

As we've been traveling with David through the wilderness of Judah, we arrive this week to chapter 24, and David's interaction with Saul. Chapter 24 actually records a three-part interaction between David and Saul—David Spares Saul (vv1-7), David Engages Saul (vv8-15), and David Promises Saul (vv16-22).

- I. David Spares Saul (vv1-7)
- II. David Engages Saul (vv8-15)
- III. David Promises Saul (vv16-22)
- IV. Three Important Lessons

I. David Spares Saul (vv1-7)

1. Having heard that David and his men were in the Wilderness of En Gendi, Saul took 3,000 chosen men and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats (v2).
2. On the way, Saul had to use the restroom, and so went into a cave, but unknown to him—"David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave" (v3).
3. V4—"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.'"
4. Now, let me say very clearly, nowhere in Scripture did God ever make such a promise like this to His beloved David.
5. But I can go even further—nowhere in the entire Bible has God made such a promise to any person, Old or New Testament.
6. "Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand (there's Scripture that says this), that you may do to him as it seems good to you (no Scripture says this)."
7. Thus, David's men encouraged him to kill Saul—it appeared God had providentially handed him over to David.
8. Again, we learn of David's righteous spirit, for instead of listening to others, he stood on the clear word of God.
9. Ex.20:13—"You shall not murder"—David chose to obey the clear word of God then follow unclear providence.
10. Having disrobed in order to relieve himself, David quietly cut off a corner of Saul's outer garment, v4b—"And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe."
11. Because kingly garments symbolized kingly rule, this may symbolize the fact that Saul's kingdom would soon be torn from him and given to David.
12. V5—"Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe"—literally, David's heart "struck him."
13. Why did his heart trouble or strike him? Verse 6 tells us—"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.'"
14. In other words, David was likely tempted to do as his men encouraged him—he was tempted to kill Saul and not merely cut his robe.
15. And thus, the very thought of killing him troubled him, or his conscience struck him, or gave him a hurtful blow.
16. Regardless of Saul's character, he was the LORD'S anointed, and thus, David knew Saul deserved to be respected.
17. V7—"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."
18. Thus, before we move onto our second heading, and consider David's speech to Saul, let me suggest three reasons why David refused to stretch out his hand against Saul.
19. (1) David knew Saul was God's appointed king, v6—"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."
20. In other words, David refused to raise his hand against a person appointed by God Himself—Saul was God's anointed.

21. Regardless of his character, Saul was appointed by God as king, and thus to kill Saul would be to dishonor God.
22. The Scripture teaches us, there is no authority but it has been appointed by God, and thus, we must respect it.
23. (2) David knew it wasn't his time to be king—David's men wanted David to shorten his path to sit on the throne.
24. David knew he wasn't at present ready to sit on the throne, and he was willing to patiently trust God's timeline.
25. And thus, in this sense the encouragement of his men was actually a serious temptation for David to dishonor God.
26. And thus, we learn an important lesson—just because a situation presents itself to us, doesn't mean it's from God.
27. And this goes back to something we learned last week—we must find direction from God's word and not feelings or mere providence.
28. David's men actually attribute this event to God's providence—"This is the day of which the LORD said to you."
29. This is the LORD'S doing! Surely this is a sign from heaven! God is obviously showing what He wants you to do!
30. But, none of that was true! Yes, God brought Saul to David's cave, but not for David to kill him, but trust God.
31. In other words—this was a test from God which David's men turned into a temptation! What God intends as a test man turns into a temptation.
32. And thus, David refused to raise his hand against Saul because he was willing to trust the LORD'S wisdom and timing.
33. A.W. Pink—"God was, in reality, *testing* David's faith, testing his patience, testing his piety. The testing of his faith lay in submission to the Word, which plainly says, 'thou shalt not kill.' The testing of his patience lay in his quietly waiting God's time to ascend the throne of Israel. The temptation before him was to take things into his own hands and rush matters."
34. (3) David knew vengeance belonged to the LORD—he knew he needed to trust God to take care of his enemies.
35. David knew that eventually, in the LORD'S perfect timing, He would enthrone David and He would deal with Saul.
36. Rom. 12:19—"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the LORD.'" V21—"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

II. David Engages Saul (vv8-15)

1. Saul having left the cave, David follows him, v8—"David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying."
2. Although David refused to raise his hand against Saul, he was not opposed to engage him in conversation—"My lord the king!"
3. V8—"And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down"—that is, he humbled himself before Saul.
4. V9—"And David said to Saul: 'Why do you listen to the word of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm?'"
5. In other words, David was exhorted Saul not to listen to those men who maintain the lie, that David sought his life.
6. In contrast to what Saul was being told, David appealed to three facts, or a three-fold evidence of the actual truth.
7. Thus, I want to suggest that David basically appealed to three things to Saul—providence, innocence, and justice.

8. (1) God's providence, v10—"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."
9. In other words, David reminded Saul, that God delivered him into his hand, and he could have easily killed him.
10. (2) His innocence, v11—"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."
11. In other words, David uses this present incident as an illustration to show Saul, he was innocent of all charges.
12. V9—"And David said to Saul, 'Why do you listen to the words of men who say, Indeed David seeks your harm.'"
13. (3) God's justice, v12—"Let the LORD judge between you and me, and let the LORD avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you."
14. In other words, David was willing to leave things with God—God will eventually judge the situation and that was enough.
15. V15—"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."
16. Thus, David refuses to harm Saul—he refuses to lift his hand against him—he refuses in any way to be a threat.
17. V14—"After whom has the king of Israel come out? A dead dog? A flea?"—a dead dog is harmless and presents no danger.
18. But notice David goes beyond this, for he not only likens himself to a dead dog, but a flea on the back of a dead dog.
19. Brethren, this is a very humbling statement of David—this is what David thought of himself in comparison to Saul.
20. What was David but a dead dog in comparison, or even worse, he was only an insignificant flea on the back of a dead dog.

III. David Promises Saul (vv16-22)

1. Within vv16-21, Saul responds to David—Saul shows a measure of regret and remorse and then ends by asking David a favor (v21).
2. V16—"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.'"
3. Now, as I will mention under our fourth and final point, while Saul's sorrow was real, it fell short of saving (evangelical).
4. In other words, Saul wasn't sorrowful for the right reasons—his sorrow was a selfish and directed truly to God.
5. (1) Saul describes David as more righteous than him, v17—"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.'"
6. This means, Saul acknowledged the fact that David was righteous and he was unrighteous—he admits he hated David without a cause.
7. (2) Saul confesses David's right to the kingdom, v20—"And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand."
8. Here Saul confesses that David was God's true anointed—God had anointed or prepared David to sit on the throne.
9. (3) Saul asks David to remember his descendants, v21—"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."
10. This simply means, Saul asked David not to kill all of his descendants for the sake of his own wicked behavior.
11. Saul actually uses an interesting word play in v21—he basically says—"Do not cut off my descendants as you've cut off my garment."

12. V22—"So David swore to Saul"—that is, he agreed not to be vindictive toward Saul's descendants and family.
13. Thus, David actually repeats his covenant vows made to Jonathan, a promise David will keep in 2Samuel chapter 9.
14. V22—"And Saul went him, but David and his men went up to the stronghold"—that is, the cave they lived in.
15. Thus, we find that David knew, to some extent, that Saul's repentance would be short-lived and not be trusted.
16. It's for this reason he returned to the cave and not with Saul—David knew Saul would again seek his life (which of course would prove true).

IV. Three Important Lessons

1. Here I simply want to suggest three important and evident lessons found in this chapter—a lesson about conscience, repentance, and temptation.
2. (1) A lesson about conscience—conscience is best defined as the voice of God within the soul of man—it's a common knowledge of right and wrong.
3. All men, as they are made in God's image, have a conscience—all men, to some extent, know what is right and wrong.
4. Now, this doesn't deny that fallen man's conscience is confused, misguided, ignored, and at times seared and deceived.
5. But it is to say, God uses man's conscience as a means to retrain him from acting as evil as he otherwise would.
6. It's through the conscience, that God Himself troubles us—that He stirs up (or troubles) the waters of our soul!
7. And yet, because of remaining sin, even the conscience of Christians can malfunction and at times act wrongly (thus, let me provide three simply helps in maintaining a good and healthy conscience).
8. (a) Conscience must be trained—by this I mean, our consciences must be informed and conformed by Holy Scripture.
9. This is what Paul meant in Romans 12:2—"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."
10. We must train our conscience by the law of God, otherwise, it can trouble us when it shouldn't, or else, not trouble us when it should.
11. This is why David's conscience was so sensitive—it troubled him over, what many would call, a very little matter.
12. All he did was cut the edge of Saul's garment—it's not as if he killed Saul, all he did was cut Saul's royal garment.
13. And yet, David's conscience troubled him—it struck him—his conscience gave him a painful and troubling blow.
14. You know brethren, it's actually a very good thing to have a conscience trained by the word, that will strike you when needed.
15. Prov.27:6—"Faithful are the wounds (blows) of a friend"—a well-trained conscience is a very faithful friend.
16. But we must train our consciences to the word or law of God, which necessitates that we rightly know God's word (law).
17. Brethren, opinions and traditions have their place, but we must be sure that our consciences are bound to Scripture.
18. (b) Conscience must be heeded—by this I mean, we must be careful to take heed to what our conscience says.
19. While our conscience can err, nevertheless, we would be foolish to ignore or disregard it whenever it troubles us.
20. The conscience is an alarm of sorts for the soul—for example, we have a home alarm that we set at night before bed.

21. On occasion one of the children will open the door in the morning, without turning it off and the alarm goes off.
22. Over the years I have learned, that if the alarm goes off in the morning, it's likely a false alarm, and there's no danger.
23. But, how foolish would I be to merely ignore it and go back to bed—I have to go downstairs to investigate the situation.
24. And so, it is, whenever our conscience alarms us, we have to check it out, and assume it's troubling us for a reason.
25. (c) Conscience must be washed—by this I mean, we must daily wash our conscience in the blood of Jesus Christ.
26. 1Jn.1:7—"If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."
27. What does John mean when he says—"the blood of Christ ongoing (or continuously) cleanses us from all sin"?
28. I fear we hear these phrases but fail to understand them—I think some Christians believe our souls are dirty, and every day, the blood cleanses us a little more, and one day, they will be perfectly clean.
29. Well, if that's what you think, then you fail to understand what John means—he's here talking about the conscience.
30. V8—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
31. John contrasts two types of people—there's those who deny their sin (or ignore their conscience), and there's others who confess it (or take heed to their conscience).
32. Those who confess their sins find forgiveness and cleansing—that is, God cleanses the conscience from all guilt and shame.
33. But, and here's my point, what does He use to cleanse the conscience from guilt and shame—"the blood of Jesus Christ His Son."
34. Now, let me ask you this question—"How does the blood of Jesus Christ, ongoingly cleanse from all guilt and shame?"
35. Well this is how—the Holy Spirit leads us, through the word, back to the cross, where we see all of our sins covered!
36. Hymn (704)—"Jesus, keep me near the cross; there a precious fountain, free to all a healing stream, flows from Calvary's mountain. Near the cross! O Lamb of God, bring its scenes before me; help me walk from day to day with its shadow ever me. In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever; till my raptured souls shall find rest beyond the river."
37. (2) A lesson about repentance—any person familiar with their Bible knows it speaks often about the need for repentance.
38. In fact, we've been considering our Savior's seven letters to His churches on Wednesday nights, and over and over again He exhorts them to repent.
39. All men need to repent—sinners need to repent in order to be saved, and saints need to repent in order to be sanctified.
40. And yet, what is repentance? Well, here I don't intend to give a detailed treatment of the all that repentance entails.
41. Children's Catechism—"Q. What is it to repent? A. To be sorry for sin, to hate and forsake it because it is displeasing to God."
42. In other words, there are three key ingredients to repentance—to be sorry for it, to hate it, and to forsake it (all because it displeases God).
43. This means true repentance begins in the heart with a true sight and sense of sin—this leads to hating and forsaking it.
44. It starts with a right view of sin, which leads to a sorrow for sin, a hatred for sin, and then a forsaking of sin.
45. Now, the Scripture distinguishes between two types (or kinds) of sorrow—one leads to death the other leads to life.

46. 2Cor.7:10—"For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."
47. Notice, there is a "godly sorrow" and a "worldly sorrow"—the one leads to salvation and the other produces death.
48. Matt.27:3-5—"Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood,' And they said, 'What is that to us? You see to it!' Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself."
49. There are many similarities between Saul and Judas—Saul hated David without a cause, and Judas hated Christ without a cause.
50. Saul sought to kill David, and Judas sought to kill Christ—Saul was remorseful for his actions, and so was Judas.
51. Saul realized that David was innocent, and Judas realized that Christ was innocent—Saul eventually killed himself, and so did Judas.
52. Thus, both Saul and Judas were remorseful for their actions, but neither of them had what Paul called—"godly sorrow."
53. Brethren, this is an important reminder—just because a person feels remorse and sheds tears, doesn't mean they are truly penitent.
54. And so, here I want to suggest five descriptions of true or godly sorrow in contrast to that which produces death.
55. (a) True sorrow is for sin—by this I mean, godly sorrow mourns for the nature and not merely consequences of sin.
56. Most people weep for the consequences of sin—these consequences include physical, social, and emotional elements.
57. Saul wept because he knew what he was doing was wrong, and he knew the kingdom would be taken from him.
58. Brethren, before I was a Christian, I used to cry all the time, but whatever I had, it was not true and godly sorrow.
59. I used to cry because of the consequences of behavior, I used to cry because I was selfish and consumed with myself.
60. But true and godly sorrow weeps because of the nature of sin—because it's a violation of God's holy law and an affront on God Himself.
61. (b) True sorrow is lasting—by this I mean, it's not short-lived and passing—it's durable and not transient or temporary.
62. Though Saul weeps in chapter 24, we'll see in chapter 25 it doesn't last—the remorse he felt did not last long!
63. You know, there are some of you present, who have felt remorse over your sin, but for various reasons it didn't last.
64. (c) True sorrow is universal—by this I mean, true repentance sorrows for every sin and not merely certain sins.
65. Worldly sorrow is selective—it weeps for certain open and outward sins that the bring shame and embarrassment.
66. But true and godly sorrow weeps for all sins—heart sins, secret sins, and even sins the world celebrates or accepts.
67. (d) True sorrow is energetic—by this I mean, true sorrow for sin leads to hatred for sin and then forsaking sin.
68. Remember our definition of repentance—"To be sorry for sin, to hate and forsake it, because it's displeasing to God."
69. Prov.28:13—"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy."
70. Now, this doesn't mean, you will never commit that sin again, no, you have to hate and forsake it many times.

71. But here's the point—true repentance does not simply give in and live in any sin without hating and forsaking it.
72. (e) True sorrow is faithful—here I am using the word "faithful" in a specific sense to mean it's also "full of faith."
73. True sorry for sin always ends in Christ—and this is the most obvious difference between godly and worldly sorrow.
74. When Saul and Judas wept, they did not turn from their sins to God's mercy, grace, love, and forgiveness in Christ.
75. Perhaps I can put it like this—true sorrow for sin is never an end in itself, but only a means to an end which is Christ.
76. (3) A lesson about temptation—here I am thinking about David being tempted by his people to put Saul to death.
77. In short, David was tempted to go to the throne, without having to endure all that the wilderness brought with it.
78. He was tempted to go straight to the throne without the suffering—he was tempted with a crown minus its cross.
79. Doesn't this sound familiar? If you remember, no sooner was our Savior anointed, He was led into the wilderness.
80. Matt.4:8-9—"Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.'"
81. The kingdoms of this world had already been promised Christ by His Father, within the eternal covenant of redemption.
82. But Satan promised these without the cross—basically what he said was this—Worship me and these are Yours without the cross.
83. This was really what David's friends were promising him—Why take the long route through the wilderness to the throne?
84. This is the question every Christian faces! Why must I enter heaven through a wilderness and not merely straightway?
85. Well, here's why—God always brings His people to heaven through the wilderness—before a crown there's a cross.
86. This was true of David, it's been true of every other Christian, and dear brethren, it was also true of our Beloved Savior.