

April 4

I Samuel 25-27, 30 and 1 Chronicles 12

Hello and welcome to April 4th installment of Project 4:4. I am Lisa Ashton and today we are covering I Samuel 25-27, 30 and I Chron 12.

In chapter 25 we encounter the conflict with Nabal and David. Had it not been for Nabal's noble wife Abigail we may have seen David seek his own vengeance instead of waiting for the Lord to deliver him. From this story I want to draw our attention to several qualities of Abigail that are important to note. First, she is a peacemaker. Before the confrontation arrives, while David is still on the road, Abigail meets him, and with soft words and wise actions, she takes away the wrath of the man who was angry and about to violate his own standards that call for leaving the revenge to God. Without Abigail, David is about to fall into the old trap of acting without asking God for direction. She keeps him from an action unworthy of him. Then Abigail is an intercessor. She not only pleads for the life of her foolish husband, but offers to take his blame upon herself. She wants to accept the penalty for her husband's sin and folly. That, of course, cannot be, but in doing so she turns away the wrath of David. Abigail has the attitude of Christ when she goes out to meet this fierce warrior from Bethlehem. Abigail and Nabal are two people from the Book of 1 Samuel that you will want to remember – she, because she reminds us of Christ and we want to emulate her; he, because he reminds us of another rich fool who Jesus described in the Book of Luke.

Moving on to Chapter 26 – The Desert of Ziph. All seven of Saul's previous attempts to take David's life failed miserably; so does attempt number eight. Once again the Lord puts the life of Saul into the hands of David, and David again refuses to take the role of God by taking the life of his enemy. In a demonstration nearly identical to the one that occurred in the cave, this time David takes the spear and water jug of the king, to provide the irrefutable proof that he has once again spared the king's life. The only real difference between this and the previous encounter is that David and his companion Abishai, his sister Zeruah's son, actually sneak into the heavily guarded camp of the mad king. They succeed only because God puts the soldiers of Saul into a deep sleep, so no one is awakened until David teasingly shouts to Abner, Saul's general, from a place of safety outside the camp. God, indeed is actively involved in helping his anointed rise to power...even at the expense of humiliating Saul's commander of the army.

Following this victory you would expect that David would be in good spirits. Makes sense. However, the beginning of chapter 27 suggest otherwise. Here we learn that David was susceptible to discouragement. He would not hasten the hand of God, but he did become desperate and flee out of fear. He forgets the hard-learned lesson about asking the advice of God before making important decisions, and once again he finds his way to the court of the Philistine king Achish. 'Sooner or later,' he reasoned, 'Saul is going to succeed. Eight times he has tried to kill me, eight times, and now I am no closer to being king than I was at the beginning. I can't take this kind of pressure any more. I guess I'll just have to go and align myself with the Philistines,

on the theory that the enemy of my enemy is my friend.' That, by the way, is not a very solid theory. But when you are desperate, you don't always think clearly. So, David goes back to Gath.

There is one difference between David's first trip down to Gath when he was in grave danger and survived only by feigning madness. Did you catch what it was? This time he didn't go alone. He took his own personal army with him and their reputation made them even more formidable than they probably were. Achish didn't even have the option of capturing David this time. He wasn't thrilled with the idea of a private army of 600 men rumbling around his capital with nothing more than a second or third degree of loyalty to him and his throne. David was definitely not a welcome guest. Even if he did join forces with Achish to fight against Saul and the other enemies of the Philistine king, he was dangerous. To get him out of the capitol, Achish gave David the city of Ziklag. The Book of 1 Samuel notes that Ziklag has been part of Judah ever since.

It was during this time, when David made himself a servant of the king of the Philistines, that his band of 600 men began to grow dramatically. Over the course of the year and months, many skilled warriors came, including bowmen from Saul's own tribe of Benjamin, who could shoot arrows or sling stones with either hand with great accuracy. David's troops were being formed into well-disciplined fighting units.

On a regular basis David would send his raiding team south toward Egypt, to the areas inhabited by the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. You will remember the Amalekites as an ancient enemy of Israel, who had opposed them on the trip from Egypt to the Promised Land. When they attacked a settlement, they were under instructions from David to leave no survivors, so no one could get back to the king of the Philistines and expose the deception. When the spoils of war was brought back to Ziklag, David would take his share of it, undoubtedly, to the Philistine king, and he would tell him that it had come from one of the villages or towns of Israel. Over time he succeeded so well in this deception that the Philistine king actually began to trust David, thinking that David had so alienated himself from the people of Israel that he would never be able to go home again.

However, unwilling to take the advice of his generals to trust David in battle against Israel, Achish, the Philistine king, sends David away on the eve of battle with Saul. Upon returning to Ziklag 3 days later, the deception that David has been practicing upon the Philistine king catches up with him. In the absence of David and the mighty men of valor, the Amalekites have taken their revenge upon the Israelite raiders, and have burned Ziklag, and taken the inhabitants, all the women and children, as prisoners of war. Things are at the lowest possible ebb for David. His own men know whose fault this is and there is talk among them of stoning David. His own wives and family are among the captives and he is devastated.

The text tells us that David found strength in the Lord his God. Things were going badly, very badly, in David's life, and it was because he had been living in his own strength and on his own wits ever since returning to the land of the Philistines. God

had to get his attention -- and He did -- and when He did, David knew where to find the strength and wisdom he needed to go on. He went back to what he knew about the God of Israel. He reminded himself of the great truths that he had known for so long about his God. He remembered all the things God had done for him in the past. Then, for the very first time in many chapters we hear David call for Abiathar the priest. "Bring me the ephod," he says, "it is time to pray." So do you remember why David would want the ephod? The ephod contained the Urim and the Thummim which was the approved means to seek divine direction. David is returning to seek God. And where does his seeking lead him? To another victory! With the help of an Egyptian slave of the Amalekites, David and his army found the Amalekite camp and fought from dusk until evening of the next day. All the women, children and plunder were brought back and David was generous to share it with Judah.

This makes me wish that whenever I am faced with a difficult decision I could just say, "Bring me the ephod" and know that I'd receive a clear immediate answer. Well we do not have a priest today that we can ask for an ephod, but we do have the Great High Priest, Jesus who we may talk to at anytime, and we do have the Holy Spirit who promises to be our guide. Let's, like David, turn to the Lord when life gets hard and find our strength in him.

This is Lisa Ashton for today's April 4th accelerator. God's word is ALIVE and it is ACTIVE. May it be doing a work in you as you continue to read it. Blessings.