

A Perceptive Life

Faithfulness of God

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of 1 Samuel in the Old Testament, chapter 24. Now if you're a guest or visitor with us this morning, I want to welcome you to a journey through the book of the Bible, what we know as 1 Samuel, and one of the things that we've seen every single week, that there are two very much ideologies that are completely contrary to one another that are on a collision course in the book of 1 Samuel. On one side of the equation you have a culture, you have a society, you have a group of people who are determined to navigate their lives away from the sacred and into the secular. At the beginning of 1 Samuel, the Israelites, the people of God, those that were members of the covenant of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob decide that they're living according to the word of God, under the judges of God, but by the time we get to chapter 8, they decide they no longer want to do it God's way, they want to look like everybody else. In fact, one of the things they said in chapter 8 was, "Give us a king so we can be just like all the other nations."

Now we see this continuous slide toward secularism all the way through the book of 1 Samuel but particularly on this day. Aren't you thankful that God is faithful? Aren't you thankful that in spite of what is happening around us, in spite of what the environment or the culture may be, aren't you thankful that if you're willing to be committed to the way, the will, and the word of God, that he protects, he favors, and he cares for us? And that's what we see in 1 Samuel, and in particular as we continue on this latter half of 1 Samuel, we see these characters of Saul and David and, yes, Saul was the first king whose reign has been removed by God back in chapter 15, though he still wears the crown and, yes, David is the anointed future king as was done in chapter 16, but one of the things that we see with these two respective characters isn't just a transition of earthly power, they're more picturesque than that because Saul is the one that these Israelites, they fell over themselves for. Why? They wanted to look like everybody else so they got somebody who did exactly what they desired. He was head and shoulders above everybody else and he was just as secular and as carnal as they were. Then there's David, a man after God's own heart.

So the picture we see is not just of these two characters interacting with one another but Saul is somewhat representative of that secular society, that culture that wants to thumb its nose at God, and David is a picture of those of us, hopefully, who desire to maintain

and do it God's way in our life. Today when we come to chapter 24, we are going to talk about what does it mean to have a perceptive life, what does it mean to have discernment, what does it mean to actually realize what is happening around you. It's somewhat of a lengthy passage but beginning in verse 1 through 22, we have a very famous scene of Saul and David in Engedi. This is the scene where David is going to cut off the edge of Saul's robe. It says,

1 And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi. 2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. 3 And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. 4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. 5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. 6 And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD. 7 So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way. 8 David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself. 9 And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? 10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed. 11 Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. 12 The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. 13 As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. 14 After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea. 15 The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand. 16 And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. 17 And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. 18 And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me:

forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. 19 For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. 20 And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. 21 Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. 22 And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

It's a very famous scene. It's a story that we know of grace and of mercy and of forgiveness and of a contrite heart and humility, yes, but in the broader scope of the book of 1 Samuel I want to see how these two men, how their interaction so put on display the life that you and I are living today, and when I talk about living a perceptive life realizing what is happening around us, you're going to go ahead and have to forgive me in advance the nature of today's message, at least from my perspective, somewhat requires some sports illustrations, and I apologize in advance for that but it's just so oftentimes there are so picturesque on the field the lessons that we hear from scripture.

If I would have titled this in a very trite way today, I would have called it this, "Make sure your head's on a swivel." Now for those of you who have never been on any type of sports environment, it doesn't matter what sport you're playing when a coach says put your head on a swivel, what that means is you'd better make sure that you can see the whole field, you'd better make sure you can see everything going around you because if you get so locked into one particular aspect of the game you don't see that person who desires you harm coming from "the blindside."

So what's the first thing that we need to do to be perceptive, to have our head on a swivel? We need to realize our surroundings. Notice what happens in the first three verses. David has a little bit of a break. Now let me set the scene for you. He is now up to 600 men, and we studied last week these are men that were in debt, they were despondent, they were the left-behinds of the culture. He has 600 men. They do not have weapons. They do not have the fortitude to engage in a tradition classic battle. But what does Saul do? Saul goes out and fights the Philistines and as soon as he is done, he goes and gets 3,000 soldiers, not just any soldier but these are Special Forces, these are the best of the best, and he goes on the hunt. Why is this critical for us? Because there are times in our life where the enemy, Satan himself, is not overtly completely engaged with us. We're not in the "battle." There's a time, there are times in our life where we have the valleys, we have periods of rest and one of the best things that we can realize in light of that is that when you and I are in those times of rest, we need to make sure we don't forget two things: 1) the enemy is coming back, and 2) he's probably going to come back stronger than the last time that we had the engagement. There's an old adage that new levels mean new devils. What does that mean? That means that the more we grow with the Lord, the more we depend on him, the more we trust him and we believe, you think the enemy is just going to say, "Okay, fine, they're so strong in the Lord I'm done with

this one"? No. He says, "As soon as I'm done with this other skirmish, I'm going to get 3,000 Special Forces and I am coming after you."

So what did David do? He was completely prepared for what occurred. Now here's the illustration that comes from the sports world. This is, as I like to refer to, this is kind of the championship season of this sports season. There are high school teams, some have already won, some are preparing to win. There are college teams that are trying to become Bowl eligible and we're trying to decide who is going to make the playoff and who is not. And even the pro teams, we're starting to see some of the teams get weeded out of the playoff picture, others take a primary seat that we never expected. And again, I am not a coach and I understand that, but I've observed and I've played a whole lot of sports and one of the things I've observed is this, that championships oftentimes are won in the off-season. You say, "What do you say won in the off-season? They won the game and when they won the game they got to hoist the trophy." Yes, but one of the most significant reasons they hoisted that trophy up is because they worked harder in the off-season than the other teams did. They ran more. They lifted more. They went in at times where the coach said you didn't even have to come in. They put in the extra time in the off-season because they knew there was coming a time where the battle was going to get so intense they'd better be more prepared than their opponent.

When we talk about realizing our surroundings, there are times in our life where the enemy gives us a little cushion, he gives us a little space, and one of the biggest problems is that we can rest on our laurels, as we say in our culture, and we can go, "Phew, I finally get a break." But what we need to realize is when those breaks come, that's when we need to be training the most, that's when we need to be digging in, that's when we need to be fortifying ourselves with the Lord for the battle that's ahead. David did not say, "Woo, got that behind me, I guess I can kick back now." What did he do? No, he got his men and he got in a position of protection because he knew Saul was going to come back and he knew it was going to be bigger than ever.

The second thing is this: not only do we need to realize our surroundings but we need to very clearly resist temptation. Now when you get into verse 4 of this story it says that "the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand." Now when I talk about resisting temptation, I understand the Bible speaks of all kinds of temptations, all kinds of opportunities to fall into the trap of sin, but I want to speak to the temptations that are here in this passage because these oftentimes are the ones that trip us up the most. Here's the first temptation that David faced, the temptation of peer pressure. Who was it that planted the idea of going into Saul's cave? It was his mighty men. It was those who were "on his side."

Now when we use the term peer pressure, we typically think of growing up in adolescence and those struggles of kind of figuring out who we are and such, but one of the things I've observed in life is oftentimes adults, we're worse with peer pressure than the kids are at times, and here's the problem with peer pressure today, I'm just going to be just an open book. We've all faced peer pressure whether it was in high school or whether

an adult, and we've all faced it but here's the problem that you and I are facing today. Go back to when you were in grade school, go back to those adolescent years, there were people who unduly influenced you to do things you know you had no business doing, there were people that encouraged you to act out in ways that you knew you shouldn't have. Here's the problem: you knew where those people were, you know where to find them, and they knew where to find you. Sometimes it was in a locker room, sometimes it was on the playground, sometimes it was in chemistry class, but you knew who they were and you knew when the pressure was coming which meant there were times that you could navigate if you desired not to be pressured you could find a way to somehow avoid them. Can I welcome you to the 21st century? Peer pressure today is no longer the playground and the locker room, peer pressure is that device in your pocket that we think is smart, if you know what I mean. Twenty-four hours a day, 7 days a week, people you have never met are pressuring you to act out as they would. You see, it's no longer the locker room, it's no longer the playground. Today, we are feeling the pressure from all sides at all times.

Now what was the temptation? What did they tempt him to do? They tempted him – hear the Spirit clearly – to do the right thing at the wrong time. You want to talk about tripping up a believer, you want to talk about a tactic that the enemy can use in our lives? Because how often do we say, "But that's the right thing to do." I mean, after all, think about the story for just a moment. God has told Saul, he's told him, "You're no longer going to be king for the rest of the days." He's told David, "You're the new king." So what was the peer pressure? God said it, let's do it. Here's the problem: the timing was wrong.

Let me give you a good example. In the book of Matthew 4, respectively in Luke 4, Jesus is in the wilderness. The devil comes and he tempts him after 40 days. I'm sure you're familiar with the temptation and turn the rock into bread, jump off the Temple Mount, bow down to Satan, inherit all the kingdoms of the world, and I understand that traditionally, and rightfully so, we look at those three temptations and they line up perfectly with 1 John 2:15-17, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. I'm not here to discount that categorization of temptation and sin but here's the thing I want to share with you: every one of those temptations that Jesus Christ was presented with is a reality of his Second Coming. Let me unfold that for a moment. What did Satan say? "Turn that rock into bread." Do you know in Revelation 12 it says God's going to supernaturally feed his people again just like he did in the wilderness? He said, "Come out of the clouds. Fall down on the Temple Mount." The Bible says in Revelation 19 when Jesus returns physically with the armies of heaven he lands on Mount Zion. And then last but not least, "If you'll bow down and worship me I'll give you the kingdoms of the world." Revelation 11:15 says the kingdoms of this world have now become the kingdoms of our dear Lord.

You know, we talk about temptation a lot but can I be honest, believer? Rarely is the temptation in a believer's life to do "right versus wrong." Do you know what it oftentimes is? To do the right thing at the wrong time. How many times have you fallen into this trap, "Well, I know that it's six months away but let's just go ahead and act as if it's already here. Oh, I know that it hasn't been made official yet but let's go ahead and act as

if it has." Can you imagine? You know, I understand temptation is temptation, can you imagine if Jesus Christ had embraced all of those right things at the wrong time? You see, David knew he was going to be king. David knew that Saul one day would no longer be king and so what did he do? He let somebody talk him into doing something that God had already spoken to be true but at the wrong time.

So for you and I when we talk about being perceptive, yes, we need to see our environment, we need to see what's happening, but one of the biggest traps we fall into is this concept of, "Well, God's already spoken it to be true. I'm going to do it on my time not his." I do know there are times in our life where we're behind the curve when it comes to God, there are times where God is saying, "Come on, Jeff, I need you to hurry up. Come on," but do you know what happens most of the time? We get ahead of God. "But God, I want this so I'll just go to, shall we say, detrimental financial means to acquire it." And God says, "Well, if you had just given it the time, it would have all worked out."

There's 100 illustrations that we could use but David, unfortunately he fell into that trap and then we pick up the story in verse 8 and we see the revealing of truth. Now this is so important to the story because David is humbled, David is contrite, David is repentant, and as wonderful as that is one of the things that bothers us so much about this story is Saul. Why does Saul, even though he says he's in the wrong and David's in the right, you do realize in the next chapter Saul's coming back, right? And so the struggle we have is why is the truth not revealed? Why is it not laid out before us?

I want you to see something in verse 11. I know we ran through the passage somewhat quickly but there's one of those nuggets of truth here we need to explore. He says, "Moreover, my father," this is David speaking, "see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it." Now hopefully I'm going to state the obvious. Does it not bother any of you that Saul had no idea this happened? I mean, think about it for just a moment, you come in my house in the middle of the night and you get to crawling under my sheets, oh, we about to have a conversation and it's not gonna turn out well.

Saul did not even notice but it really wouldn't have played out the way it would in our home today. You know, if you've ever seen whether it be movies, documentaries, projects of such about royalty, about those who lived the lifestyle that a king or a queen does, one of the things that you'll know is this: they change clothes a lot. Y'all notice that? I mean, they've got a special outfit for this and a special outfit for that, and if you've ever toured one of the estates of some of these individuals, they'll tell you on the tour oftentimes they would change clothes 7-8 times a day. I mean, they'd get all dressed up just for dinner. I'm must grateful I made it to dinner, but nonetheless that's what they do.

You do realize that even King Saul, as we joke about today, he would have had a very special garment to wear to bed. You say, "Why is that?" You do understand all these soldiers, they're in the field of battle, they're interchanging themselves, they're coming in on shifts and such, and the reason that he wore it, one of the reasons was so that they

would know which one was the king. In other words, you don't wake him up at 5 o'clock to go do a tour, okay? He had a special garment that specially identified him as who he was. He gets up, starts going about his day and doesn't even realize that his own garment that identifies him has been tampered with.

Here's the truth that's been revealed and Romans 1 says it so eloquently, it talks about that when people get in a position where they reject the person of God and the things of God, it says that God gives them up – listen to this – and God gives them over to a reprobate mind. What does that mean? They are actually incapable of processing properly. They're unable to think of Godness in their lives. You say, "Why is this important to the story?" Understand that Saul and David are pictures of a greater scene that is happening here, and when we talk about having our head on a swivel, when we talk about not falling into temptation of the right thing at the wrong time, hear me clearly, that temptation to do the right thing at the wrong time is because we ever question and/or ask will God ever let the truth come out. And guess what happened? It did and it wasn't just in front of David, it was in front of everybody else and here's what everybody saw, that Saul was so oblivious to the things of God, his position and his authority, he didn't even notice when part of it was missing.

Think about that. Have you ever had one of those moments or maybe it's just me, where you're watching the news, you're reading the news and say, "Can nobody see this? Can nobody see what is happening?" You see, the thing is that even though this scene here in chapter 24 is dramatic with the skirt of his robe, it's not many chapters later where the whole world's going to see Saul's reprobate mind, the whole world is going to see how he processes and such, which leads to the final concept in verse 20 and 21. There is a resolve for action. Now this is an important understanding to this passage, and quite honestly if you're a believer in Jesus Christ it's going to be a hard pill to swallow. It says, "And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king." Saul's admitting it, he's owning it. "The kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house." What is Saul asking for and then how does David act on this? Saul knows, because remember the Israelites wanted to be like everybody else, right? Remember, "We want a king just like everybody else." So what does everybody else do? When the king dies whether it be in battle as Saul did, or whether it be by natural causes, if you are the king to replace the former king what do you do to all their relatives? You get rid of them because they are a threat to your reign.

This is why in Isaiah 6, you remember this famous passage where Isaiah says that he saw the Lord lifted up? Do you remember how that passage begins? "In the year that King Uzziah died." You say, "Well, why is that important?" Because the research shows he was probably related to King Uzziah and here he's saying, "Hey, there's a good chance that I'm gonna lose my life." He's in the foxhole of life and, by the way, when you're in the foxhole of life there are no atheists, and he's struggling and he's like, "Okay, God, I need to see you now because my life could be taken from me."

What does Saul ask? He says, "Would you treat me different than other entities treat their kings?" Now there's two layers to this. The first one is David did exactly that. Now Jonathan was his best friend, he was the son of Saul, but Jonathan and Saul actually die the same day in battle. But one thing you may not know is that Saul had another child, he had several, and one of the children that he had was a child that at an early age had a tragic accident. There was kind of an ambush on the palace and in the process of leaving somebody fell on top of him and he crippled his legs. He was unable to walk. He was unable to fight. He was unable to defend himself. You talk about low hanging fruit. I mean, that's easy to get rid of. There's a famous story in 2 Samuel where they say all of Saul's house is gone and David says, "Is there not one that I can give mercy to? Is there not one that I can fulfill this request?" And they said, "Oh yes, that child." He says, "Bring him to me." Do you know what David does? David takes the child of his archenemy and cares for him the rest of his life as if it's his own son.

Do you see the difference between the people of God and the world? The world would have said, "This is easy to take care of." But it's deeper than that. What was Saul asking to do and what did David respond by? How did he or what was his resolve? This is important. You've got to grasp this. David treated every descendant of Saul as their own person. He did not hold against them the actions of Saul. Now this revolutionary in our world today because we live in a society today where everybody wants to either A) be a part of a group or put you in a group, and if you're in the wrong group it doesn't matter what you do, it's wrong whatever you did, and if you're in the right group, you can do everything that's wrong and you get excused because you're in the right group. If you don't know that's called good preaching, just in case you're curious. Because that's the world we live in today and just because of how you were born, where you live or whatever it may be, you're either in the good one or the bad one because of somebody else. Not because of you. Hey, I've got people all the time tell me I'm stupid because I'm a Dallas Cowboys fan. I'm in a group, okay? I am still hoping and wishing and it probably won't ever happen. But all that being said, what did David say? David did not hold those who came from Saul guilty because of Saul's misbehavior and why is that important? Because he saw every individual as who they were before God and not in light of a group that they had nothing to do with, they just happened to naturally be a part of.

How does this transition? You know that peer pressure that we so easily fall into, that truth that we won't reveal so desperately that rarely comes on the timetable we want, there's going to come a day every single one of us, the Bible says in Hebrews 9:27, for men must die and face the judgment and here's one of the problems: there's a lot of people that are going to stand before God one day and say, "Guess what? I was in the right group. I was a Baptist." And God's going to say, "This isn't a group exercise. This is an individual exercise." There's a lot of people that you're going to stand before God one day and you're going to bow your head and say, "O God, I was in the wrong group. There's no hope for me." He says, "I'm not looking at you based on the group you're in, I'm looking at you for you." You see, the resolve to act is that we must resolve that every single individual on planet earth will stand before God in spite of whatever group they are a part of, and we as individuals must give an account to God. There's coming a day in my life where I'm going to stand before God and he's going to ask me, "All right, Meyers,

you see this beautiful place back here? Why should I let you in?" Because I was the pastor of the best Baptist church in America. He's going to say, "That's not a good answer." Oh, I'm from a Christian home. "I'm sorry that's not the right answer." Who are you? And one of the things that David did that we need to learn from is he did not allow one's group association to change how he interacted with them as individuals because that's what God does with us.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Maybe today you're one of those individuals in spite of whatever group you may or may not be associated with, maybe today you're one of those folks that said, "You know what? I thought I was good because I was in a certain group." Maybe today the Holy Spirit took the word of God and it really resonated with you this isn't about the group you're in or the group you're not, this is about you and your standing in relationship with the Lord. The Bible says in Romans 10 whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, that means whether you're in the right group or the wrong group, it doesn't matter what group you're in, it just says whoever you are if you realize you have a sin problem and you ask Jesus to save you, he will do so. If you're that person today, can I encourage you to have that conversation with the Lord? It's not a conversation that has to be held out loud. It's not a conversation that requires you to say the same thing that I or somebody else might say. This is just your heart's cry before God. Maybe your heart's cry, though, would sound a little something like this. "God, today I realize I'm going to stand before you one day and eternity is in the balance and, God, I have enough understanding to realize I've been places I shouldn't have been, I've done things I shouldn't have done, I've spoken words that should have never left my mouth and, God, your word says the wages, the result of my sin is death. And God, I not only believe it, I'm here to admit that I deserve it. But your word also says but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord and, God, today I just want you to know I believe, God, I believe there is nothing I can do to deserve your grace and eternity in heaven, there's nothing I can stop that will earn me that status. God, today I believe it is Jesus Christ and him alone. God, today I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he came on my behalf, he lived a sinless life on my behalf. God, today I believe that when he allowed himself to go to Mount Calvary when he was crucified, he was buried, and the price and the punishment of my sin and, God, today I believe that three days later when he rose from the grave he made it possible for my sin to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have the answers to all the issues and the struggles and the problems of this life but there's one thing I know: I've got a sin problem that only Jesus can solve. So the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today, maybe you're here in person, maybe you're watching online and if you're here in person can I encourage you in a moment after I pray and we stand and sing just to step out and step forward. We've got a whole team of people, we've got a room set aside, we'd love to hear your story, we'd love to pray with you, we'd love to pray for you, and maybe today is that day you take that step of faith. Or maybe today you say, "I'm already a believer. I need to follow in believer's baptism." Or maybe you're that person saying, "I need to be a part of a Bible-believing, people-loving church." We'd love the privilege of having that

conversation with you. Or maybe today you say, "You know what, pastor? There's nothing to step out and step forward on," but there might be a whole lot to step out and leave on today. Maybe today through the reading and the preaching of the word of God the Spirit of God showed you the changes that don't just need to happen in this place but as you leave this place.

Lord Jesus, as we come to this time of decision, thank you, thank you that in spite of our condition when we arrived that you are a God of mercy and grace and, God, today we thank you that in spite of us you love us, that in spite of us you're willing to save us, and in spite of us you care for us. And so, God, may we never take it for granted and may we show you by simply responding to however you've spoken in our lives. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.