Philistines were surprised to see Israelites among them, and they did not trust them to fight with them against their own people. Although Achish tried to defend him, David and his men were eventually dismissed and sent home. It is painful to see this sad chapter in David’s life being relived on a daily basis today! Here we have the children of the world holding the children of God to a higher standard than that which God’s people had set for themselves!

Prayer Emphasis: **Live** up to your name! **Seek** to be distinctively Christian in all that you say and do. Be **aware** that the world is watching and expecting to see Christ in us as we walk through this world. **Shine** the Lord’s light as brightly as possible today and every day of your life!

Day 38: 1 Samuel 30:1-15

“Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.” (1 Samuel 30:6)

When David and his men were sent away from Aphek, they marched for what must have been three long days to their home in Ziklag. This trip would have required an average of approximately 25 miles marched each of those three days. It goes without saying that David’s army was no doubt tired, sore, and hungry by the time they reached their home city. In Bible times, it was customary for the inhabitants of an army’s city to come out to meet them as they approached their home, but no one was going to come out to meet David and his men on this day because, in their absence, “the Amalekites...had taken captive the women and those who were there, from small to great” (v. 1-2) and left the city burning behind them. As they neared their homes, the Israelite warriors could probably see the smoke from the fires that the Amalekites set and, no doubt, began to fear the worst. Their fears became reality when “David and his men came to the city, and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive” (v. 3). We read in verse four that these *warriors* turned to *weepers* and cried until they could cry no more. It was then that David learned a hard lesson about leadership. Just as it had been for Moses many years before (Exodus 17:4), “the people spoke of stoning him” because of their distressing situation. David had probably heard of that past situation and might have even used it to help him as he “strengthened himself in the LORD his God.”

Prayer Emphasis: **Believe** that the Bible has an answer for every situation. **Look** for strength and guidance in the stories of the saints who have served before and **believe** that you serve the same living and loving God that saw them through their trials and tribulations.

Day 39: 1 Samuel 30:16-31

“So David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away...” (1 Samuel 30:18)

The beautiful declaration of David’s victory found in today’s focus verse reminds us of at least two things we read about yesterday. Upon returning to his home and seeing it burned and his family taken captive, David “strengthened himself in the LORD his God” (see v. 6) and “inquired of the LORD” (see v. 8) as to what he should do next. Because of these two very wise actions, today we read that “David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away.” However, it is important to note that even after God responded to David’s inquiry with the definite command to “pursue” and the definite promise that he would “without fail recover all” (see v. 8), David was still left to take some action of his own. We too often pray and then simply sit back and expect to watch God do all the work. If David and his men were to “recover all,” they were first going to have to “pursue.” We, too, would do well to realize that God’s promises often include our cooperation and participation. We should pray as though everything depends upon God but work as though everything depends upon us. If God has told us to “pursue,” then we should be doing so with all diligence and dedication.

Prayer Emphasis: Remember our earlier lessons about when to fight and when to flee and continually **trust** God to help you to know how to appropriately respond to your own life situations. **Search** your own heart to see if there are things that God has told you to “pursue” and then get after them as soon as possible!

Day 40: 1 Samuel 31:1-13

“So Saul, his three sons, his armor bearer, and all his men died together that same day.” (1 Samuel 31:6)

While David was busy with the Amalekites, Saul and his armies were finding their own hands full with the Philistines. After learning that Saul and his three sons died in this battle, I am sure David was relieved that he and his men had been sent home by the distrusting Philistine leaders. In our last chapter, we saw David inquiring of God when he was in a fearful situation. In chapter 28:5, we saw that when Saul “saw the army of the Philistines” he “was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly.” But when Saul attempted to “inquire of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him” (28:6). After that, Saul turned to mediums – something God expressly prohibited His people to do. Then Samuel paid an after-life visit to Saul and informed him that he and his sons would die the next day. Well, the day of which we have read in this final chapter of 1 Samuel is that “tomorrow” that Samuel spoke of in that conversation (see 1 Samuel 28:19). We are told “the Philistines fought against Israel” (v. 1) and “followed hard after Saul and his sons,” eventually killing “Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul’s sons” (v. 2). Then, when “the battle became fierce,” Saul was struck by an archer’s arrow and “severely wounded.” Saul later took his own life with the sword that he often intended to use to kill David (v.4). The tragic loss of Saul and his sons is a sad but important story. If any of Saul’s sons had been spared in that battle, they would have had a claim to the throne of Israel and David would not have eventually become the rightful king over God’s people. As much as it might chaff His enemies to know it, God is very much involved in the politics of this world, especially when it affects the lives of His people. And He has every right to be!

Prayer Emphasis: Thank God for political leaders – especially those who stand strong and firm for the things of God. **Join** us in praying for our country daily. Exercise your right to **vote** and be a good citizen to both America and Heaven! **Contact us** at **850-562-8069** or **gary@seminolebc.com** if we can pray for you or minister to you and your family in any way.