

## 40. The Book of 1 Samuel—24:1-22

---

### *“Vengeance Belongs to God”*

(3/13/16)

(Give Background)

#### **I. The Outrageous Situation—v.1-3**

##### **1 Samuel 24:1-3 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now it happened, when Saul had returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, "Take note! David *is* in the Wilderness of En Gedi." <sup>2</sup> Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats. <sup>3</sup> So he came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there *was* a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs. (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.)

Now I don't want to be indelicate—but WOW!

To have your enemy in a position like this—it's just too good to be true!

Here Saul is chasing David all over the wilderness to kill him and now has to stop to use the bathroom—and picks the very cave that David and his men are hiding in!

In fact the situation was so over the top, tailor made for taking vengeance on their enemy that David's men assumed God had delivered Saul to them on a silver platter for them to kill him so that David could take the throne.

## II. The Soldier's Assumption—v.4

**1 Samuel 24:4 (NKJV)**

**<sup>4</sup> Then the men of David said to him, "This is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.' " And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe.**

We don't read anywhere in 1 Samuel where God ever said these words to David—that He would deliver Saul into his hands for him to take vengeance on him.

I personally believe that this was another assumption on the part of David's men.

Apparently they interpreted God's promise to David, that someday he would replace Saul as king of Israel—they interpreted that to mean that God was promising to someday deliver Saul into David's hands so that David could kill him and take the throne.

And now the circumstance seemed to bear that out because look here is Saul going to the bathroom in the very cave they were hiding in!

In fact it looked like such a 'slam dunk' that this was God's will that even David got caught up in the situation and cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

Let me stop here and say this—just because a course of action seems like a 'no brainer' doesn't necessarily mean that God is in it.

I mean just because you happened to be driving down a street at the exact moment when the realtor was putting the "For Sale" sign out front of some house.

And the house happened to be exactly what you were looking for—right down to the white picket fence and the flower boxes under the windows—doesn't mean this is automatically a sign from God that you should quickly make an offer before someone else does.

So often people make the assumption that something just has to be God's will because circumstances would never come together like this if God *wasn't* in it.

And so because we let our circumstances and our emotions dictate our actions instead of taking time to pray we make a hasty decision and then find out later on that we made a big mistake—whether we're talking about buying a house or choosing a spouse—emotions can lead us astray.

In this situation David's men got caught up in the emotion of the moment.

The passion to take revenge on someone who has hurt you or who is trying to hurt you when you have done nothing wrong to them and now the opportunity to take revenge presents itself—it's easy to think that God has orchestrated the situation to allow you to do that very thing.

And for a second that's exactly what David thought—until he stopped himself and realized that God hadn't handed Saul over to him so that he could take vengeance upon him—but so that he could show mercy to him!

This would have the effect of softening Saul's heart and hopefully turn an enemy into a friend.

I read once how a Massachusetts congressman named Thaddeus Stevens bitterly wished to 'crush' the South after the South lost to the North in the Civil War.

When he heard President Lincoln stress the importance of binding up the wounds of the nation by forgiving and reconciling—Stevens was furious and pounded his fist on the cabinet table and shouted, "*Mr. Lincoln, I think enemies ought to be destroyed!*"

To which President Lincoln quietly responded, “*Mr. Stevens, do I not destroy my enemy when I make him my friend?*”

Now you need to understand that *Saul* had turned against David, Saul was trying to kill David for no reason—David was truly being persecuted for righteousness sake.

But even though Saul hated David and wanted to kill him—David had always loved and respected Saul who, in many ways, had been a hero in his eyes. (Explain)

Not to mention the respect that David had for Saul who was anointed by God as Israel’s first king—this all fed into David’s conviction about not taking vengeance upon Saul when he had the chance.

### III. David’s Conviction—v.5-15

**1 Samuel 24:5-7 (NKJV)**

**<sup>5</sup> Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe. <sup>6</sup> And he said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD." <sup>7</sup> So David restrained his servants with *these* words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on *his* way.**

I have seen those in the Word of Faith movement use this passage to teach that you should never question the person that God has raised up to teach the Word of Faith message...

They are God’s anointed and as David refused to touch Saul because *he* was the Lord’s anointed—so must we never touch the Lord’s anointed (Word of Faith teachers) by challenging what they are teaching.

David didn't touch the Lord's anointed but he did rebuke the Lord's anointed. (1Sam.24:9-15)

Peter was certainly the Lord's anointed but Paul rebuked him to his face, not for heresy, but for hypocrisy and conduct unbefitting a Christian leader. (Explain)

Christian leaders are not infallible and sometimes need to be corrected—but false teachers need to be exposed and driven from the church.

If unhealthy teachings enter the Body of Christ, it becomes the responsibility of all its members to mobilize and purge it from the Body like white blood cells mobilize to purge invading diseases from the human body.

But if a physical body becomes incapable, for whatever reason, of purging itself of the disease that has invaded it—that body is going to grow weaker and weaker until it dies—just like a church body.

**1 John 4:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

**Acts 17:11 (NKJV)**

<sup>11</sup> These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so.

Today whenever Christians try to speak out against false teachings and the teachers that have brought them into the Church they are denounced and called divisive.

We hear the cry from those wanting to protect their leaders from correction—

*“Touch not the Lord's anointed!”* pointing to what David said when he refused to strike and kill Saul when he had the chance.

Again, David didn't touch the Lord's anointed *physically*—but he did rebuke the Lord's anointed *verbally*.

**1 Samuel 24:7-15 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> So David restrained his servants with *these* words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on *his* way. <sup>8</sup> David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down. <sup>9</sup> And David said to Saul: "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm'?" <sup>10</sup> Look, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and *someone* urged *me* to kill you. But *my eye* spared you, and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he *is* the LORD'S anointed.' <sup>11</sup> Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that *there is* neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it. <sup>12</sup> Let the LORD judge between you and me, and let the LORD avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you. <sup>13</sup> As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.' But my hand shall not be against you. <sup>14</sup> After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea? <sup>15</sup> Therefore let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand."

In verse 13 David quotes an ancient proverb that, not only happens to be true, but is very New Testament from a doctrinal point of view—

**A. Wickedness proceeds from the wicked**

You could modify that statement slightly and say with the same accuracy that "*sin proceeds from the sinner*".

You see sinning doesn't make a person a sinner—it only proves that they *are* a sinner.

My pastor used to like to say that stealing a horse doesn't make you a horse thief it just proves that you are one—because if you weren't a horse thief you could never steal a horse.

The action simply bears witness to what a person is—it's the fruit of their nature.

When I said this proverb that David quoted was very New Testament—I had something Jesus Himself said in mind—

**Matthew 7:15-20 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup> "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Jesus gives a very simple illustration from nature—that no one expects to pick grapes from a thorn bush or figs from thistles—why?

Because they just aren't capable of bringing forth good fruit (that which is nourishing and beneficial for life)—all they can do is bring forth after their kind.

Thorns proceed from thorn bushes just like sin proceeds from sinners—and that's why Jesus said, "*You will know them by their fruit.*"

The Bible says that anyone who doesn't have Jesus living in their hearts by faith is a sinner by nature.

It makes no difference that they consider themselves a Christian, or that they call themselves a Christian—the label doesn't change what they are by nature.

For example just because you hang a sign around a thorn bush that says "Apple Tree"—doesn't mean you're going to be able to pick apples from it.

Even so a person can wear a Christian t-shirt but that doesn't mean the fruit of the Spirit will grow from their life—that will only happen through a change in their nature (being born again).

You see it's as God said, *"Everything will bring forth after its kind."*

Thorns proceed from a thorn bush; and sin proceeds from the sinner—

And regardless of what a person verbally professes about themselves—the fruit in their life will be the ultimate revealer of what they are on the inside by nature.

It's as Paul said to Titus about some professing Christians—*"They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him..."* (Titus 1:16)

Or as John stated in his first epistle—

**1 John 3:7-9 (NLT)**

<sup>7</sup> Dear children, don't let anyone deceive you about this: When people do what is right, it shows that they are righteous, even as Christ is righteous. <sup>8</sup> But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup> Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God.

This isn't to say that an unbeliever never does anything good, or that a believer never does anything bad—John is simply laying out the general pattern of their lives.

When a person becomes a Christian they are no longer 'a sinner' (by nature)—they now have a new nature and are a child of God.

That doesn't mean they will never sin ever again—it just means they are a new creation and have gone (by nature) from sinner to saint (set apart from the world and having the nature of God).

That new nature will begin to manifest “*the fruits of righteousness*” as Paul said in Philippians 1:11 and they will no longer live habitually in sin.

And that brings us to the converse or flip side of our proverb—if wickedness proceeds from the wicked then:

## **B. Righteousness proceeds from the righteous**

Now the righteousness that proceeds from the righteous (Christian) can take on many different forms (obeying God's commandments, evangelizing the lost, helping the poor, loving ones enemies etc.)

However in looking at our text this morning I want to quickly draw out the one thing that was most evident in David's life—who was a righteous man (saved).

**1 Samuel 24:12 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> **Let the LORD judge between you and me, and let the LORD avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you.**

Many years later Paul the apostle would articulate this in Romans 12—

**Romans 12:18-21 (NLT)**

<sup>18</sup> Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup> Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, “I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the LORD. <sup>20</sup> Instead, “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.” <sup>21</sup> Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

Now let's not misunderstand David—he was an O.T. king and not a N.T. Christian.

He did take vengeance upon the Philistines—but only because they were the enemies of God.

When it came to his own personal enemies we see his heart for them expressed in Psalm 109—

**Psalm 109:1-5 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Do not keep silent, O God of my praise! <sup>2</sup> For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful Have opened against me; They have spoken against me with a lying tongue. <sup>3</sup> They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, And fought against me without a cause. <sup>4</sup> In return for my love they are my accusers, But I *give myself to prayer*. <sup>5</sup> Thus they have rewarded me evil for good, And hatred for my love.

David grieved over the evil others had done to him in response to the good he had shown to them.

His response was to pray for them and to continue to love them and do good to them—and then to bring the situation to God in prayer and to let God deal with his enemies—

But he never sought to bring vengeance upon them for what they had done to him.

**Psalm 35:11-16 (NKJV)**

<sup>11</sup> Fierce witnesses rise up; They ask me *things* that I do not know. <sup>12</sup> They reward me evil for good, *To* the sorrow of my soul. <sup>13</sup> But as for me, when they were sick, My clothing *was* sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; And my prayer would return to my own heart. <sup>14</sup> I paced about as though *he were* my friend *or* brother; I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns *for his* mother. <sup>15</sup> But in my adversity they rejoiced And gathered together; Attackers gathered against me, And I did not know *it*; They tore *at me* and did not cease; <sup>16</sup> With ungodly mockers at feasts They gnashed at me with their teeth. <sup>17</sup> **Lord, how long will You look on? Rescue me from their destructions, My precious *life* from the lions.**

Once again, David refused to take vengeance upon his enemies but rather looked to God to deal with them as He saw fit.

This was how David dealt with Saul—the same way that Jesus treated His enemies—

**1 Peter 2:23 (NKJV)**

<sup>23</sup> who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

And again the words of Paul seem applicable here—**“Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.” (Rom.12:21)**

And it seems that David’s kindness toward Saul did ‘conquer’ (at least for a time) the evil Saul sought to do to him.

#### **IV. Saul’s Confession—v.16-22**

**1 Samuel 24:16-19 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> So it was, when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, "*Is this your voice, my son David?*" And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. <sup>17</sup> Then he said to David: "*You **are** more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil.*" <sup>18</sup> And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the LORD delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. <sup>19</sup> For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day.

Here Saul makes an honest confession—he told David, "**You *are* more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil.**"

- Returning good for evil—that's *godly*.
- Returning good for good or evil for evil—that's *human*.
- But returning evil for good—that's *demonic*

I believe that, at very least, Saul is suffering a mental breakdown—and at worst he is demonically possessed.

Either way Saul's confession may have been sincere at that moment—just like a lot of people who, in a moment of raw self-examination, will confess they have done wrong in their lives.

The problem is it is momentary remorse and not genuine repentance. (Explain)

Saul's confession was nothing more than momentary remorse and not real repentance—how do I know—because in chapter 26 he's chasing David once again to kill him.

Alan Redpath—

*"If a man is emotionally upset, as Saul was, and awakens to his condition, but only weeps about it and still doesn't obey God, his second state is a thousand times worse than the first. Emotion that does not lead to action only leads deeper into sin and rebellion."*

First Saul makes an honest confession—then he makes a remarkable admission:

**1 Samuel 24:20-22 (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup> And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. <sup>21</sup> Therefore swear now to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father's house." <sup>22</sup> So David swore to Saul. And Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

After Saul acknowledged that David would someday be king he then asks him to promise that when he does become king he won't kill or mistreat Saul's descendants.

David graciously agrees and we see his kindness shown eventually to Jonathan's crippled son Mephibosheth, whom David adopted (2 Sam. 9).

Wickedness proceeds from the wicked; and righteousness proceeds from the righteous—or as Jesus put it *“by their fruits you will know them.”*

**Matthew 5:43-46 (NLT)**

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. <sup>44</sup> But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! <sup>45</sup> In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. <sup>46</sup> If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much.

**Matthew 5:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

One of the greatest ways I know to let your light shine in this world for Jesus is by showing kindness to those who hate you and have set themselves as enemies against you.

The first thing you do is pray for them.

Often there is a lot of pain going on inside of them (and maybe they blame God for it) so they take some of that pain out on you as a Christian (one who represents God).

Then you look for little ways you can show them kindness—always return good for their evil and never seek to retaliate or take vengeance upon them—this will demonstrate that you are truly a child of God and hopefully, by your witness, they will become one too.