
David – Submission under Sovereignty

1 Samuel 24

Introduction

The problem of being sinned against by authorities.

The perspective of Scripture on the challenges this presents.

The story of David as an illustration of a man pursued by his king.

- Saul's rejection.
- David's anointing.
- Their involvement.

Confrontation – Saving the Life of his Enemy (v.1-7)

This chapter is part of a three set showing David as one who will not take vengeance. As a demonstration of a man after God's own heart, he is prepared to suffer scorn, suffering and shame in order to uphold the Name of God and his integrity as a man of God.

The end of chapter tells us two important things. Saul stopped pursuing David distracted by the Philistine raids. David has sought refuge in the strongholds of Engedi, near the Dead Sea.

The Coming of Saul

When Saul completes his defeat of the Philistines, someone reports the hiding place of David. It is fairly evident that this report comes from someone knowledgeable of David and intending him harm. The account of Saul's coming to Engedi shows the author's personal familiarity with the area. The writer here is mixing both history and a bit of irony – here is the King of Israel, ducking into a cave in order to go to the bathroom.

The Counsel of David's Men

And who would be crouching behind rocks in the very same cave but David and his men. They must be out of earshot. His men say, "Here it is. This is the time to put an end to all this. Not only that, this must be God's time. This is the moment when that prophecy will be fulfilled. God kill him."

The Conduct of David

I wonder: Did David creep out intending to kill? Maybe, but he reached out with his knife and only cut off a piece of Saul's robe. As he returns with it in his hand, his conscience smites him. He feels guilty. He has intended wrong, maybe a greater one than he did.

The Curbing of David's Men

His men are ready to do what David wouldn't. They are ready to attack Saul. David restrains them. He does so by reminding himself and them that Saul is God's anointed king. He cannot reach out with the sword to bring his life to an end. To do such is rebellion. Even though he has been anointed to take Saul's place, he will not be the hand of Saul's destruction.

Note: I am compelled to point out that the use of this verse my church leaders and especially , pastors, to cut off confrontation and correction when it is needed is wrong. We are not God's anointed over the church. Jesus is the line of fulfillment of Kingly anointing. You must not confront or correct our heavenly Ruler. You must always bow to His will. But earthly elders/overseers/pastors/bishops are serving at the pleasure of God.

The Going of Saul

Oblivious to his danger, to how close he was to losing his life, Saul finishes his business, gets up and leaves the cave.

This is one of those scenes that movies are made for. The reader's imagination is meant to see the self-important arrogance of Saul while squatting ignominiously near the humble and honorable David.

Challenge – Showing the Proof of his Mercy (v.8-15)

Then David gets up, runs out of the cave and calls to Saul.

His Probing Question (v.9)

David probes deep into Saul's heart with his question. "Why does Saul listen to false accusations?" This such a good question. It probes not just that Saul is making decisions based on false information, but also the motivations behind it. Saul has known David a very long time. What in his relationship with David would give any credence to the idea that David wanted to kill him?

In other words, Saul's heart beliefs and wants are exposed in his listening to these counsel and charges. He knows David's godliness. But he is jealous and afraid – jealous over David's success and popularity and afraid for his future. Jealousy and fear are the roots from which his anger, vulnerability to false counsel and his willingness to carry out an ungodly pursuit and persecution of David.

His Proven Innocence (v.10-11)

God has given David an opportunity to demonstrate the kind of man he truly is. Saul is utterly at his mercy. God has put Saul in that position. But he will not do even what his men counsel him. He holds up the Word of God as his guide and the cut off piece of robe as his proof of innocence. He will not disobey God. He means Saul no personal harm. And here is the proof. I could have cut your throat instead of cutting your robe.

He asserts that he has not sinned against Saul nor has he sinned against God. There is no treason nor wrong even though he has what appears to all just cause for vengeance. He has been on the run for several years now. He has suffered personal loss and difficulty. He lives in very rough circumstances. And Saul is the cause of it all. But he will obey God regardless. He will not sin.

His Personal Reliance (v.12-15)

Now how can this be? Let's generalize here so that we can put ourselves in David's shoes:

You are in a position where you have someone you are to be in submission to. This could be a ministry leader, a boss at work, a spouse, a coach, a parent, maybe even your government.

That person has come to despise you – maybe through jealousy, fear, competition or personal animosity. They have decided to make your life miserable and are in a position to do so. They listen to false accusations. They attack you. They abuse you and cause you to suffer.

You have the opportunity in God's providence to destroy the person. God brings about a situation where you can bring all this to an end. Maybe you can get them fired, removed from their position of authority, humiliate them

or get them out of your life. You have the opportunity to strike back and your best friends and other Christians are telling you that's what you ought to do.

Now, what will you do? Will you respond as David has? If you want to respond like David, you are going to have to think like David. These verses give us David's thinking and wanting. Here are the faith commitments.

I RECOGNIZE THAT A WRONG EXISTS (v.12a). Attempts to minimize, deny or unilaterally forgive are neither Biblical nor helpful. When you are being sinned against, you must acknowledge that sin is being committed so that you know what Scriptures to go to, how to approach God and how to respond. When you deny what is true, even about your own situation, you are lying to yourself and thwarting the grace of God for the help needed. Acknowledge your situation.

GOD WILL JUDGE IN HIS OWN TIME (v.12b). This is a fundamental belief and confession of your heart. God is just and will settle the accounts. He may well wait until the judgment at the end of days. He may well impute them to Jesus' account. Commit to God's providence in judgment.

I WILL NOT STRIKE BACK EVEN IF I HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY (v.12c). As we will see in the last message in this series, not striking back in the midst of being sinned against is a basic Christian ethic. We are so prone even to physical violence, much less the kind of rearrangement of a bosses' files on the server that ruin his life! Do not strike back.

I WILL NOT RETURN EVIL FOR EVIL BECAUSE IT WILL ONLY LEAD TO MORE WICKEDNESS (v.13). Being sinned against never mitigates your own sin. In other words, just because you are being sinned against, you may not respond with what in other situations would be considered sin. Also, you must understand that responding with evil simple generates more evil. It has a cascading or domino effect. Do not make excuses in order to sin.

I WILL CONFESS MY LOWLINESS AND HUMBLENESS BEFORE GOD AND OTHERS (v.14). While humbleness and gentleness are much needed graces in all situations of life, they are essential to a right response like David's. A right sense of one's place in the Kingdom, of one's position before God and man will give perspective in the midst of suffering. We need to sense our smallness and lowliness. This will help us when we want to assert our rights and defend our reputations and seek recourse. Be humble and lowly before God.

I WILL ALLOW GOD TO DEFEND ME (v.15). When you are being attacked, particularly by someone who is in authority over you, you need to allow God to defend you. He knows exactly what is going on. He is at work to test you and to eventually bring forth the righteousness pleasing to Him. Commit yourself to self-defense only when God's reputation is at stake – then let it be a defense of God like David's. Allow God to defend you.

Brothers and sisters, these are somewhat easy to write, preach and even affirm until we are faced with the situation ourselves. This is why we must screw these truths deep into our souls as the renewing of our hearts that prepares us to please God.

Consequence – Settling the Conflict by his Promises(v.16-22)

So what is the rest of the story?

Saul's Remorse

(v.16)

Saul is struck with remorse and sorrow. The gentleness and faithfulness of David along with his demonstrated mercy breaks his heart. He grieved and broken. In the sight of his own army, David and his men and God, he weeps tears of contrition.

Saul's Repentance

(v.17-20)

Saul is graced with repentance. He admits his own sin. He admits he has provoked his own sin. He acknowledges he has sinned against David without cause. He invokes God's blessing upon David for the merciful good David has shown. He acknowledges that God has established David as the future king and that God will stabilize the kingdom under David's rule. He thus bows to the purposes and plans of God.

Now this should be heartening to us. We may not in our own situations see such immediate and dramatic responses. But we know that we will be pleasing to God. And we can hope by faith that God will be pleased to move in the hearts and lives of others to grant them repentance and an escape from the snares the devil has laid for them.

Saul's Response

(v.21-22)

As a response to his own affirmation of David's kingship and the acknowledgment that his own death will bring that about, he looks away from himself to his children. Why does he do this? Because it was a part of the world of their day that vengeance may be exacted against the offspring, against the sons and daughters. Also, it was common for kings to wipe out the records of their predecessors. There appear to be gaps in the Egyptian and Babylonian succession of kings as a result of this. Saul wants to protect his children and his heritage.

So, he asks David to swear that he would not kill his children nor erase him from the historical records. David swore this to Saul. This promise is going to emerge later when David seeks to do good for the sons or daughters of Saul instead of doing them evil. And of course, the history of Saul, both good and bad, has been Divinely preserved as a part of Scripture.

Through remorse and repentance we come to the place of reconciliation. The point of the author of 1 Samuel is to show to later generations, that in spite of Saul's sin and provocation, David did not bring about the fall of Saul's dynasty. He in fact refused when given the opportunity and the counsel to do so. He pleased God and preserved his integrity and honor even when being grievously and wrongfully sinned against.

Conclusion I want to conclude by telling you a personal illustration and reminding you of those heart affirmations needed when you will be sinned against by someone you are to be submitted to.

Personal illustration: *Given but not manuscripted.*

Yes, it is so extraordinarily difficult to please God when you are being sinned against by an authority and have the opportunity to strike back. However:

Acknowledge your situation.

Commit to God's providence in judgment.

Do not strike back.

Do not make excuses in order to sin.

Be humble and lowly before God.

Allow God to defend you.