

BOOK OF 1 SAMUEL
HANDLING OUR ENEMIES
1 SAMUEL 24:1-22

Introduction

A reporter was interviewing a man on his 100th birthday, and asked, “What are you most proud of?” “Well,” said the old man, pondering the question, “I don’t have an enemy in the world.” “That’s quite an achievement!” said the reporter. “Yep,” added the old man, “I’ve outlived every last one of them.”

There isn’t anyone I know of who can has made it through life without collecting at least an enemy or two (or more)... especially those of us who are believers and even more so those who are actively living for the LORD and doing the LORD’s work.

We can try our best to get along with everybody, but **there are always some people who just won’t cooperate with us!** Right? Misunderstandings happen, our motives can be wrongly judged, other things can happen and bad blood can put even the best of us at odds with others.

I know it might be hard to believe, but do you know there are some people who just plain don’t like me, and what’s more, they never will like me.

Chuck Swindoll once said, *“Friends come and go, but enemies accumulate.”* That’s sad, but true!

So, how are we to deal with our enemies? How should we handle someone who is out to get us—who would like nothing better than to get the best of us?

I believe that David gives us a great example here in this chapter! We’ve been looking for weeks as the story of this confrontation between David and King Saul has unfolded.

Let’s see what this chapter reveals to us regarding this matter.

**I. DAVID HANDLED HIS ENEMY BY SHOWING HIM MERCY.
(Vs. 1-8)**

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We’ve seen this confrontation here between King Saul and David—Saul’s son-in-law. We’ve seen the persistence of Saul! At least when it came to David he was persistent! He was not easily discouraged in this quest of his to track down and kill David.

We last saw a close encounter in chapter 23 where it appeared Saul was about to be successful, but an attack by the Philistines sent him running home to defend his kingdom.

As soon as that threat was taken care of though, we see now that he once again regrouped to pursue David. He tracked him to an area known as *“En-ge-di”* which means *“rocks of the wild goats”*, suggesting that it was an area that only goats could navigate well.

He didn’t know it, but he was actually very close to David and his men.

Saul and his men arrived at some sheep pens near a cave, and Saul had to stop. Why? In vs. 3 it says that he had *“to cover his feet.”* No doubt he was tired and needed a rest!

But Saul entered this cave where David and his men were already in the cave, keeping just out of sight in the darkness.

Do you get the picture? King Saul, went to sleep surrounded in the darkness by his enemy and his enemy’s army—this definitely was not a good position for Saul to be in!

David’s men saw this as a perfect chance to solve the Saul problem. So, David crept up to Saul, who was totally unaware of what was going on...he took out his knife...he raised it...and then—he cut off a corner of Saul’s robe.

Not exactly what David’s men had in mind! They wanted David to let them have a stab at it and take care of Saul for good!

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But David felt guilty even for cutting off this piece of cloth. As David saw it, this man was still God's chosen king to be dethroned by God alone!

Nobody had the right to disgrace him, much less kill him. David showed mercy to Saul not just for Saul's sake, but for God's sake!

David handled his enemy **not through murder, but through mercy!** Would Saul have shown mercy to David? No!—David, no doubt, would have been a dead man if the roles were reversed! But this just shows the difference between a man after God's own heart and a man who has turned his back on God.

This is how we should handle an enemy—When they are at their weakest and most vulnerable moment, when they are helpless and unaware, when the opportunity is there to take revenge and to make them pay—then show them mercy. Spare them your wrath. Why?

1. Because Jesus Commanded It!

Luke 6:27 "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,"

Jesus repeated this command found throughout the Bible: show mercy to your enemies.

2. Because When We Show Mercy To Our Enemies, We Rise Above Them Instead Of Sinking Down To Their Level!

Luke 6:32 "For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them."

Luke 6:35-36 35 "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. 36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

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Who won this battle we see here? David did...because he obeyed God, and did not violate his conscience.

During the Revolutionary War there lived a Baptist pastor in Ephrata, Pennsylvania named Peter Miller who was a close friend of General Washington. In that same town also lived Michael Wittman, an evil-minded man who did all he could to abuse and oppose this pastor. One day Michael Wittman was caught in a plot against the Colonial army and was arrested and sentenced to death. When the old preacher heard about Wittman's arrest, he started out on foot and walked 70 miles to Philadelphia to plead for this man's life. Washington said, "No, Peter, I cannot grant you the life of your friend." The preacher exclaimed, "He is not my friend--he is the bitterest enemy I have." Washington cried, "What? You've walked 70 miles to save the life of an enemy? That puts the matter in a different light. I will grant the pardon." And he did. And Peter Miller took Michael Wittman from the very shadow of death back to his own home in Ephrata--no longer as an enemy, but as a friend.

**II. DAVID HANDLED HIS ENEMY BY SHOWING HIM MERCY...
DAVID HANDLED HIS ENEMY BY MAKING AN EFFORT TO
COMMUNICATE WITH HIM IN A CIVIL WAY. (Vs. 9-16)**

One of the things that often keeps people at odds with one another is a lack of communication. Disagreements escalate into feuds all because two offended people will **talk about one another**, but never get around to **talking to one another**.

But David teaches us to make an effort to communicate with them. No sooner did Saul come out from the cave than David took his life into his own hands. He called out to Saul, reaching out to communicate with his enemy.

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A. He Communicated Humbly.

David bowed to the ground before Saul, not in worship, but in humility. He wanted Saul to see that he respected his authority as God's anointed king, and that he had no desire to fight against him.

B. He Communicated Tactfully.

When David showed Saul the corner he cut off his robe, he was showing the king that he did not want to do him harm. He did not want this fight, even if Saul did!

David gently reminded Saul who was hunting who, and how he personally was trusting God to save him from the king's clutches. David spoke the truth to Saul carefully, presenting his innocence, and trying to appeal to Saul's sense of justice to end this conflict.

C. He Communicated Sincerely.

David was not just trying to pull one over on Saul, he was sincere. He wanted Saul to know that he had nothing to fear from him! He wanted him to know that even though Saul had done him evil, he was not looking to repay evil for evil.

David spoke from his heart, because he didn't want to be at war with Saul.

More times than we realize, if people would just keep the lines of communication open, there would be less conflict, and more understanding. But how we communicate with our enemy makes all the difference in the world.

We cannot expect our enemies to listen to us when we have an attitude of arrogance and revenge. That's like throwing fuel on the fire, because proud angry words only stir up more trouble.

We must speak truthfully, and tactfully with sincerity.

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Remember that it not only matters what we say, but how we say it.

Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

We shouldn't offer empty flattery or deceitful words. But neither should we unload everything that's on our mind or in our heart either. Sometimes just talking things out can disarm even the most hostile foe.

A Christian lady owned two chickens that got out of their coop and busied themselves in the garden of an ill-tempered neighbor. The man caught the hens, wrung their necks, and threw them back over the fence. Naturally, the woman was upset, but she didn't get angry and rush over and scream at him. Instead, she took the birds, dressed them out, and prepared two chicken pies.

Then she delivered one of the freshly baked pies to the man who had killed her hens. She apologized for not being more careful about keeping her chickens in her own yard. Her children, expecting an angry scene, hid behind a bush to see the man's face and hear what he'd say. But he was speechless! That chicken pie and apology filled him with a burning sense of shame. But she wasn't trying to get even. Her motive in returning good for evil was to show her neighbor true Christian love, and maybe even bring about a change of heart.

Could you do something like that? With God's help, you can. God can help us communicate with our enemies—not in anger or pride, but in humility and love.

Is it easy? No...but neither is it impossible. It's just that most folks would rather let their wounds fester and grow worse than to reach out with the love of God.

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*DAVID HANDLED HIS ENEMY BY SHOWING HIM MERCY...
DAVID HANDLED HIS ENEMY BY MAKING AN EFFORT TO
COMMUNICATE WITH HIM IN A CIVIL WAY!*

**III. DAVID HANDLED HIS ENEMY BY MAKING AN EFFORT
TO BE RECONCILED WITH HIM. (Vs. 17-22)**

We must do more than just call a truce—we must do what we can to be reconciled. David demonstrated his willingness to be reconciled to Saul in these verses.

Saul was genuinely touched by David's mercy towards him. In between sobs, he admitted that David was in the right, that the Lord had given David the kingdom.

He even prayed for God to bless David, and begged David to show mercy to Saul's family after he dies. So we see here how David conquered his enemy, not with a sword or other weapon of the flesh, but by his kindness, and Saul offered to be reconciled with David.

How would we have responded to Saul's offer? Would we have let bygones be bygones, or would we have been a little more suspicious, a little more cynical? Would we have said, *"I'm glad you're sorry Saul, but I still don't trust you. Let's see how things go for awhile before I make any commitments here."*

That is not what David did. David's oath was a sign of his reconciliation with Saul. Through reconciliation David had successfully handled his enemy...at least for the moment.

Saul and David said the right words, but was Saul serious about his desire to be at peace with David? Unfortunately, he was not! We will find that he again pursued David, still trying to kill him. His remorse was short-lived.

Though David was sincere about his commitment to reconcile with Saul, Saul's commitment to reconcile with David did not stand the test of time.

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Hebrews 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Romans 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

When we choose to seek to reconcile with our enemies, we may be surprised to find some of them becoming close friends. But even if our enemy fights against all our efforts to reconcile, we still are to give it our best effort as David did!

Not everyone wants to be at peace with us. Some of our enemies may even call a truce just to get a chance to sharpen the knife they want to put in our back.

We ought to be loving, and forgiving, but that doesn't mean we are to be foolish. Jesus told His disciples:
Matthew 10:16 "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

Jesus is saying that while we ought never to be too suspicious, we ought always to be cautious. We need to be quick to reconcile with our enemies, but we also need to be wise enough to be make sure our reconciliation is real.

David reconciled with Saul because he sincerely wanted to patch things up; but Saul soon forgot his tearful words. So, we must be wise about reconciliation, too.

David's attitude and actions are a vivid illustration of the words of the apostle Paul, who gives this advice:
Romans 12:17 "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men." Vs. 20-21 "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."