

**Called to Honor**  
**November 6, 2005**  
1 Sam 24:1-10  
Dr. Jeff H. McCrory Jr.

Synopsis:

David is on the run from Saul. He flees Nob and searches out the craggy fortresses of En-Gedi, a haven near the Dead Sea. But Saul pursues. In an embarrassing moment for Saul, David, encouraged by his men, has a chance to kill his enemy. What will he do? He refuses to act, not because it wouldn't help his cause, but because of honor.

I.

On this weekend before Veterans Day, we pause to honor those who serve and have served in our armed forces. Without these men and women, we would not live in the freedom we now enjoy. I ask you today to honor their service and sacrifice.

Honor is quaint virtue. When we hear someone speak of honor, we think of bygone days, when people saluted the flag, when children honored their parents, when husbands and wives honored their commitments, and when we as a country honored our leaders.

Biblically honor means to weigh something or someone heavily. The Hebrew word literally means "to weigh heavily." An honored person is thus a *heavy-weight*.

Unfortunately, we have lost the ability to weigh most anything heavily. What, if anything, do we weigh heavily in our culture? How can we learn from David's example to honor the right persons and things?

II.

The past few weeks we have watched as David flees before Saul: from Gibeah to Ramah, where the Holy Spirit falls upon his pursuers and subsequently upon Saul himself; then from Ramah to Nob, where the priest Ahimelech risks giving holy bread and weapons to David's men. Finally we come to the last of two stories regarding David's flight. We come to the desert fortress of En-Gedi.

Years ago I visited En-Gedi. It is a desert oasis in the craggy mountains rising up along the Dead Sea. For miles about there is nothing but endless rock faces and dusty terrain. Think of Death Valley and the mountains surrounding. In the middle of this dry mountainous region is an oasis, up through one of the ravines off the Dead Sea. In that ravine are water, trees, vegetation, and more importantly caves and hiding places. En-Gedi is in the same region as the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

It is to this cave-filled ravine that David flees. Hiding in a cave, no doubt due to the report of Saul's 3,000 man army searching for him, David and his band of brothers assume they are safe. But Saul is close by, scanning the rocks above. All of a sudden Saul feels an urge. In the desert there are few trees and bushes. So when Saul feels an urge, he has to seek shelter. He finds himself slipping into the same cave where David and his men are hiding. After removing his robe, he is in a vulnerable position—no details needed! David's men, remembering one of David's enemy psalms, urge him:

Here's your chance. Yahweh is fulfilling the promise, placing your enemy in your hands. Go for it, quickly while he's squatting down.

What's David going to do? Here is his enemy, the one who has wrongly tormented him. Here is his enemy, whom the Holy Spirit has deserted. Here is his enemy, whom David knows will soon depart, leaving the kingship to him. After all, didn't Samuel anoint David as king? Why not step forward and with one quick thrust speed up the inevitable?

David does step forward, and with one quick thrust cuts off a piece of Saul's robe, but stays his hand from further action due to—honor. Honor is that quaint virtue of a bygone era. David refuses to act because Yahweh has anointed Saul, has weighed him heavily. David honors both Yahweh and Saul, and thus refuses to act.

### III.

Our world does not live by honor. We live in an era that sociologists describe as deconstructionist. Deconstruction is a fancy term that means we don't trust anyone anymore, and thus de-construct them and their motives. We tear down people because we believe that every person and every group wants to advance their own agenda, and we believe that all agendas are just power moves. Honor? forget it! Don't trust anyone. De-construct them.

In an era of deconstruction, we tear down parents, teachers, pastors and priests, police officers, politicians, and *apropos* for Veterans Day, the military. It is not that these people are perfect. They aren't. I can tell you from experience that pastors have feet of clay. I know my own and my brothers' and sisters' failings. Everyone fails, that hasn't changed. What has changed is that the fulcrum has tipped from trusting to doubting. We have all become skeptics. The result is a society of lonely, skeptical people. When we can't trust, when we honor no one, we are left alone and in suspicion.

#### IV.

A deconstructed society will not long survive. What can we learn from David about regaining honor and community?

First of all, David honors Saul even though Saul acts dishonorably. This ought to quell our protests that things are worse now than they used to be. In fact, things are about the same as they used to be. There are scoundrels and there are righteous people at all times and all places. So the excuse that people are less honorable today doesn't hold up. In all times and places honor doesn't begin with other people, it begins with you.

We have to make a choice, just as David did, in the midst of a skeptical society to honor and to weigh people and things heavily. You have to decide to honor your parents, your children, your politicians, your teachers, your pastors and priests, and your military. No one is going to do this but you. Without these God-given people our society degenerates into lawlessness and anarchy. Make the choice. Start weighing heavily those whom God has put over and under you.

Second, David honors Saul not because Saul is such a great guy, but because *Yahweh honors Saul*. There are institutions and roles that need honor in order to keep us from descending into chaos. As much as Paul hated the Roman Empire for persecuting early Christians, he told those living in Rome to honor the magistrate (Rom 13), the same magistrate who was ordering the death of many. Why? Because God has established order for the common good.

Let me give you a personal example: politicians.

My experience in DC. When I arrived in DC, I thought, "Throw the bums out!" When I left, I respected the bums, knowing that most were trying to do the right thing.

God sets people and institutions in our life for the common good. We need to weigh these people heavily, not because they are so great, but because God does.

Third, God continues to work through corrupt and compromised people and institutions. David will soon occupy the position of anointed. We readers of Scripture already know how David compromises his integrity with Bathsheba. The problem with throwing the bums out is that new bums come in to replace them. We can throw the new bums out as well, but after them come even more bums. The truth is that we and our institutions are all bums, compromised and corrupt.

Let me touch upon one of the bum, compromised, and corrupt institutions today, the institutional church. There is a movement afoot to do away with the institutional church.

E.g. George Barna's new book *Revolution*

By-line "Millions of believers have moved *beyond* the established church . . . and chosen to *be* the church instead."

The problem with moving beyond the established church is that very quickly these millions of believers set up their own established institutions. The end of the process is each person off alone, talking to God, skeptical about even their own thoughts. We are all bums, brothers and sisters!

God continues to work through the bummed scandal of the institutional church, the Body of Christ here on earth. Where two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus, an institution springs up, one which God uses to further his kingdom, just as God used the kingship, as bummed as it was, to further his kingdom.

God wants to use the bummed church here at Geneva to accomplish his purpose. This is one heck of a stewardship plea, but I am asking you to honor your bummed session this next year, pledging with your finances to move us forward. Many of you have already given this past week, but many of you have not. Your session and staff are already 100% pledged. God needs your help to move forward:

With a Caring Pastor

With ministry to younger families

With a more efficient Sunday morning  
With funding new missionaries and planting new churches

We are stretching this year. I am frightened that we won't make it. I feel like the father who wanted Jesus to heal his son. Jesus said to him, "Only believe." The father replied, "I believe, help my unbelief!" God needs you to honor this institution, this Body of Christ here on earth that we might impact our community for Jesus Christ. If you have not already pledged, please do so today.

V.

David could have killed Saul, but he didn't. He chose to honor what God had established. Honor is a choice that we make, to stand with God through those placed over and under us. As you leave today, it is your choice to weigh heavily those around you. Let's change the tide of skepticism by contributing not to deconstruction, but to honor.