*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 28 – July 3

David and Abigail

**Monday, June 28 Samuel 25:1-44**

*“Abigail intercedes”*

 After the brief reference to Samuel’s death, the chapter relates the conflict between Nabal and David, in which Nabal’s noble wife intercedes to prevent a violent conclusion. In the end, however, God himself intercedes to vindicate David’s actions and to confirm in David the lesson he had learned from the episode. Patience and restraint are the path to God’s best plan.

 While Saul, a central character in 1 Samuel so far, is absent in this passage, the story uses literary subtlety to substitute Nabal for Saul. His stance and demeanor toward David are the same as Saul’s, and his sudden death prefigures Saul’s death.

 The Nabal episode confirms David’s actions of the previous chapter, in which he refused to take Saul’s life in the cave at En Gedi. But the question remains: Will David take vengeance against his enemies in his own power and become king by his own hands, or will he wait patiently for God’s timing? Nabal provides a test case for David. How he responds here will reveal how he will bear up under similar but even more drastic circumstances.

*In following your plan, Lord, may I be patient and self-controlled. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 29 1 Samuel 26:1-25**

*“David spares Saul”*

 This is the last meeting between the competing anointed ones, the last time Saul and David will see each other. Saul continues his pursuit of David, taking once again a large contingent of troops into the southern desert of Judah to find and kill David (as he did in chapter 24). With the miraculous intervention of God, David is able to humiliate the king and his commanding general. The encounter ends with Saul’s confession of guilt, though he falls short of promising to let David live.

 The passage emphasizes the continuing active role of God in David’s rise to the throne and in Saul’s downfall. As we have seen elsewhere in 1 Samuel, God is sovereign. He himself rules over Israel, though he has chosen to use human surrogates, or anointed ones, to govern the nation. The failure of Saul as God’s anointed one is sure, a fact that David himself is aware of (verse 10). Moreover, David’s legitimacy as anointed one is becoming more obvious and is clear from this text because of his reliance on God in stark contrast to Saul.

*You are sovereign, Lord, and your rule is forever. Amen.*

**Wednesday, June 30 1 Samuel 27:1-12**

*“David lived among the Philistines”*

 While running from Saul, David earlier attempted to find refuge with Achish of Gath, but that episode did not end well (see 21:10-15). Now he is accepted by the Philistine overlord, presumable because Achish wants to exploit the conflict between Saul and David. David’s sojourn with the Philistines accomplishes two objectives. Frist, he seeks and finds protection because Saul is still trying to kill him. Having passed up two opportunities to kill Saul, David has now forsaken hope that Saul will up the chase. He realizes it cannot continue indefinitely; eventually Saul will be successful. But David also knows that Saul cannot afford to send entire regiments of Israelite troops deep into Philistine territory simply to pursue him.

 The second objective is less obvious. While in Philistia, David devotes himself to warring against the potential enemies of Judah while convincing Achish that he is fighting the enemies of the Philistines. Thus he endears himself to both the Philistines *and* the citizens of Judah, whom he will someday rule as king.

*No matter where we journey in this world, Lord, you are with us. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 28 – July 3

David and Abigail

**Thursday, July 1 1 Samuel 28:1-25**

*“Saul consults a medium”*

 The threat of war with the Philistines serves as the historical context for one of the most unusual chapters in the Bible. In a desperate attempt to determine God’s plan, Saul goes to a spiritual medium in order to conduct a séance in which he converses with the deceased Samuel. With the Philistine and Israelite armies facing off in the Jezreel Valley, Saul is seized by terror and resorts to a forbidden substitute for prophecy. In a way that surprises most modern readers, the Bible describes the specter, or ghost of the departed Samuel, in conversation with Saul.

 Today’s readers might be tempted to dismiss the reality of this episode as a remnant of primitive, superstitious shamanism or as a literary invention to describe Saul’s character, having little to do with reality. But the biblical text is unapologetically consistent in its assertion that the event described here is historical. Today’s readers would do well to admit that there remains much we do not understand about death and the afterlife, and we should not easily dismiss the face value of the text.

*In times of crisis, Lord, I will turn to no one but you. Amen.*

**Friday, July 2 1 Samuel 29:1-11**

*“David rejected by the Philistine commanders”*

 When we left David in chapter 27, he was enjoying amiable relations with the Philistines, though he had deceived Achish and had surreptitiously becomes the protector and defender of Judah against desert marauders. As long as Achish does not know the true nature of David’s military campaigns, David will continue to gain favor with the people of Judah while endearing himself further to this Philistine master.

 But this is a dangerous game. The single development David can ill afford is renewed hostilities between the Philistines and Saul’s army. In such a conflict, David will be trapped. If he joins his Israelite brothers by turning against his Philistine allies he will forfeit the protection he has found in Ziklag and will once again be at the mercy of Saul. But if he fights against the Israelites, he will certainly jeopardize the God-given promise of becoming their king. David’s dilemma is resolved when the Philistine military commanders object to his presence among them. While they are aware of his alliance with Achish, they are leery of him and send him back to Ziklag.

*Amazingly, Lord, you rescue us from seemingly impossible dilemmas. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 3 1 Samuel 30:1-31**

*“Meanwhile, back in Ziklag . . .”*

 The Amalekites have plundered David’s adopted city and taken alive all the women and children of his men, including David’s own two wives. As if this were not enough, David’s own men for the first time question his leadership. Their bitterness over losing their families is so severe that they now talk of killing David. Surrounded by trouble, David, as he has done time after time, turns to the Lord and finds strength.

 David’s faith finds expression in the concrete action of seeking divine guidance, by which he learns that God’s will for him in this situation is to go after the Amalekites. The story of his pursuit and victory over the marauders is told in such a way as to highlight an important feature of David’s character. He is a leader who shows magnanimity to individuals in vulnerable situations. First, he is generous and gracious in his treatment of an Egyptian who had been an Amalekite slave. Second, he decides to include those too exhausted to make the journey to the Amalekite encampment. Thus, he establishes the principle of equality that lasts throughout his reign.

*Like David, may I find strength in you, Lord. Amen.*