

Session 4

September 27, 2020

HONOR LIFE

Exodus 20:13; 1 Samuel 26:7-11, 22-25

Since God is the giver of life, it must be a sacred thing. In this week's lesson—taken from the story of Saul and David—we see that God *protects* life, *appoints* life, and *values* life.

Life is protected by God (Ex. 20:13). The sixth Commandment is often used by absolute pacifists to argue against the taking of any life, under any circumstance. The King James rendering “Thou shalt not *kill*” adds to that confusion. Two important points should be made. First, the correct translation is *murder*. This commandment then, prohibits the taking of *innocent* human life. Hence, murder is always wrong, whether done in the womb before birth, or in cold blood afterward. Second, this commandment does not prohibit the killing of animals (as was allowed for both sacrifices and food), enemy combatants, or those judged and justly condemned by the magistrate for the various crimes God enumerated as deserving of death (see Gen 9:6; Ex 21-22; Lev. 20; et al.). The point is that God is the initiator and sustainer of life. He is also, therefore, the *protector* of life; and no one has authority to take a life without His sovereign approval. For reflection: *What biblical arguments can you make when confronted by the two extremes...absolute pacifism on the one hand, or a “kill them all” mentality on the other?*

Life is appointed by God (1 Sam. 26:7-11). The relationship between King Saul and soon-to-be-king David is both dramatic and complicated, as it oscillated back and forth between a certain warmth and downright hostility. This chapter records the second time David had an easy opportunity to kill the one who sought to kill him (see 1 Sam. 24 for the previous incident in the cave near En Gedi). But Saul's bitter contrition and apparent change of heart then was short lived, and again, Saul and his army sought out David and his band of Mighty Men to destroy them. Once again, the loyal warriors of David were filled with glee that Saul was so foolishly vulnerable. This time he was asleep with his spear beside him (v. 7). Abishai volunteered to do the deed, and to do it quickly and efficiently (v. 8). Legally, acting in his own defense against an enemy combatant, David would have been justified in killing Saul on either occasion. But spiritually, morally, and ethically, David once again took the high road and ordered that Saul's spear and water jug be snatched, but that his life be spared. Two reasons for his restraint were offered. First, David recognized that like it or not, Saul was God's chosen king. Second, he understood that Saul's life belonged to God and that He alone would ordain when, where, and under what circumstances He would end it (vv. 9-10). His justification must have been maddening to his band of Mighty Men, but it was certainly pleasing to his God (v. 12). For reflection: *One can't help but ask, “What would I have done if it was me?” How would you honestly answer that?*

Life is valuable to God (1 Sam. 26:22-25). In the intervening verses, David crossed the valley to a safe distance and shouted his disapproval of the king's security forces that allowed him to approach the sleeping monarch. But the point of his speech (vv. 22-24) was not about flaunting the ease with which he could have killed Saul, but rather the mercy that he offered him. His reasons? Not only was King Saul God's anointed, and hence belonged to Him (v. 23), but David looked beyond Saul's evil and *saw value* in his life (v. 24). Interestingly, David admitted his

hope that the Lord would value his own life, just as he had valued Saul's and would deliver him from the troubling times that he too would face as king. For reflection: *What kind of spiritual maturity must we have to look beyond the evil attacks of others and see the value of their lives? What would help us in obtaining that depth of maturity?*