

THE LIFE OF SAUL AGAIN SPARED BY DAVID: LESSONS ON REAPING WHAT ONE SOWS 1 SAMUEL 26:01–25

Introduction

Sowing and reaping — this is one of the truest laws in all the universe. What we sow, we will reap, and there is no escaping the fact. Consider our attitudes, for example: if we sow love and kindness, we will reap friends and good relationships. Consider our behaviour and conduct: if we sow diligence in whatever we do, we will reap far more production and fruitfulness. As we walk throughout life, if we will sow as we should, we will reap a sense of purpose, fulfilment and satisfaction — living a conquering, victorious life.

The events of this chapter show the truth of *sowing and reaping*. This is: *The Life of Saul Again Spared by David: Lessons on Reaping What One Sows*, 1 Samuel 26:1-25.

- I. The betrayal of David and Saul's renewal of his pursuit: a heart filled with anger and murder (vv. 1-4).
- II. The bold, secret venture of David into Saul's camp — under the cloak of darkness: a heart set on never harming God's anointed (vv. 5-13).
- III. The charge of David against Abner — failing to protect God's anointed and deserving to die: a lesson on neglect, unfaithfulness (vv. 14-16).
- IV. The attempt of David to resolve the conflict with Saul: seeking peace with one's brother (vv. 17-20).
- V. The confession of Saul: a lesson on reaping what one sows (vv. 21-25).

I. *1 Samuel 26:01–04 Saul's Renewed Pursuit to Capture and Kill David*

There was the betrayal of David and Saul's renewal of his pursuit to capture and kill him. Unknown to Saul, this was to be his final pursuit of David. And in this account, Saul is the tragic picture of a man whose heart was filled with anger and murder, so much so that David finally accepted that reconciliation with the king was impossible. The first scene opens with the betrayal of David:

1. For the second time the Ziphites betrayed David (23:19-29). Apparently they had a permanent spy network that was continually seeking intelligence on any opposition that might arise against Saul. For some time they had been seeking information on David and discovered that he was hiding out on the hill of Hakilah, which faced Jeshimon, a desert or wasteland. Because of the strongholds or fortifications scattered throughout the area, this particular hideout provided security for David and his men, giving them a significant advantage over any approaching enemy. As soon as the Ziphites discovered David's hideout, they reported the important information to Saul, who was presently at his capital in Gibeah.
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2. Losing no time, Saul mobilized 3,000 crack troops and set out on a fierce pursuit of David, traveling down to the Desert of Ziph as quickly as he could. Reaching the general area of David's reported hideout, Saul set up camp beside the road that led up to the hill of Hakilah near the desert Jeshimon.
3. Note that David's hideout was nearby, someplace out in the desert. When he received information that Saul was once again pursuing him and was actually camping nearby, David sent out scouts to locate Saul's camp.

Thought 1. Hearts filled with anger and violence descend into the depths of depravity. Consuming anger and the violent act of murder are two of the worst evils that can be committed, for anger and murder are directed against other people. The angry person and the murderer attack, assault and abuse people both verbally and physically. A person consumed with anger usually commits some irresponsible act or lawless, violent behaviour. And the murderer ends up taking a human life, exposing an ignorant and evil heart that disregards the *sanctity of life*.

God hates anger and hates murder. God hates any wicked, evil act committed against another person. And God warns us, His hand of judgment will fall upon any of us who become consumed with anger or commit murder:

Mat 5:22 *“But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.”*

Rom 1:18, 29-32 *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.... They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*

Gal 5:19-21 *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

1 John 3:15 *Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.*

Rev 21:8 *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*

II. *1 Samuel 26:05–13 The Bold, Secret Venture of David into Saul's Camp*

There was the bold, secret venture of David into Saul's camp under the cloak of darkness. For the second time, David crept up on the king without the king's being aware of his presence (24:1-22). Without question, David's heart was set on never harming God's anointed leader:

1. Knowing Saul's location, David sneaked up to the king's camp to gather intelligence information, noting how many soldiers were pursuing him, who the commanders were, and the weapons they had at their disposal. One thing David noticed was that Saul and his commander-in-chief were lying in the middle of the camp, with the troops encircling them. And they were all sound asleep.
2. David turned to the two men and courageously asked for a volunteer to sneak into Saul's camp with him (v. 6). The two soldiers asked were Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai, David's nephew. Without hesitation, Abishai volunteered.
3. Together David and Abishai crept right up to where Saul was sleeping, noticing that all the soldiers were in a deep sleep (vv. 7-8). When they reached Saul, they noticed his spear stuck in the ground right beside his head. Immediately, Abishai whispered that this was a God-given opportunity, and he requested the right to kill Saul with his own spear.
4. But David refused to harm Saul, for Saul was the LORD's anointed (vv. 9-11). Once before when David and his men had the opportunity to kill Saul, David's conscience had stricken him and he had learned from that experience that he was not to harm any man anointed by the LORD (24:5-7; Exo 22:28). Note that David whispered three reasons why they must not harm the king:
 - => Because Saul was the LORD's anointed and David would become guilty before God if he killed the LORD's anointed ruler (v. 9).
 - => Because vengeance was the LORD's and the LORD Himself would judge Saul in His own time and way.
 - => Because David himself feared the LORD, what the LORD would do to him if he laid a hand on the LORD's anointed (v. 11).
5. Quietly and quickly, David and Abishai sneaked back out of Saul's camp, taking Saul's spear and his water jug. Keep in mind that the spear was a symbol of authority and the water jug a symbol of life (the water of life).

No one detected the two men, and note why: the LORD had sent a deep sleep upon Saul and his troops (v. 12). Something extraordinary happened that night, a miracle worked by the hand of God to demonstrate His sovereign power over the affairs of men, even the armies of the world.

Having completed his reconnaissance mission, David and Abishai crossed over to the other side and stood on top of a hill, a safe distance away (v. 13). Once again David

had confronted his fierce enemy with the opportunity to kill him. But because Saul was the anointed ruler, David had demonstrated the utmost respect in allowing God's anointed to live.

Thought 1. Respect is to be shown to leaders, whether rulers of nations, ministers of the gospel, supervisors at work, officials of social organizations or clubs, or teachers or leaders of any other position. Leaders are to be honoured. If a leader is corrupt, his corruption is to be opposed, but the office of the leader must be honoured. It is the office of leadership that is to be respected and honoured. And if the person filling that office is responsible, moral and just, the person is to be honoured as well as the office. But if the person in the leadership position is irresponsible, immoral and unjust, the corrupted person is to be opposed. His corruption is not to be licensed and indulged. Indulging and giving license to a corrupt official only endorses his corruption and encourages him to continue in his irresponsible, immoral and unjust ways. Such a person is to be opposed. But his office, the leadership position itself, is to be respected and honoured. Leadership offices and positions are necessary to carry on life, society and governments. For this reason, the office of leadership must be respected and honoured. This is the clear teaching of God's Holy Word:

Mat 22:20-21 *And he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."*

Acts 23:5 *Paul replied, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'"*

Rom 13:1 *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.*

Phil 2:29 *Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour men like him.*

1 Th 5:12-13 *Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.*

1 Tim 5:17 *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*

Titus 3:1 *Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good.*

Heb 13:7 *Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.*

1 Pet 2:13-14 *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.*

1 Pet 2:17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king.

Exo 10:20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go.

Exo 22:28 Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people.

Prov 11:11 Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed.

Prov 14:34 Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.

Prov 16:12 Kings detest wrongdoing, for a throne is established through righteousness.

Eccl 8:2 Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God.

III. 1 Samuel 26:14–16 David's Charge Against Abner — Failing to Protect God's Anointed

There was the charge of David against Abner, the commander of Saul's army: he had failed to protect God's anointed and deserved to die. Having climbed a safe distance up the hill, David shouted out across the canyon and awoke Abner and his troops from their deep slumber. Note the series of questions in the Scripture that David shouted out, challenging...

- Abner's manhood
- Abner's position in Israel
- Abner's irresponsibility and neglect of his duty in guarding King Saul (v. 15)

After shouting out the questions that demonstrated Abner's irresponsible neglect, David charged Abner with terrible failure and shouted out the legal verdict (v. 16). He deserved to die. Abner had failed to protect God's anointed. And there was clear evidence: the king's spear and water jug were missing.

Thought 1. Abner neglected his duty of protecting the king. He had been unfaithful, giving only half-hearted service to Saul. For he had allowed David and Abishai to sneak into camp and become a threat to the king. And there was evidence, the spear and the water jug. This is a striking lesson for us on neglect, unfaithfulness and half-hearted service.

Far too many of us are neglectful, serving only half-heartedly. How many of us give only half-hearted service at our employment? How many of us are unfaithful to our commitments:

- => to our spouses and children?
- => to our employment?
- => to social and community clubs?
- => to our government?

- => to our friends and neighbours?
- => to our studies and securing an education?
- => to the Lord and His church?

Neglect, unfaithfulness, half-hearted service — this is irresponsible behaviour. And it weakens our families, our societies, our nations and our churches. Furthermore, if we are often neglectful and prove unfaithful, we can irreparably harm those whom we fail.

Neglect and unfaithfulness are serious matters to God. Listen to what God's Holy Word says, much of which is a warning:

Mat 25:24-30 *Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'* "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. "Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him." And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Mat 7:26-27 "But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Luke 12:47 "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows."

Luke 16:12 "And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?"

James 2:14 *What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?*

James 4:17 *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.*

2 Chr 25:2 *He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not wholeheartedly.*

Hosea 10:2 *Their heart is deceitful, and now they must bear their guilt.*

IV. 1 Samuel 26:17–20 David's Attempt to Resolve the Conflict with Saul: Seeking Peace

There was David's attempt to resolve the conflict with Saul, seeking peace and reconciliation with him. Naturally, David's loud taunting of Abner had awakened Saul.

1. As soon as Saul recognized David's voice, he immediately called out to him, asking David to confirm his identity (v. 1). Note that Saul addressed David as "my son." But in replying, David does not address Saul as his father, but rather as "my lord the king." Remember that David was no longer related to Saul as his son-in-law. Saul's daughter Michal had divorced him and married another man (25:44). By now, David probably knew deep within his heart that reconciliation and re-establishment of the relationship with Saul was impossible.
2. Nevertheless, David presented a strong case for reconciliation, a strong case for peace between two brothers. Three strong arguments were presented point by point:
 - a. If David had done any wrong, deserved any guilt — where was the evidence? Note that David asked Saul for the proof (v. 18).
 - b. If the LORD was chastising David for sin through Saul, then he would readily present an offering of peace to God, and the LORD could remove His hand of chastisement from David (v. 19).
 - c. But if others had turned Saul against him, they deserved to be cursed (v. 19). Note that David gave two reasons why the troublemakers should be cursed: because they had kept him from his inheritance and because they were trying to force him to serve other nations. And by being in other nations, they hoped that David would be influenced to serve their false gods (v. 19).
3. Having completed his arguments, David pleaded with Saul to reconcile and bring peace between them (v. 20). He pleaded with Saul not to let him die in exile, on foreign soil. And he pleaded for Saul to consider the true facts: David was nothing more than a flea or a partridge before the mighty king Saul.

Thought 1. God wants people reconciled, living together in peace. Conflict, fighting, violence and war are not of God. God never intended people to be attacking, assaulting, maiming and killing one another. Neither should we be verbally fighting, bickering, complaining, murmuring, squabbling or causing all kinds of dissension and division. A couple living in dissension will separate; a group of people divided against themselves will disintegrate. A nation divided against itself cannot stand.

When there is trouble between two of us, we must seek reconciliation or we will be split asunder, damaging and harming our relationship and potentially destroying it. Whether individuals or nations, reconciliation and peace should always be given a chance. Listen to what God's Holy Word says:

Mat 5:9 *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."*

Luke 2:13-14 *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."*

1 Cor 14:33 *For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints.*

2 Cor 13:11 *Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.*

Eph 2:14 *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.*

Col 1:20 *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

Col 3:15 *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

Phil 2:3-4 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

2 Tim 2:14 *Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.*

2 Tim 2:24 *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*

James 3:17-18 *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.*

Psa 34:14 *Turn from evil and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.*

Prov 12:20 *Deceit is in the hearts of those who plot evil, but those who promote peace have joy.*

Prov 20:3 *It is to a man's honour to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.*

Job 22:21 *"Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you.*

Isa 27:5 *Or else let them come to me for refuge; let them make peace with me, yes, let them make peace with me.*

V. 1 Samuel 26:21–25 *Saul's Confession: A Lesson on Reaping What One Sows*

There was the confession of — Saul, a striking lesson on reaping what one sows. Just as before, Saul was emotionally touched and aroused, and he offered up another false confession (24:16-22).

1. Convicted and emotionally moved by David's appeal for peace, Saul confessed his sin and asked David to return (v. 21). But note: Saul's confession was false, based entirely upon his emotions. His confession was short-lived, temporary, and never

led to repentance. He was emotionally moved because David had spared his life, not because he was making a decision to stop pursuing David. He did confess his sin, that he had acted like a fool and committed evil against David. But he was making a decision to confess out of emotion, not out of a conviction and willingness to repent.

When Saul asked David to come back and rejoin him, David knew better. He knew that Saul could not be trusted, that his deceptive heart was lying and would soon turn against him. By returning he would be endangering his life, so he rejected Saul's appeal for him to return.

2. Instead, David offered to return Saul's symbol of authority, his spear. He instructed Saul to send one of his young men over to get it (v. 22).
3. While the young man was making his way toward David, David shouted out a truth that he wanted Saul to remember: the law of God concerning sowing and reaping (vv. 23-24). God rewards a person for righteousness and faithfulness. If a man is faithful and sows righteousness, he will reap righteousness. But the implication for unfaithfulness is just as clear: if a man sows unrighteousness, he will reap unrighteousness. At this point, David shouted out that he had proven righteous by sparing Saul's life. The LORD had actually delivered Saul into his hands that very day, but David had not laid a hand on Saul because Saul was the LORD's anointed. Then David cried out for the LORD to reward him just as he had rewarded Saul, for the LORD to rescue and deliver him from all trouble (v. 24).
4. Saul, unaware that these would be the last words he would ever speak to David, pronounced a blessing upon his former commander and predicted a glorious future for David, who was to be the future king. He declared David would do great things and be triumphant throughout his life (v. 25). Having spoken these last words, Saul and David went their separate ways.

Thought 1. One of the major laws of life is the law of *sowing and reaping*. If a farmer sows good seed on fertile soil, he will reap a good harvest. If a labourer sows responsible, diligent work, he will be productive. If an employer sows just wages and good working relationships, the company will reap increased production. If a student sows focused concentration and diligent study, the student will reap an excellent education and be far better prepared to secure gainful employment. If a neighbour sows kindness and helpfulness, the neighbour will reap good relationships and many friends. If a husband and wife sow peace and love, they will reap a loving, peaceful family. If a lost, unsaved person sows faith in Christ, this person will reap salvation and eternal life, the glorious privilege of living forever in the presence of God.

But the converse of the positive results of *sowing and reaping* is also true. If we sow the negative, we will reap negative, unfavourable results.

=> If a farmer sows bad seed, he will reap a poor harvest.

- => If a labourer sows irresponsible, slothful work, he will be unproductive and perhaps lose his job.
- => If an employer sows unfair wages and bad working relationships, the company reaps less production and profit and loses capable workers.
- => If a student sows inattention and disinterest, failing to study, the student reaps a poor education and is less prepared to secure a good job.
- => If a neighbour sows ill feelings, the neighbour will reap bad relationships and few friends.
- => If a husband and wife sow strife and discord, they reap a disturbed family, and perhaps end up separated or divorced.
- => If a lost, unsaved person continues to sow unbelief in Christ, this person will reap judgment and the terrible fact of hell and eternal separation from God.

No greater lesson can be learned than the lesson of *sowing and reaping*. As we walk throughout life, if we sow what we should, we will reap a fruitful, productive life. This is the clear teaching of God's Holy Word:

Luke 8:5-8 *"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown." When he said this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."*

Gal 6:7-8 *Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*

Gal 6:9 *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time He will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

Job 4:8 *As I have observed, those who plough evil, and those who sow trouble reap it.*

Psa 126:5-6 *Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.*

Prov 22:8 *Whoever sows injustice reaps calamity, and the rod they wield in fury will be broken.*

Hos 8:7 *They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no head; it will produce no flour. Were it to yield grain, foreigners would swallow it up.*

Hos 10:12 *Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you. ■*