

Third Presbyterian Church
Midweek Bible Study
I Samuel - Chapter 24
Time For Revenge?

1 Samuel 24:1-22 (NIV) After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, "**David is in the Desert of En Gedi.**" [2] So Saul took **three thousand chosen men** from **all Israel** and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats. [3] He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and **Saul went** in to **relieve** himself. David and his men were **far back** in the cave. [4] The men said, "**This is the day the Lord spoke** of when he said to you, '**I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.**'" Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe. [5] Afterward, David was **conscience-stricken** for having cut off a corner of his robe. [6] He said to his men, "The **Lord forbid** that I should do such a thing to my **master**, the **Lord's anointed**, or **lift my hand against** him; for he is the **anointed of the Lord.**" [7] With these words **David rebuked his men** and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way. [8] Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. [9] He said to Saul, "Why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you'?" [10] This day you have seen with your own eyes how the Lord delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, 'I will not lift my hand against my master, because he is the Lord's anointed.' [11] See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. Now understand and recognize that I am not guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. [12] May the Lord judge between you and me. And may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you. [13] As the old saying goes, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' so my hand will not touch you. [14] "Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? [15] May the Lord be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand." [16] When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" And he wept aloud. [17] "You are more righteous than I," he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. [18] You have just now told me of the good you did to me; the Lord delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me. [19] When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the Lord reward you well for the way you treated me today. [20] I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. [21] Now swear to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's family." [22] So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

1. Romans 12:19-20 (NIV) ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord
 - A. What does it mean to leave room for God's wrath?
 - B. Why does God forbid us from exacting revenge on others?
2. How does realizing the temptation for revenge is natural help me in my fight against exacting revenge?
3. Knowing that what we are going through, someone else has also gone through....does this knowledge help us as we go through our storm?
4. What are the circumstances David went through that would have in our minds justified his revenge against Saul?
5. Why is it important to have godly people around us especially when we have been wronged and contemplating revenge against our perpetrator?
6. When the bible says "Love your neighbor as yourself." What does that mean and is it even possible especially when the neighbor is my enemy?
7. What does it mean to respect the office/title even if you don't like the person?
 - A. Why is this respect godly?
8. What has been the result of you praying for your enemy or someone who is persecuting you?
9. How is the desire for revenge quailed when we realize God's ultimate judgement?
10. Share your main takeaway from the sermon and the lesson?

Pray today for a spirit of release for that person who wronged/abused/tried to break/betrayed and hurt you!!

The Life of Saul Mercifully Spared by David: Lessons on Honoring God's Anointed, 24:1-22

(24:1-22) Introduction— Good for Evil, Fact— Evil, Duty Toward— Indulgence, Duty— Correction, Duty— Discipline, Duty— License, Duty: repaying or doing good for evil is not a simple thing to do. For example, how can we love our enemies—those who abuse, assault, or commit some act of violence against us, perhaps even attempting to kill us?

Think for a moment: If someone ridicules, mocks, or curses us—what does it mean to do good to that person? If a person steals from us, causes financial difficulty, or destroys our property—what does it mean to do good to him or her?

To do good for evil does not mean to give license to wickedness nor to indulge evil. To do good would mean to correct and discipline the wicked or evil person. Correction and discipline are good, helpful, and beneficial for the person who lives a life of sinful behavior. But when we seek to correct and discipline the wicked, we do it with a spirit of care and compassion, not out of a spirit gripped by vindictiveness and revenge. We correct and discipline the wicked and evil of this earth by executing the compassionate, righteous laws of God. These laws are spelled out in God's Holy Word.

David was gripped by the compassionate, righteous laws of God. For this reason, when the opportunity came to take revenge upon his enemy, King Saul, he acted instead in compassion, not in vengeance and retaliation. David rendered good for evil. This is the subject of this captivating passage of Scripture: *The Life of Saul Mercifully Spared by David: Lessons on Honoring God's Anointed, 24:1-22*.

1. David's respect for the office of king: a lesson on the need to honor God's anointed leader (v.1-7).
2. David's humility and his loyalty to King Saul: a lesson on the need for humility and loyalty (v.8-15).
3. Saul's remorse and confession that David would be king: a lesson on repaying good for evil (v.16-22).

1. (24:1-7) Respect, Example of— Rulers, Duty to— Ministers, Duty to— Leaders, Duty to— Anointed, Importance of— David, Respect for Saul: there was David's respect for the office of king, a strong lesson on the need to honor God's anointed leader. Remember, Saul had been right on the verge of capturing David when he received an urgent message that the Philistines had attacked Israel. As a result, he was forced to give up his pursuit, forced to return and defend the nation against the Philistine invaders. After turning back the Philistine aggression, he returned home to Gibeah and reinstated his spy network to find out where David was hiding. Note what happened:

1. David's hideout was soon discovered by the spies who passed on the information to Saul. David was hiding out in the Wilderness or Desert of En Gedi, which was an oasis with plenty of fresh water and fruitful vineyards. En Gedi was located east of Hebron close by the Dead Sea.

As soon as Saul received this information from his spies, he mobilized a *special force* of 3,000 soldiers who set out in search of David. They marched to the inaccessible Rocks of the Wild Goats where they began their search. As evening approached, they came to a very fertile area where a number of sheep pens had been built and decided to make camp there. As the cloak of darkness began to set in, Saul walked out from the camp looking for a place to relieve himself and noticed off in the distance a large cave to which he headed.

2. Unknown to Saul, David and his men were hiding far back in the very same cave (1 Samuel 24:4).

3. So remarkable was the coincidence that David's men suggested this was of God (1 Samuel 24:4). God had placed David's enemy into his hands: he should therefore seize the moment and kill Saul.

4. But note what David did: quietly tiptoeing, he crept up and cut off only a corner of Saul's robe (1 Samuel 24:4). Obviously Saul had taken off his robe and laid it aside some distance away, which enabled David to creep up unnoticed.

5. Afterward, however, David was stricken in conscience for what he had done (1 Samuel 24:5-7). And note, he shared the fact with his men. He stated that he had been disrespectful to his master, their ruler and the LORD's anointed. Since Saul was the LORD's anointed, the men's counsel to kill him could not be carried out. To kill the LORD's anointed would be an act of outright rebellion against the LORD, for the LORD commanded His people not

to curse their rulers (Exodus 22:28). In fact, the hand of God's judgment had fallen in the past when God's people rebelled against their leaders (Numbers 12:2-15; 16:1-35).

With this rebuke, David was able to stop his men from killing Saul. As a result, Saul left the cave and returned to his men at the campsite.

Thought 1. Civil leaders and religious leaders are to be respected. We are to honor our leaders, not curse or ridicule them, certainly not assault or kill them. Even when a leader is wrong, we are to show respect and honor for the position the person holds. If the leader is wrong, acting in some wicked or evil way, we should do everything in our power to correct the leader. But in correcting, God demands that we still show respect and honor for the leader. If we retaliate in some unkind, lawless, or violent way, we stoop to the level of the wicked and corrupt leader. Such disrespectful, dishonoring, and lawless behavior makes us no better than the immoral and unjust leader. God's Holy Word is clear and straightforward: we must honor both our civil and religious leaders.

1) We must honor our civil leaders.

"They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

2) We must honor our religious leaders.

"Receive him therefore in the LORD with all gladness; and hold such in reputation" (Philippians 2:29).

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the LORD, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17).

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation [behavior, conduct]" (Hebrews 13:7).

2. (24:8-15) Humility, Example of— Loyalty, Example of— David, Respect for Saul— Ruler, Respect for, Example of— Leader, Respect for, Example of: there was David's humility and his loyalty to King Saul. As soon as Saul had left the cave and walked a short distance, but still within earshot, David walked out to the edge of the cave and called out to the king. Standing some distance apart, the two men confronted one another and each in his turn spoke, with David speaking first. The speech of each man is the longest recorded in First Samuel, with David speaking 114 Hebrew words and Saul speaking 67 Hebrew words. Note David's speech:

1. David showed the utmost humility toward Saul by addressing him as king and bowing to the earth (1 Samuel 24:8). Note that David actually addressed Saul as "my master" (1 Samuel 24:6); "the LORD's anointed" (6:10); "my LORD" (1 Samuel 24:8, 10); "the king" (1 Samuel 24:8, 14); and "my father" (1 Samuel 24:14). David was making every effort to convince Saul of his respect and honor.

2. David presented a strong case for reconciliation between himself and Saul (1 Samuel 24:9-11). He declared that the charges of treason being launched by others were absolutely false. The proof was fivefold:

⇒ First, Saul had just been in the very cave where David was, delivered there by the LORD.

⇒ Second, some of David's own men had urged him to kill Saul, but he had refused.

- ⇒ Third, David had refused because Saul was God's anointed, and David both acknowledged and honored the fact.
- ⇒ Fourth, Saul was, in fact, David's father-in-law.
- ⇒ Fifth, Saul's robe had just been cut by David, yet David had refused to kill him.

With the proof and evidence presented, David pronounced the verdict: he was innocent (1 Samuel 24:11). Then he cried out for Saul to understand and recognize that he was not guilty of wrongdoing and rebellion against the throne. He had not wronged Saul, and yet Saul was hunting him down like a wild animal to kill him. The evidence was irrefutable, and Saul needed to acknowledge the fact.

3. David attempted to convince Saul of the injustice being done by his pursuing him and seeking to kill him (1 Samuel 24:12-15). Doing all he could to strike and melt the heart of Saul, David shouted out six points:

- a. David warned Saul of God's judgment (1 Samuel 24:12). The LORD was going to judge between him and Saul, and David cried out to the LORD to avenge the wrongs that had been done to him. But he assured Saul that his own hand would never retaliate nor seek revenge against the king.
- b. David then quoted an ancient proverb that teaches an obvious fact: only a wicked person would do evil against another person (1 Samuel 24:13).
- c. David assured Saul that he was not wicked; he would never harm him (1 Samuel 24:13).
- d. David asked a series of questions that clearly showed he was not a personal threat to Saul (1 Samuel 24:14). In fact, he was nothing more than a dead or lifeless dog or a small flea before Saul. He was totally insignificant and posed no threat whatsoever to Saul.
- e. Closing his appeal to the king, David then called upon the LORD to decide who was right and to judge and punish the guilty party (1 Samuel 24:15).
- f. Finally, with a thundering voice, David called out for the LORD to vindicate and deliver him from the hand of Saul (1 Samuel 24:15).

Thought 1. David sets a dynamic example for us of humility and loyalty. Just imagine what was happening. With raging anger and hostility, Saul was fiercely pursuing David, seeking to kill him. But out of respect for God's Holy Word—which states that rulers are to be honored—David humbled himself before King Saul. He humbled himself and declared his loyalty. Saul was wrong, wicked, and evil, and he had even been driven insane by his sinful behavior. Nevertheless, he was the ruler over God's people. For this reason, David humbled himself and declared his loyalty to King Saul.

What a dynamic example for us. God's Holy Word commands us to live lives of humility and to give our loyalty to the leaders who rule over us.

- 1) We are to live lives of humility.

"But ye *shall not be so*: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve" (Luke 22:26).

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:3-5).

- 2) We are to honor and be loyal to those who rule over us.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1).

"That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth" (1 Corinthians 16:16).

"Receive him therefore in the LORD with all gladness; and hold such in reputation" (Philippians 2:29).

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the LORD, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17).

"Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work" (Titus 3:1).

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation [behavior, conduct]" (Hebrews 13:7).

"Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Peter 2:17).

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).

"Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people" (Exodus 22:28).

3. (24:16-22) Remorse, Example of— Good for Evil, Example of— Saul, Acknowledged David to Be King— Covenant, Between David and Saul— David, Respect for Saul: there was Saul's remorse and confession that David truly would be king someday. This is a striking lesson on repaying good for evil. After David had finished speaking, Saul called back, "Is that really you, my son David?" (NLT). Note that Saul addressed David as "my son." Having just called out the question, Saul visibly wept aloud. But this outburst of tears was only an emotional reaction to a convicted heart, for Saul never repented or had a true change of heart. Picture the scene as Saul addressed David at that moment:

1. First, Saul confessed that David was more righteous than he (1 Samuel 24:17-19). Clearing David of all guilt, he shouted out that David had repaid him good for evil. Saul was the one who had been doing evil to David while David was doing good to him. Moreover, David had shown mercy to him by not killing him when he had the chance in the cave. Note that Saul acknowledged that the LORD had delivered him into the hands of David but that David had deliberately chosen to spare his life. This defied common sense and human nature, which seeks to retaliate against one's enemy. Then because of David's repaying Saul good for evil, the king pronounced a blessing upon David. He asked the LORD to reward him for the kindness he had shown to the king that day.

2. Amazingly, Saul confessed God's royal plans for David, that David would someday be king and would establish or reunite the kingdom of Israel that Saul himself had torn apart (1 Samuel 24:20; 15:28; 16:12). In this confession, he confirmed what his very own son had earlier predicted for David (23:17).

3. Tragically, even in the midst of confessing his evil against David, Saul's utter selfishness came out and was exposed. This is seen in the two requests he made (1 Samuel 24:21-22). Note that his major concern was to preserve his name and the lives of his descendants to make sure that his name was always preserved and honored. He requested that David swear to two things:

⇒ that David not kill off his descendants

⇒ that David not wipe out his family's name

Saul was probably unaware that his own son Jonathan had made a similar covenant with David (20:14-17, 42). Then without any hesitation whatsoever, David made the very same covenant with Saul. He swore that he would do what he could to preserve the descendants of Saul and the name of the family. Sometime later David would keep his word, fulfilling the covenant he had just confirmed with Saul: he would save the life of Jonathan's crippled son, Mephibosheth, and actually bring him into the royal palace (2 Samuel 9:1-13; 19:29; 21:7).

4. Having agreed to the covenant, Saul and David ended their encounter. Saul returned home, but David and his men returned to their stronghold in En Gedi (1 Samuel 24:22).

Thought 1. Nothing is anymore difficult than doing good for evil. Time and again God's Holy Word teaches that we are to love our enemies. We are not to seek revenge, retaliating against those who have wronged us. As difficult as it may be, we are to be kind to those who ridicule, mock, or even curse us. Even if a person abuses, assaults, or attempts to kill us, we must not be consumed with the spirit of vengeance and seek to retaliate. But of course we must attempt to get away and seek the help of others. A wicked abuser or persecutor must be corrected, must never be indulged nor given the license to commit his evil. But in our correcting this evil behavior, our corrective action is to be carried out in a spirit of regret and compassion, not of revenge and retaliation. We are always to render "good for evil," keeping in mind that the good is correction and discipline, not license and indulgence. God's Holy Word declares that we are to render good for evil.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

"But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you" (Luke 6:27).

"But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke 6:35).