

**1 Samuel 24**  
**March 5, 2023**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: How do you know (or how would you know) whether an opportunity to avenge someone who wants to harm you is coming from God, or when it is out of self-interest? What factors would you consider? [Let people engage]

**Transition:** We are getting ready to read one of the more familiar stories of the Bible where David might have felt temptation to kill Saul, who has been chasing David all this time to kill him! Men can be prone to interpret circumstances in accordance with their own inclinations, rather than in light of God's laws. David leaned on his strong faith in God, which saved David from falling into the snare of finding justifications to kill Saul. Let's read the text.

**BOOK:**

**David Spares Saul's Life**

**24** After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the Desert of En Gedi."<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. <sup>6</sup> 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."<sup>7</sup> With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.

<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> He said to Saul, "Why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you'?" <sup>10</sup> 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.'<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> As the old saying goes, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' so my hand will not touch you.

<sup>14</sup> "Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea?" <sup>15</sup> 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."

<sup>16</sup> When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" And he wept aloud. <sup>17</sup> "You are more righteous than I," he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. <sup>21</sup> 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.”

<sup>22</sup> So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

### **LOOK:**

It is important that we always test circumstances by the Word of God. So tender was David's heart that he repented openly of his rash deed of cutting Saul's robe; for he had not shown proper respect for the Lord's anointed. David, “a man after God's own heart,” was willing for God to take care of Saul (Rom. 12:19–21).

### **Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

***Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Sam 24). Victor Books.***

### **III. God Gave David Grace (24)**

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (Prov. 16:32). God gave David the grace needed to show kindness to his enemy, and this is even greater than defeating the giant Goliath. Saul's men had been lying about David and telling Saul that David was trying to slay him (24:9). If Psalm 7 fits into this event, as many

students believe, then Cush the Benjamite was chief of the liars. This experience gave David opportunity to prove to Saul and the leaders that he was not trying to slay Saul, but that he honored the king even though the king was out of the will of God.

*A. The temptation (vv. 1–7).*

Saul came into the cave to rest and relieve himself, probably laying his outer garment down as he entered. The cave was large and very dark, so he did not see David and his men hiding in the rocks. David was able to cut Saul's garment and not be detected. Certainly, this would have been the time to kill his enemy! In fact, some of David's men insisted that God had arranged the circumstances so that David might so act (v. 4). It is important that we always test circumstances by the Word of God. So tender was David's heart that he repented openly of his rash deed of cutting Saul's robe; for he had not shown proper respect for the Lord's anointed. David, "a man after God's own heart," was willing for God to take care of Saul (Rom. 12:19–21).

*B. The explanation (vv. 8–15).*

David and his men were safe in the cave, and Saul's men would not dare to attack them; so David boldly stepped out to speak to Saul once the king had gone some distance away. How shocked Saul must have been to hear the voice of his son-in-law! The piece of the robe was evidence enough that David was telling the truth. "I am but a flea, a dead dog!" said David. "To what advantage is it for you to chase me? But I am not going to kill you or trick you, for the Lord will fight my battles and plead my cause." What a gracious spirit God gave to David. Oh, that we might have this same attitude toward our enemies today.

*C. The supplication (vv. 16–22).*

Picture the pitiful Saul as he stands before one who is his better. Saul's weeping and his admission of guilt were but shallow, passing emotions; they did not really come from his heart. He was only too glad to acknowledge David's kindness. After all, David had spared his life! And Saul was concerned primarily for his own family, that, when David did become king, he would not slay them. Verse 20 indicates the perversity of Saul's heart: he admitted that David was the rightful king, yet he persisted in opposing him! David kept his promises to Saul and even vindicated Saul's honor after Saul's death. This beautifully illustrates Christ's words in Matt. 5:10–12. For David to show kindness to Saul, and to pray for him, was a greater victory than to overcome the Philistines. We can be sure, if we obey the Lord, that He will take care of our enemies for us in His good time.

**Merrill, E. H. (1985). 1 Samuel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, p. 451) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

**Chapter 24. Saul caught up with David at En Gedi and nearly found him. The LORD had other plans, however, and Saul's life was in David's hands as the king went to relieve himself (lit., "cover his feet," a euphemism, v. 3) in the same cave where David was hiding. So close was David that he cut off a piece of the king's robe as evidence of his opportunity to kill him. But even this act convicted David, who would not think of harming Saul bodily (vv. 5–7). David would not hurt the king, for he regarded Saul as the LORD's anointed (vv. 6, 10; cf. 26:9, 11,**

23). Yet, as **David** said, **the king** had no just cause for hunting him down (24:14–15). In repentance, **Saul** acknowledged David’s righteousness (vv. 17–19) and the fact that David would indeed **be king** (v. 20).

**Mathews, K. A. (1998). *The Historical Books*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (p. 117). Broadman & Holman Publishers.**

**David Spares Saul (24:1–22).** Saul pursued David into the region of En Gedi. There he went aside into one of the many caves nearby to relieve himself. David and his men were hidden in the back of the same cave. His men urged him to kill the king, but David chose to trust God’s providence. However, he quietly cut off the hem of Saul’s garment. David later regretted doing it, however, because the hem was symbolic of Saul’s position as the Lord’s anointed. Once the king left, David called out to him and showed the hem as evidence of his innocent intentions toward the king. Saul openly admitted his sin against David and confessed with his own mouth that the Lord had chosen David to be king.

**Philbeck, B. F. (1972). *1 Samuel*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary* (p. 176). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.**

### **Saul Delivered to David (1 Sam. 24:1–22)**

*The passage*—In the struggle between Saul and David, the people of Israel were confronted with an agonizing dilemma. Their new government which had been established to help unify the nation was torn asunder by the bitter power struggle. The resultant division reopened the way for domination by foreign powers. Clearly the nation had to be united, but behind whom? Was Saul truly a demented autocrat senselessly pursuing an innocent man, or was David a political opportunist seeking to usurp power from the king?

The biblical author seeks to resolve this question in his account of the meeting between Saul and David in the cave at En Gedi. With 3,000 crack troops at his command and with local citizens helping to locate his rival, the king seemingly had the upper hand. Once again, however, the Lord intervened—this time to deliver Saul into David’s hands.

David now had the power, seemingly a God-given opportunity, to remove the one last obstacle blocking his and Jonathan’s plan to restore stability to Israel’s government (23:15–18).

David, however, was not anxious to assume personal control of matters under divine jurisdiction. He, therefore, restrained his men and cut off only the border of Saul’s robe. If Saul was to be deposed as king of Israel, God would have to provide his own means for removing him from office. David would not lift up his hand against the Lord’s anointed.

Saul was forced to admit that his suspicions had been ungrounded and that David would indeed one day rule over Israel.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Samuel 24). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**