

Introduction: The most important thing for all children of God to know is that the heavenly Father is always acting in the lives of His children. He desires to help them to grow in their knowledge of Him so that their faith in Him will grow. *** Think back on your own life of faith in God. How many times do you remember when the same kinds of tests were happening to you over and over? The specifics of the tests varied, but the subject was always the same. Maybe you had to make difficult decisions about stewardship. Or, every few months a difficult person entered into your life pushing all the wrong buttons. Maybe you found it hard to eat and enjoy healthy foods. Perhaps many of your friends and loved ones were mourning the loss of someone important to them, and you wondered how you could ever comfort them. Maybe the Father was confronting you with the necessity of breaking long-standing harmful habits. This list could go on and on ... *** Today we consider the third test in David's life where he had the opportunity to avenge himself for a wrong done to him or his men. Saul, who began to seek David's life by hurling a spear at him (1 Samuel 18:10-11), bookends these tests, with the brutish fool Nabal in the middle. *** First, David could have killed Saul when he sought relief in a cave where David was hiding. David spared Saul's life because he was Yahweh's anointed (1 Samuel 24:1-12). *** Then, Nabal mistreated David's men, provoking David to want to kill both Nabal and his servants. But, Yahweh corrected David through Abigail; and, he learned something after Yahweh struck down Nabal (1 Samuel 25). *** Now Abishai seeks to kill Saul in the middle of the night as he goes to him with David. But, David applies what he learned from his test with Nabal and forbids Abishai to kill. David now has faith Yahweh will punish Saul appropriately – in His time as He chooses (1 Samuel 26:1-12; 31). *** In a psalm David wrote after many more tests over many more years, he generalized what he had learned. Whenever enemies attack him, David will petition his gracious God for strength, with the full faith built by experience, because he knows Yahweh will save him. *** With all this in mind, let's look at the specifics of our passages this morning.

I. Acting on information, Saul comes after David with three thousand men; David sends out men on foot, sees Saul set up camp, and goes to the camp with Abishai. (1 Samuel 26:1-6)

A. Once again the Ziphites give Saul information about David and he comes after David in the wilderness with three thousand men. (Verses 1-3)

1. Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah to say: Is not David hiding himself in the hill of Khakilah on the east of Jeshimon. (Verse 1)

Gibeah: Two cities were named Gibeah ('hill'). The one in Benjamin was Saul's hometown (1 Samuel 10:26). The other was in southern Judah (Joshua 15:1, 57), David's tribe, near the wilderness of Ziph.

2. Then Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph; and, with him (were) three thousand chosen men of Israel, to seek David. (Verse 2)

Seeks David: After a brief time of repentance toward David, Saul is once again bent on destroying David because he is jealous of David and selfish.

3. Then Saul encamped on the hill of Khakilah, which is east of Jeshimon beside the road; and, David was remaining in the wilderness; then he saw that Saul came after him. (Verse 3)

'Comes after' David: Saul sets up camp with his three thousand man army against David's six hundred (1 Samuel 23:13), a five-to-one advantage. He is going all out to wipe out David!

B. David sent men on foot to track Saul's movements, then sees how they set up camp for the night, and Abishai goes down with David. (Verses 4-6)

1. Then David sent out (men) going about on foot and he knew it was established that Saul had come. (Verse 4)

David's 'footmen': These 'footmen' would be called spies in modern western warfare. When they reported back to David, he knew as a firmly established fact, that Saul had come for him!

2. Then David rose and came to the place where Saul had camped; and he saw the place where Saul had lain down, and Abner, son of Ner, the commander of his host – Saul (was) lying in a trench and the people encamped round about him. (Verse 5)

David sees: As night falls, David sees Saul with his general, lying in a trench with his three thousand soldiers surrounding him to protect him.

3. David said to Ahimelek the Hittite and Abishai, son of Zeruiah (David's sister – 1 Chronicles 2:3-16), brother of Joab: Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp; then Abishai said: I will go down with you to the camp. (Verse 6)

Two men: Hittites were residents of Heth, at city in what is now northern Lebanon. His name means 'my brother (is) king'. Abishai, my father (is) Jesse – gift, is David's middle nephew by his sister Zeruiah (balsam). More on him later.

II. Abishai wants to kill Saul but David forbids him to do it, confident Yahweh will act; as enemies attack, David sings a prayer to the gracious God in faith based on His past help. (1 Samuel 26:7-12; Psalm 86:14-17)

A. They find Saul, surrounded by his men, sleeping and Abishai says he will kill Saul, but David says: Do not destroy Saul because he knew Yahweh will smite Saul. (1 Samuel 26:7-12)

1. David went with Abishai to the people at night: Behold! Saul (is) lying asleep in the encampment; and, his spear was stuck in the ground at his head and the people lying round about him. (Verse 7)

Saul sleeping: It is now the middle of the night as David and Abishai arrive at the camp. Nothing has changed except Saul and all his men are asleep.

2. Then Abishai said to David: God has this day delivered your enemy into your hand; now, I will smite him to the earth with the spear: one stroke and I will not do to him second time. (Verse 8)

Abishai: Abishai is always quick to desire violent action. David was exasperated with ‘the sons of Zeruiah’ three times, all after he became king. The first time was when the oldest son, Joab, killed the noble Abner in direct disobedience to David (2 Samuel 3:39) because Abner killed the youngest son Asahel when he foolishly went after Abner (2 Samuel 2:18-24). The second time was when David fled Jerusalem because of Absalom and Shimei (of Benjamin) cursed David. Once again, Abishai – a slow learner, sought to kill Shimei (2 Samuel 16:1-14). Finally, after David returned to Jerusalem as king, Abishai still wanted to kill Shimei (2 Samuel 19:11-23).

3. David said to Abishai: You must not destroy him, for who can put forth his hand against Yahweh’s anointed and be free from guilt? And David said: As Yahweh lives, for if Yahweh will strike him, or his day will come and he die, or in battle he shall go down and be destroyed. (*Verses 9-10*)

Faith in Yahweh: As a young teenager, David learned faith in God by tending his father’s sheep alone (1 Samuel 17:34-37). After Nabal, David now knows by faith Yahweh will bring an end to Saul in His own way and in His own time. So now, he acts graciously towards Saul.

Knowledge of God enables gracious action

4. Far be it from me to Yahweh to put forth my hand against the anointed of Yahweh; and now, you must take the spear near his head and jar of water, and we will go. (*Verse 11*)

Takes Saul’s possessions: David asks Abishai take the spear Saul threw at him in his first fit of anger at David. David is gracious to Saul because his faith has been strengthened as he knows Yahweh better through more tests.

Knowledge of God enables gracious action

5. Then David took the spear and jar of water from the head of Saul, then they went away, and not (man) seeing, and not (man) knowing, and not (man) awakened, because a deep sleep of Yahweh had fallen over them. (*Verse 12*)

Miracle: Perhaps David himself took the spear and water because Abishai could not be gracious to Saul.

We know, and so did David, that the success of the mission was because Yahweh did a great miracle by causing a deep sleep to come over three thousand men. Growing faith, as a result of growing knowledge of God, enables people to be gracious to enemies.

Knowledge of God enables gracious action

Application: We must take time each day to be alone with Father-Son-Holy Spirit to intimately know Him by prayer, focused reading of the Word, meditation on God’s Word, and some time in silence to hear His will ‘whispered’ to us (1 Kings 19:7-18). This will build our faith and make us more like Jesus, so we may pass all the difficult and frustrating tests God will bring into our lives.

- B. As enemies attack David, he sings a prayer to the gracious God for strength and salvation based on Yahweh’s past help. (*Psalm 86:14-17*)

1. God, proud men have risen up against me / a gathering of terrifying men have sought my soul (life) / They have not set Thee before them. (*Verse 14*)

David’s problem: A large number of proud and terrifying men have arisen against David doing all they can to take his life. Furthermore, these men have no knowledge of God or respect for Him.

2. Thou, Adonai, God of merciful compassion and grace / slow (to) anger and (having) multitude of strong love and faithfulness. (*Verse 15*)

God’s character: God, as David’s lord, probably the pre-incarnate Jesus (Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:43-45), has impeccable character, specifically: mercy, compassion, grace, a ‘long fuse’ (slow to explode with anger), and a great abundance of strong life-giving, life-changing love with faithfulness. What a comfort it is to know this about the Almighty God!

3. Thou must turn to me and be gracious / Thou must give strength to Thy servant / And Thou must save the son of Thy handmaid. (*Verse 16*)

Petition: David petitions his gracious (and so much more) God about the gang of terrifying men seeking to take his life, asking for the gracious gift of strength and that Adonai-God will save him!

When enemies attack, call on the gracious God

4. Thou must do to me a sign of goodness / and those hating me will see and be shamed / because Thou, Yahweh, have helped me and comforted me. (*Verse 17*)

Confirmation of faith: David asks the covenant God, Yahweh, for a sign to confirm his faith built on a lifetime of trials Yahweh brought into David’s life so he will grow in his knowledge of God.

Application: We must make it our practice to always pray to God with hearts grateful for His perfect character, stating our current distress, and petitioning for help with firm and established faith in God, based on all the help He has graciously given us over the years.

Conclusion: Acting on intelligence from people living in southern Judah, Saul comes after David with three thousand men to David’s six hundred. David sends out men on foot to learn where Saul is making camp, sees for himself the set-up at twilight, then goes to the camp with Abishai at night. Abishai wants to kill Saul but David forbids it, confidently knowing Yahweh will punish Saul in His own time by His own means. David later describes his mature faith in a prayer psalm: As enemies attack him, he petitions his gracious God for salvation, full of faith based on Yahweh’s past help for him.

Knowledge of God enables gracious action