

DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE

1 Samuel 24

In the previous chapter, we said that God had miraculously delivered David by drawing Saul away to fight the Philistines at the moment Saul was ready to capture David. But when Saul was done with the Philistines, he went back to pursuing David.

We wish that our spiritual enemies who pursue us like Saul pursued David would simply give up, and we won't have to bother with them anymore. But that is not the case, the Satan will never let Christians go, he keeps coming back, and coming back, like a roaring lion, seeking to devour, destroy and kill.

But I am confident if this, that our spiritual struggles can be a blessing in disguise if they bring us to our knees.

David's Situation

1 Sam. 23:29- ***Then David went up from there and dwelt in strongholds at En Gedi.***

David and his men took refuge among the rocks and caves of Engedi. These caves were among the cliffs and were ideal places for camouflage. Today Engedi is a tourist place, but David went there not as a tourist, but as a fugitive. Engedi is an oasis in the wilderness, where there are freshwater springs, waterfalls, lush vegetation, and countless caves in the rocky limestone cliffs, high above the Dead Sea.

There David was safe and secure, with an abundance of water. But not before long Saul was told that David was in Engedi, so he took 3000 chosen men from all Israel and set out with a burning hatred to look for David. Giving Saul a five-to-one advantage over David, who had only 600 men.

Once at Engedi , verse 3 tells us Saul privately went in a cave to relieve himself. So, he finds himself crouching in the privacy of a cave – but not just any cave. God caused him to go into the very cave where David and his men were staying in the deep recesses of the cave. Without knowing it Saul became vulnerable.

This was no coincidence at all, but timed and arranged by God to *test David*, to *train* David, and *display the godly heart* of David.

David's Temptation

The men of David said to him, "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 (v4). "

David's men were excited at the opportunity in front of them, and they believed it was a gift from God. They saw this was a golden opportunity from God to kill Saul. David's men were angry with Saul and wanted to avenge all they suffered at his hands.

David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe, which he had undoubtedly removed and cast on the floor.

What made David decide not to kill Saul? David knew it was disobedient of him to kill Saul, because God put Saul in a position of authority, and it was God's job to remove Saul, not David's.

David wanted the promise of his kingship to be fulfilled, but he refused to try and fulfill it, by taking the throne by force. As long as God kept Saul in power, to lift his hand against Saul was to lift his hand against God.

On David's part it was a glorious triumph of spirit over the flesh, of grace over sin.

Some key lessons :

1. **If someone is making your life miserable take it to the Lord.**

Even though Saul tried killing David several times, and made David's life completely miserable, in all this, we see David's heart didn't store up bitterness and anger towards Saul.

David kept taking it to the Lord, and he received the cleansing from the hurt, the bitterness, and the anger that the Lord alone can remove.

*Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful,
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

Had David not been watchful with prayer, and stored up bitterness and anger in heart, he wouldn't have been ab

2. **Spiritual men never look for opportunities to put down those who oppose them.**

They know that vindication should be left to God. David demonstrated spirituality, while his men in training demonstrated carnality.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybodydo 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 ...do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:17-21).

3. **We need to be exceedingly cautious how we interpret the events of Providence.**

God had promised David the throne, had his time now come for removing the one obstacle which stood in his way? It looked like it right? It seemed as if God had delivered Saul in David's hand to do what he wished.

In Psalm 54, we find, David who had prayed for vindication earlier on, but thank God, he did not take matters into his own hands, and discerned well, that even though God had placed Saul right in his hands, he refused to take the opportunity to kill him. Leaders must discern how to interpret events and respond in the right way.

David's Conviction

David only cut off the corner of Saul's robe, yet his heart troubled him. Why did his conscience trouble him?

Because the robe was a symbol of Saul's royal authority, and David felt badly about it, that he had defied the king and had shown contempt for the office

We may not agree with a leader or ruler about everything, but we call to show proper respect for their position and authority over us.

David was blessed with a tender conscience, which is a mark of true spirituality. Then we read that David, in v. 7, rebuked and restrained his servants from attacking Saul.

David's Vindication

Saul left the cave and went his way, soon afterwards David went out and called to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself face to the ground. He said

to Saul, "Why do you listen when men say," David is bent on harming you "? 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." (vv7b-10)

David is saying, "Saul I am no rebel, you are the boss and I know it." I respect you as my leader and as my king. David calls him, "my lord the king in v8, my master in v10, the Lord's anointed in v10, and my father in v11."

See the corner of your robe in my hand! This was the proof that David had full opportunity to kill Saul yet did not take that opportunity. As David showed Saul the corner of the robe, Saul must have felt shame and guilt. David was pouring burning coals on his head.

David proved his innocence and that Saul's flattering advisors were nothing but liars. Saul was being grossly misled and misinformed by evil slanderers . We must always evaluate the advice of friends in the light of God's Word even when they claim divine authority. Saul did not care to know God's will, he set on fulfilling his own desires and believing faltering lies .Saul listened to the words of men. Men who denied God's word.

Today, in our generation, more than ever, we are surrounded by liars, at every level of society, and we must be ever more careful not to trust anyone's word if it does not square up with God's Word –the holy bible. This is why it is of crucial importance that we are well acquainted with our God and let His word richly dwell in us.

David says, "I have done nothing wrong to you and yet you hunt me down like a partridge, may the Lord judge between you and me." David would let God plead his case and be the judge. God is the best witness, isn't He?

Jesus did the same Peter tells us: ***When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate when He suffered, he made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to him who justifies justly*** (1 Peter 2:23).

David then says, " ***May the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done me, but my hand will not touch you. As the old saying goes, "From evildoers come evil deeds," so my hand will not touch you.*** V v12-13).

He is reminding Saul that a man is revealed by his actions. As a tree is known for its fruits, our character is revealed by our conduct.

The proverb had a "double edge" to it, for it could easily been applicable to the person of Saul.

Saul was moved to tears, but his tears were not tears of real repentance. There would be no change of heart. And he said to David, "***You are more righteous than I.***" "***You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly.***"

Saul was constrained to acknowledge David's integrity and his own sin. But he saw himself as righteous. What a pitiful picture Saul is! What is the use of saying, "*I have acted as a fool, 'If he goes on playing the fool?*" What use are tears and confession before David if there would be no change of heart.

It was only emotions on Saul's part, not genuine sorrow, and repentance. Emotion that does not lead to action only leads deeper into sin and rebellion. Saul's tears were superficial and his conviction temporary, because in the upcoming chapter 26, with his 3000 men, he's pursuing David again.

You see, Saul was no longer under the Divine guidance; an evil spirit had full dominion over his soul. If God does not fill a person, the devil will.

3 possible levels of life:

- Divine Level (17,18) - where we return good for evil.
- Human Level (19,20) - where we return good for good, evil for evil.
- Demonic Level (21,22) - where we return evil for good.

David's Affirmation

Then Saul tells David, "***I know that you will surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. 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.***" So, David gave his oath to Saul. (vv20-22).

Saul knew all along that David would be king, but now he really knows it. If you read between the lines, Saul's major concern was his own reputation, and his family descendants, and not the spiritual welfare of the people under his care.

The discipline of God did not break Saul. The kindness of God did not melt him. Saul has a hardened heart and is consumed with himself.

In that day, when one royal house replaced another, it was common for the new royal house to kill all the potential rulers from the former dynasty. Saul wants David to promise that he and heirs will not kill or mistreat the descendants of Saul. David promises with an oath. But David asks nothing of Saul.

Then Saul returned home, and David and his men went up to the stronghold. (v 22). David did not trust Saul for a moment. David was a greater discerner. So little discernment in the church of Christ today! If anyone says he believes in Christ, and we make him out to be a Christian. The Devil believes and he's no Christian.

David could see right through his duplicity and cruel hatred. He knew him well. He did not think it was safe to return to Jerusalem, to his own home, or even dwell in the open country, but remained in the wilderness, among the rocks and the caves.

Like David, we are called to be innocent as doves and wise as serpents.

You know God did vindicate David that day, by delivering him from Saul's hand. It was a moral triumph for David that day. The central lesson is that

David first gained the victory over himself before he triumphed over Saul. The mighty men of David learned the precious lesson that day from their leader --that the true hero is the one who conquers his own anger and hatred.

For the Christian, self-control is of major importance. We are to practice the grace of restraint! David was a man of grace! He did not treat Saul the way he deserved. God does not treat us as our sins deserve (Psalm 103: 10). If God treated any of us as our sins deserve, our lives would be hell on earth.

In closing we can say that this victory in the cave of Engedi over Saul was greater than his victory over the giant, Goliath. Killing Saul would have meant disaster for David. Thank God he didn't!

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city (Prov. 16:32).

David held out a piece of Saul's robe before him as a sign of mercy and grace. David was saying to Saul, "*You think I am against you. You think I am out to harm you. But I am for you and here is the proof.*"

God holds before you today, not a corner of a robe, but a cross: "Here is the proof that I am not out to harm you. I am for you." Even though you have been resisting him and sinning against him: "***God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us***" (Rom. 5:8).

The tragedy of Saul's life was that when grace was displayed, he just kept pushing it away. Don't let that be the story of your life. Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. Come to Christ in faith and repentance. Come to him in confession. Receive His forgiveness and be saved!

It's time to begin a brand-new life, a life with God!