

Enemy Love 101

David the Fugitive Pt.5

1 Samuel 23:19-24:22 4-5-2009

Summary: David's own people kept betraying him to Saul, but God rescued David through the Philistines. God brought Saul to David, but David refused to touch him. He cut his robe but then repented of that. David loved his enemies (he was able to do so because he left vengeance to God) and respected Saul (because he honored God's authority). Saul's hard heart was finally touched.

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23:19 The Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hakilah, south of Jeshimon? **20** Now, O king, come down whenever it pleases you to do so, and we will be responsible for handing him over to the king." **21** Saul replied, "The LORD bless you for your concern for me. **22** Go and make further preparation. Find out where David usually goes and who has seen him there. They tell me he is very crafty. **23** Find out about all the hiding places he uses and come back to me with definite information. Then I will go with you; if he is in the area, I will track him down among all the clans of Judah." **24** So they set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the Desert of Maon, in the Arabah south of Jeshimon. **25** Saul and his men began the search, and when David was told about it, he went down to the rock and stayed in the Desert of Maon. When Saul heard this, he went into the Desert of Maon in pursuit of David. **26** Saul was going along one side of the mountain, and David and his men were on the other side, hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men to capture them, **27** a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the land." **28** Then Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. That is why they call this place Sela Hammahlekoth. **29** And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of En Gedi.

24:1 After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the Desert of En Gedi." **2** So Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crag of the Wild Goats. **3** 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. **4** 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. **5** Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. **6** 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." **7** With these words

David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way. 8 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. 9 He said to Saul, "Why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you'? 10 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.' 11 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. 12 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. 13 As the old saying goes, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' so my hand will not touch you. 14 "Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? 15 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." 16 When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" And he wept aloud. 17 "You are more righteous than I," he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. 18 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. 19 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. 20 I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. 21 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." 22 So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

Introduction

Well, I got mad at the garbage man this week. Lately I have noticed that I have been kind of irritable and easily angered, which is always a symptom of selfishness and pride. The more selfish you are the smaller the thing it takes to irritate you. So I knew things were getting bad when I found myself wanting to get revenge on our garbage man for not taking the extra garbage I put out. I actually thought about calling his boss – even though it would do nothing to take care of my garbage problem. Sometimes God gives you a wakeup call like when you wake up one day and realize, *Man, I'm off the deep end of petty selfishness!*

Something that minor really should not even register in our hearts as being even worth noticing. But what about offenses that are worth noticing? There are some offences that God *wants* us to take note of so that they can fulfill their purpose of testing the condition of our hearts. How you respond to an offense is a very accurate gage of your spiritual maturity.

So what is the right way to respond to a malicious attack? What is the godly response? David wrote imprecatory psalms (psalms calling on God to punish his enemies). How do we balance that with Jesus' command to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us? In today's passage David is going to give us a crash course on how to love your enemies.

Those back-stabbing Ziphites! 23:19-24:1

We pick up the story in verse 19 of chapter 23. Jonathan has just come to David, helped him find strength in God, and then left.

19 The Ziphites (people from David's own tribe) went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hakilah, south of Jeshimon? 20 Now, O king, come down whenever it pleases you to do so, and we will be responsible for handing him over to the king."

So people from David's own tribe are stabbing him in the back – which makes Saul very happy.

21 Saul replied, "The LORD bless you for your concern for me.

That is just amazing. Saul calls upon God to bless these people for helping him carry out his rebellion against God. (Do not ever think that religious lingo is any sign of a godly heart. There are some very wicked people who know exactly how to sound like a mature Christian in their speech.)

22 Go and make further preparation. Find out where David usually goes and who has seen him there. They tell me he is very crafty.

Literally, "It is told to me that he is *crafty* crafty." Today he would say, "He's just crazy crafty." The Ziphites come to Saul and say, "We know right where he is. We are telling you – we have pinpointed the exact hillside. We can take you right to him." Saul: "You don't understand who we are dealing with. This guy is crazy smart and crazy slippery. You can't just spot him on a hill one day and think you'll get him if you go after him." And so Saul gives a whole list of instructions. First he says, "Go and make further preparation." The word there means "establish" – make sure your intel is rock solid.

22 ... Find out where he usually goes and who has seen him there.

"Conduct some interviews. Talk to folks in the area so you can get a profile on his patterns. I want to know where he goes in the morning, the afternoon, at night, where he eats, drinks, sleeps. I want to know what his response is when there is a threat – what are his emergency procedures, lines of retreat, where does he hide – I want the names of the people who have seen him - I want to know everything."

23 Find out about all the hiding places he uses and come back to me with definite information. Then I will go with you; if he is in the area, I will track him down among all the clans of Judah." 24 So they set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul.

Saul has led the Israelite military for many, many years. He is not just chasing after David like you and I would chase someone. He and his generals are the top experts on this sort of thing in the country.¹ And he is leaving nothing to chance in this operation.

And it works.

24 ...Now David and his men were in the Desert of Maon, in the Arabah south of Jeshimon. 25 Saul and his men began the search, and when David was told about it, he went down to the rock and stayed in the Desert of Maon. When Saul heard this, he went into the Desert of Maon in pursuit of David. 26 Saul was going along one side of the mountain, and David and his men were on the other side, hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men to capture them,

This could not be more dramatic. The word translated "closing in" means *to surround*. Saul uses a kind of pincer movement, which is the oldest military maneuver in the book. It involves surrounding the enemy and closing in.

Saul knew David's location and he knew his escape routes. Thanks to the Ziphites, David does not have a chance. So Saul sends out a detachment around the south side near the bottom and another group around the north side near the bottom so when David heads down that east side he will run right into two detachments coming up toward him, and Saul will be coming from behind. It is a foolproof plan and there is really no way out for David.

¹According to 2 Samuel 1:23 he was swifter than an eagle and stronger than a lion.

David had first heard that Saul was approaching when he was in the Arabah so David takes off and makes it to Maon. But when he gets to Maon he finds himself surrounded by Saul's forces. And in verse 26 they have him. Saul has men coming at David from every direction.

26 David and his men were on the other side, hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men to capture them,

The word translated "hurrying" refers to being in a state of alarm.

David knows there is no way out. Saul's army vastly outnumbers David's, all his escape routes are cut off, and now Saul just methodically tightens the noose. This is it.

David turns around and sees Saul approaching from above him. He sees the group coming up from below on this side, and on that side. What do you do in a situation like this? David turns to his strongest and best men who have made a circle around him and says, "You know, this gives me a great idea for a psalm."

Psalm 54:1 For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A maskil of David. When the Ziphites had gone to Saul and said, "Is not David hiding among us?"

This is the prayer David prayed at that time:

1 Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might. 2 Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth.

He pleads with God to hear him. "I cannot afford to just pray out of routine or custom right now – this has got to be true prayer that rises to heaven and comes into Your ears." What good is my prayer if God does not listen to it? The world thinks prayer itself – just the act of praying – is somehow psychologically beneficial. But David is not the least bit interested in prayer for prayer's sake. He is interested in one thing – God hearing him. If God does not attend to this prayer, David is finished.

3 Strangers are attacking me; ruthless men seek my life-- men without regard for God.

It would be bad enough if it were just a matter of being hunted by Saul. But when your own tribe turns against you and betrays you for no reason, and people who do not even know you hate you and are going out of their way to hurt you that is hard to take.

The Ziphites are looking for political gain, and so they are quick to sell David out. In chapter 24 they do it again, and then again in chapter 26.

1 Samuel 26:1 The Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Is not David hiding on the hill of Hakilah, which faces Jeshimon?"

Again and again David keeps making narrow escapes, but then these Ziphites always betray him again.

These people were a huge problem for David. They should be his allies, and yet they are worse than Doeg. Doeg had to be coerced into giving up information about David. But the Ziphites go out of their way to betray David, and then they conduct all this reconnaissance work so that David can have no escape.

How do you handle that when someone who should be supporting you betrays you instead? How do you deal with the pain of being stabbed in the back?

Psalm 54:4 Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me. 5 Let evil recoil on those who slander me; in your faithfulness destroy them. 6 I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you; I will

praise your name, O LORD, for it is good. 7 For he has delivered me from all my troubles, and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.

David does not know if God is going to deliver him here. But he gets to thinking about what God has already done for him and it generates such joy in his heart that he feels compelled to express it. His circumstances have not changed at all, but now he has joy and hope in God.

Escape

Back to 1 Samuel 23. David is trapped, and Saul can taste victory. He is already thinking of what he is going to say when he puts David to death. But his thoughts are interrupted “My lord the king! My lord the king!” Abner turns to see who would dare approach king Saul’s forces from behind. “Identify yourself!” He struggles to catch his breath.

27 a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the land."

Maybe with Gibeah unguarded the Philistines were going after Saul’s capital. Saul has one of those moments where you know what you have to do, but it is just so hard to accept. He is so close. But he realizes he has to leave, and he has to leave right now.

28 Then Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. That is why they call this place Sela Hammahlekoth.

That probably means “place of division.”

So the Philistines inadvertently save the life of the man who will spend the next 40 years annihilating them in battle time after time. God rescues David from his enemies by means of his other enemies. Who knows how many of us would have been dead a long time ago if God did not allow our enemies to keep interfering with each other? I imagine that happens among demons every day. One demon is waiting around the corner to destroy you, and God allows another demon to get a better idea of how to destroy you, and while they get into a big fight over it you walk away untouched. For all you know that happened this morning on the way to church – or while you slept last night.

So Saul has to go deal with the Philistine attack. And when that is taken care of he hurries back to pick up where he left off with David. But now David is gone. Saul looks around and thinks, “Where is he?” Parker. Specifically, E-470 and South Parker Rd.

29 And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of En Gedi.

That is about 15 miles straight east. If you compare a scale map of Denver, Saul’s headquarters are up here where we are (I-25 and 104th). And that place where Saul had him surrounded was Chatfield reservoir. So Saul returns to Chatfield Reservoir, but now David is in Parker.

But that is no problem for Saul, because he has those Ziphites informing him about everything.

1 Samuel 24:1 After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the Desert of En Gedi."

No mention at all of how the battle with the Philistines went, but Saul seems to be in one piece so presumably he won.

2 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.

The phrase “chosen men” refers to soldiers who were especially skilled² – the crack troops. These are the Israelite Special Forces.

David Gains the Upper Hand

Saul finds out that David is in the Crag of the Wild goats and so he is headed there. But David is already on the move. And he probably doesn't realize it, but he is headed straight for Saul. Saul is headed to the Crag and David is coming from the Crag and their paths intersect in a place called “the sheep pens.”

I don't know if David saw him coming and hid in a cave, or if he was already in there at the time, but in verse 3 David and his men are way back in this huge cave, and they watch Saul's army pass right in front of the cave. So they are in there trying to be silent, trying not to move a muscle as they watch thousands of heavily armed soldiers passing right in front of the cave. And then, to their horror, Saul's army stops. Oh boy – now it looks like someone is approaching the cave. Here they come! David and his men silently grab hold of their weapons. They are not going to have much of a chance – outnumbered five to one, but they have no choice – their backs are literally against the wall.

But then, what happens next need not be described – except to say it was a relief to both David and Saul.

3 He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself.

Saul wants a little privacy, so he goes into this cave. And of all the caves in the whole nation of Israel he happens to pick the one David is hiding in. Talk about not having God's favorable guidance! He thinks he found a private cave and it turns out all his enemies are in there.

The literal translation is he “covered his feet,” which is Hebrew for going #2. There are other biblical euphemisms to refer to that. But this writer picked the one that is only used one other place – in the story of the assassination of Eglon (Jdg.3:24). And if you think this story is funny you should read that one. The assassin gets away because the guards outside just think Eglon didn't get enough fiber or something and he is just taking a really long time in the bathroom.

Now look down at the end of verse 4.

24:4 David crept up unnoticed

The word translated “unnoticed” is the same word used in Judges 4:21 of when Jael snuck up on Sisera while he was sleeping and drove a tent peg through his temple.

So the writer of 1 Samuel here takes terms from Judges 3 and 4 that are connected to two famous assassinations. It might have had a similar effect as the phrase “grassy knoll” does for our culture. Saul is sitting there like Eglon and David is sneaking up like Jael. The writer is painting a picture in your mind of an ideal assassination opportunity. If this were a movie the ominous, “Someone is about to get killed” music would be playing.

And it all makes perfect sense to David's men.

4 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.'"³

To them that is an undeniable stroke of providence and a sign from God that they are to kill Saul. This is so typical. Everyone thinks they know what God means by His providence. When Saul hears that David

² Judges 20:16, 34.

³There is no record of this prophecy in Scripture. It may be that they just interpreted the circumstance as a prophecy. Or more likely there was a prophecy, but they are misinterpreting it. It probably applied to some other situation. And even if it did apply here, the prophecy was that David could do to his enemy as he pleased. And that is exactly what David did. What pleased David – what he desired to do – is to show his king honor and respect and loyalty.

is in Keilah he says, “Oh, that means God is giving him over to me to kill him.” And now David’s men draw a similar conclusion here.

Be careful about hearing God’s voice in coincidences. We are not in a position to dictate to God what He means by what He does. If you want to hear God’s voice go to Scripture.

So the assassination theme music is playing, and David’s men quote the prophecy, and now here comes David sneaking up on Saul, but then David does something totally unexpected.

... and cut... off a corner of Saul's robe.

David really is crazy crafty. I am thinking Saul must have taken his robe off and set it aside, so I doubt he is wearing it at this point. Still, this is a pretty stealthy move.

5 Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe.

How could he be conscience stricken for doing that? Compared to what they were trying to get him to do this was nothing. But David’s conscience does not measure the rightness or wrongness of an action by what other people would do. He measures it by the principles called for in God’s Word. And God’s Word calls us to respect and honor those in authority over us.

Cutting Saul’s robe was sin. The royal robe was a symbol of kingship itself. Cutting it was a slap against the very office of Saul. It is like tagging the presidential seal with graffiti or something. It was an act of disrespect.

In fact, it is essentially the same sin that David’s men wanted him to do. They differed only in degree. The men wanted an extreme act of rebellion and David instead does a little act of rebellion. But it is still the sin of rebellion against the King.

So David is conscience-stricken immediately. He does not spend weeks or months or years trying to justify it. Immediately he accepts the fact that what he did was wrong.

6 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." 7 With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul.

Your translation may use the word “persuaded” instead of “rebuked” in verse 7, but that is too soft. The New International Version gets it right. The word means to rip in half. David tore into them with his words.

Controlling those men in a context like this would not be easy. They believe this is God’s will and they do not back down easily. David has to get tough. Whoever makes the first move toward Saul, David steps right in front of him. “Lay one finger on God’s anointed and I’ll rip you in half.”

But Saul is oblivious to this whole drama. He still thinks he is alone in there.

7 ...And Saul left the cave and went his way.

Saul finishes up, grabs his robe which now has a slight alteration, and walks out of the cave.

David’s men are disappointed. But at least this will buy them some time. As Saul and his men head up into the high mountain Crags where David just came from, David and his men can go the opposite direction where Saul just came from. That is the last place Saul will look, and so this will buy them a lot of time.

All they have to do is wait a little while, then take off up the road to the north. But guess who spoils that escape plan?

8 Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul

One thing about following David – it never gets boring. You do not have to worry about him being overly predictable. Another near miss, another narrow escape, they are home free, and you walk out there and call out to him? His men are probably thinking, “Aren’t there easier ways than this to commit suicide?”

8 ... "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. 9 He said to Saul, "Why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you'? 10 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.' 11 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. 12 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. 13 As the old saying goes, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' so my hand will not touch you. 14 "Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? 15 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."

Love your enemies

When Jesus commanded us to love our enemies in the Sermon on the Mount there are a lot of people who take that to be an example of an impossible command. They say, “It wasn’t even meant for us to obey it. It is just Jesus setting an impossible standard so we will all realize what sinners we are and rely totally on grace.” But it is not impossible. David loved his enemies. If you ever doubt that just read the account at the beginning of 2 Samuel 1 of when Saul dies. David is absolutely crushed with sorrow.

How did he do that? The secret is in verse 12.

12 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.

He says, “Saul, if anyone is going to pay you back for what you have done it is going to have to be God, because it is certainly not going to be my hand.” The reason David was able to love Saul is because he left vengeance and justice up to the Lord to worry about. When you really trust God to bring about justice, it frees you up to love people.

Think about those wicked Ziphites who stabbed David in the back and kept on reporting everything to Saul. And how did David treat the Ziphites? In chapter 25 David runs in to a group of these Ziphites out in the wilderness. What do you think he does? Teach them a lesson? Slap them around a little bit? Beat them up and send them home with a sign around their necks saying, “Stop reporting me to Saul!”?

No. He takes care of them. He is very kind to them and he uses his own personnel to set up a perimeter around them to guard them from thieves or wild animals or any other danger. He is running for his life and he takes the time to help out these shepherds. He is even friendly in his greeting.

25:6 Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!

That is the way David treats the people who betray him. How can David have such a loving response? Again, the secret is in leaving vengeance up to God. In Psalm 54:5, when David prays about these people, he says, **Let evil recoil on those who slander me; in your faithfulness destroy them.** Sometimes people read David’s prayers and accuse him of being vindictive, because he frequently prays for God to punish his enemies. But David prayed that because his enemies were also God’s enemies. To the degree people place themselves in opposition to God we must oppose them.

But does that mean we should bear personal animosity toward them? Does that mean we have a green light to hate them or be cruel or mean to them or get revenge? No. Vengeance is God's, not ours. David had it exactly right – if you think vengeance is in order, leave that to God. But in your own personal dealings, show kindness.

In fact, it is good to remember that David did not only pray for judgment on his enemies, when it came to their personal relationship David prayed for blessings for them.

Psalm 35:12-14 They repay me evil for good and leave my soul forlorn. 13 Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting. When my prayers returned to me unanswered, 14 I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother. I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother.

When his enemies mistreated him and then they got sick he did not celebrate. He prayed for their healing. And when God said no to that prayer David grieved and mourned and fasted to see if he could bring God to change His mind. And it was a genuine, heartfelt mourning – like for a family member.

How different would your life be if you left justice 100% up to God? When your spouse did something irritating or demeaning or insensitive or disrespectful, you never did even the slightest thing to make him or her pay a price. You never do anything to teach anyone a lesson. You always leave that up to God. When the garbage man could have easily taken your extra garbage can but just leaves it there on the curb, instead of having thoughts about calling and getting him in trouble with his superiors, you think instead of how you can bless him and show him kindness. When your boss gives the promotion you deserve to someone else, or scolds you for doing something you did not even do, instead of daydreaming about what you would say if you had the upper hand (like if you were put in charge of his year-end bonus or something), instead of having vengeful thoughts, you have thoughts of love and kindness, because you have left all justice in the Lord's hands.

So should you wish your enemies good or harm? Should you want blessings for them or do you want God to punish them? What I see in the psalms is both. When you look at them through the eyes of compassion you want God to be patient with them like He is with you. But if they refuse to repent you want to see justice done. Maybe the best prayer is, "God, let them taste just enough chastisement to bring them to true repentance, and no more."

That is the great thing about leaving it up to God – you do not ever have to worry about whether there is a little too much harshness or a little too much leniency. You just pour out to God what is in your heart and then rest in the knowledge that God will do what is best. And then you pour out kindness and love to them.

Respect your Authorities

The other thing that really stands out in this account is David's respect for Saul. It is not just that he shows kindness. He goes beyond that and deeply respects and honors Saul. When he speaks to him he bows down with his face in the dirt and says, "My lord, the king." The word he used is ADONAI – the highest of all titles for God. There is no word in existence that David could have used that would convey greater respect.

Even when Saul is not around and David is just talking in a relaxed, private setting with his men he refers to Saul as "The Lord's anointed." You can see his deep respect in his body language, in his attitude, in his speech – even in his conscience. And that is the most remarkable of all. The moment David cut Saul's robe, immediately he was assaulted from two opposite directions. His men were all over his case over his failure to be harsh against Saul, and his conscience was all over his case over the fact that he was harsh against Saul. And instead of doing what most people would do – agree with the men and argue with his conscience, David agrees with his conscience and argues with his men.

I doubt most people aspire to be like David in this instance. I think most people read this and think, "Wow, David really had a hyper-sensitive conscience when it came to respect for Saul." I think there are a

lot of people who watch David go against Goliath and think, "I want to be like that!" They see his great faith, his great courage, his great commitment and say, "I want to be like that." But I don't know if there are as many who see David's great respect for Saul and say, "I want to be like that. I want to learn to respect and honor and revere President Obama like David did with Saul."

The things our President is doing with regard to abortion – using tax money to fund the killing of unborn children, or trying to force Christian doctors to have to perform abortions. Those are truly wicked things. There is no question President Obama has a lot of blood on his hands.

But Saul had plenty of innocent blood on his hands too. But David showed him the utmost respect and honor because he was the Lord's anointed – chosen by God to be the king. And President Obama was chosen by God just as much as Saul was.

Romans 13:1 ...The authorities that exist have been established by God.

5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. 6 This is also why you pay taxes ... 7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

All authorities have been placed into their position of authority by God, and so in that sense they are just like Saul. David showed deep respect for Saul not because of Saul, but because of God. It was because David had such reverence for God, and he stood in awe at God's authority.

I have to confess to you that I have been guilty of speaking disrespectfully of our President. And doing that is not a minor sin; it is a sin against the very authority and honor of God Himself. And this principle applies not only to the President, but to all who are in authority. That includes your teacher at school if you are a kid. It includes your mom and dad, your husband, your boss. Show them the utmost respect. There is no end to the Christian marriage books that say, "Wives, be respectful and submissive to your husband so he will in turn treat you the way you want." No – be respectful and submissive to your husband because he bears the very authority of God! When was the last time you did something that demonstrated honor and respect toward the one in authority over you who doesn't treat you well?

We have trouble honoring authority in our culture because we have so little understanding of the transcendence and holiness and authority of God. Write a book portraying the Trinity as Jesus with a couple of giggly women baking bread and cracking jokes and you have got yourself a bestseller. But when was the last new bestseller that made you tremble at the awesome holiness and transcendence of God? But if our eyes were opened to the awesome, staggering authority of God, maybe we would be more respectful to those He has placed in authority over us.

Overcome Evil with Good

Let's close by taking a look at the effect this had on Saul. This is unbelievable.

16 When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" And he wept aloud.

This is the great King Saul – standing there crying. This is the man who watched Doeg slaughter the entire city of Nob - children and babies and women – without saying a word. His heart was as hard as granite, but it was softened by David's love and respect. There is incredible power in repaying evil with kindness.

Proverbs 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

The worse someone treats you the greater power and opportunity you have to touch their heart.

This section is the longest speech ever recorded by Saul and every word in it is exactly right. It is hard to believe these words are coming out of Saul's mouth. This whole speech is so unlike him. He has felt remorse before, and he has been apologetic, but usually he mixes in a lot of rationalization and excuses. Here there is none of that.

17 "You are more righteous than I," he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. 18 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. 19 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. 20 I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. 21 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."

He humbles himself just like Jonathan and speaks to David as his superior, and begs him for mercy in the future. Back in chapter 23 when Jonathan was talking to David there was one thing Jonathan said that was really hard to believe.

1 Samuel 23:17 "Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this."

You read that back in chapter 23 and you think, "Come on Jonathan – you know that is not true." But it turns out it was true. What looked like paranoia in Saul's heart was not paranoia – it was envy.

Deep down Saul knew David would be king, and when David's respect and kindness finally melt Saul's hard heart it comes out.

And that happened because David obeyed Romans 12:21 a thousand years before it was written. Look back at verse 17.

17 "You are more righteous than I," he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly.

Literally, "You have done good to me and I have done evil to you."

Romans 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

That is exactly what David did.

Are you dealing with someone whose heart is hard? Romans 12:21 teaches three principles that will help you do what David did with Saul.

1. You are commanded to win the fight.

First, notice the only command in the verse: **Overcome**. You are commanded to win. Pull out your biggest guns, because you are commanded to win. Overwhelm your opponent. If he hits you with a peashooter, pull out a .38. If he fires a rifle shot, respond with a tank. If he gets a tank, drop a nuclear bomb. Do not be content to lose.

2. Your opponent is not the other person.

Second, this enemy you are fighting and that you are commanded to overcome is not the person who is hurting you. It is not any person at all. Your opponent that you are to defeat is *evil*.

3. The only weaponry you are permitted to use is "good."

So you are commanded to win, the enemy is evil and not the person, and then third, there is only one weapon you are permitted to use. Overcome evil with what? Good. You cannot use your fists, you cannot

use harsh words, you cannot use revenge or nagging or manipulation. The only weapon you are allowed to use is good. And that makes perfect sense, because if the enemy is evil, then obviously you do not want to introduce more of the enemy onto the battlefield by adding your own evil. Trying to overcome evil with evil is like trying to put out a fire with gasoline. The only weapon that works against evil is good, and so that is the only weapon we are permitted to fight with. That is the weapon David used to conquer Saul's hard heart and it is the only weapon that proved powerful enough to do it.

Those three principles make for some interesting warfare. The person hurts you, and the war has begun. You are never to fight against that person, but you do declare all out war on the evil. So he hurts you; you blast him with kindness. He does not accept your kindness and fires off some more evil – time to pull out the big guns. Now you double and triple your kindness and acts of love. As much as he escalates evil, you escalate the good until the evil is annihilated, and you win your brother's heart.

Benediction: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14 Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13 Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.

Devotionals

Day 1

Psalm 54:1 Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might. 2 Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth.

David pleads with God to hear him. He cannot afford to just pray out of routine or custom right now – this has got to be true prayer that rises to heaven and comes into God’s ears. What good is my prayer if God doesn’t listen to it? The world thinks prayer itself – just the act of praying – is somehow psychologically beneficial. But David is not the least bit interested in prayer for prayer’s sake. He is interested in one thing – God hearing him. If God does not attend to this prayer, David is finished.

Hear my prayer today, dear Lord. Turn Your face toward Your servant. Apart from Your favorable ear I am undone. I have no other recourse, no other hope, no other caretaker or supplier or savior. In You alone I place all my trust and hope because there is no other. Have mercy on Your servant, dear Lord, for unto You I pray.

3 Strangers are attacking me; ruthless men seek my life-- men without regard for God.

You know the injustices I have suffered at the hands of _____. You know the lies that have been told (and believed) about me, You know the unfair treatment, You have seen the snubs, heard the disparaging remarks, the lack of respect – all the things that have been done against me.

4 Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me. 5 Let evil recoil on those who slander me; in your faithfulness destroy them. 6 I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you; I will praise your name, O LORD, for it is good. 7 For he has delivered me from all my troubles, and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.

Father, I leave all justice in Your hands. I trust You completely to take care of it. Give me justice and mercy and relief from this unfairness in Your own time. I will wait for You to act, and I will not run after any substitute.

David does not know if God is going to deliver him here. But he gets to thinking about what God has already done for him and it generates such joy in his heart that he feels compelled to express it. His circumstances have not changed at all, but now he has joy and hope in God.

I cannot even begin to count my blessings. The multitude of Your mighty wonders is more than the stars in the sky and the grains of sand on the seashore. How many times You have lifted me up and given me joy and hope! You have never tried to make me happy and failed. You have never run short of some resource. The only resource You need to thrill my soul is Your very presence. And I know that will be available to me no matter what dark road I may have to go down. Thank You, dear Lord, that I can trust You to be tomorrow what You were yesterday.

Day 2: Love Your Enemies

When Jesus commanded us to love our enemies in the Sermon on the Mount there are a lot of people who take that to be an example of an impossible command. They say, “It wasn’t even meant for us to obey it. It is just Jesus setting an impossible standard so we will all realize what sinners we are and rely totally on grace.” But it is not impossible. David loved his enemies. If you ever doubt that just read the account at the beginning of 2 Samuel 1 of when Saul dies. David is absolutely crushed with sorrow.

How did he do that? The secret is in verse 12.

12 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.

He says, “Saul, if anyone is going to pay you back for what you have done it is going to have to be God, because it is certainly not going to be my hand.” The reason David was able to love Saul is because he left vengeance and justice up to the Lord to worry about. When you really trust God to bring about justice, it frees you up to love people.

Think about those wicked Ziphites who stabbed David in the back and kept on reporting everything to Saul. And how did David treat the Ziphites? In chapter 25 David runs in to a group of these Ziphites out in the wilderness. What do you think he does? Teach them a lesson? Slap them around a little bit? Beat them up and send them home with a sign around their necks saying, “Stop reporting me to Saul!”?

No. He takes care of them. He is very kind to them and he uses his own personnel to set up a perimeter around them to guard them from thieves or wild animals or any other danger. He is running for his life and he takes the time to help out these shepherds. He is even friendly in his greeting.

25:6 Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!

That is the way David treats the people who betray him. How can David have such a loving response? Again, the secret is in leaving vengeance up to God. In Psalm 54:5, when David prays about these people, he says, **Let evil recoil on those who slander me; in your faithfulness destroy them.** Sometimes people read David’s prayers and accuse him of being vindictive, because he frequently prays for God to punish his enemies. But David prayed that because his enemies were also God’s enemies. To the degree people place themselves in opposition to God we must oppose them.

But does that mean we should bear personal animosity toward them? Does that mean we have a green light to hate them or be cruel or mean to them or get revenge? No. Vengeance is God’s, not ours. David had it exactly right – if you think vengeance is in order, leave that to God. But in your own personal dealings, show kindness.

Day 3: Love Your Enemies

David did not only pray for judgment on his enemies, when it came to their personal relationship David prayed for blessings for them.

Psalm 35:12-14 They repay me evil for good and leave my soul forlorn. 13 Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting. When my prayers returned to me unanswered, 14 I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother. I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother.

When his enemies mistreated him and then they got sick he did not celebrate. He prayed for their healing. And when God said no to that prayer David grieved and mourned and fasted to see if he could bring God to change His mind. And it was a genuine, heartfelt mourning – like for a family member.

How different would your life be if you left justice 100% up to God? When your spouse did something irritating or demeaning or insensitive or disrespectful, you never did even the slightest thing to make him or her pay a price. You never do anything to teach anyone a lesson. You always leave that up to God. When the garbage man could have easily taken your extra garbage can but just leaves it there on the curb, instead of having thoughts about calling and getting him in trouble with his superiors, you think instead of how you can bless him and show him kindness. When your boss gives the promotion you deserve to someone else, or scolds you for doing something you didn't even do, instead of daydreaming about what you would say if you had the upper hand (like if you were put in charge of his year-end bonus or something), instead of having vengeful thoughts, you have thoughts of love and kindness, because you have left all justice in the Lord's hands.

So should you wish your enemies good or harm? Should you want blessings for them or do you want God to punish them? What I see in the psalms is both. When you look at them through the eyes of compassion you want God to be patient with them like He is with you. But if they refuse to repent you want to see justice done. Maybe the best prayer is, "God, let them taste just enough chastisement to bring them to true repentance, and no more."

That is the great thing about leaving it up to God – you do not ever have to worry about whether there is a little too much harshness or a little too much leniency. You just pour out to God what is in your heart and then rest in the knowledge that God will do what is best. And then you pour out kindness and love to them.

I may not have a maniacal king trying to kill me, but I do know something of what it's like to be opposed, resisted, or despised. I have people in my life who are hard for me to love. My flesh would rather hate them than love them. Lord, teach me to show Your grace by my love for those I don't naturally love. Help me always leave vengeance to You that I might be free to show kindness. Teach me to really care about their wellbeing, to have deep compassion for them for their plight of being under your disfavor, and when they repent to be willing to accept Jesus' sacrifice on their behalf as sufficient.

Day 4: Respect Your Authorities

David goes beyond kindness and deeply respects and honors Saul. When he speaks to him he bows down with his face in the dirt and says, “My lord the king.” The word he used is ADONAI – the highest of all titles for God. There is no word in existence that David could have used that would convey greater respect.

Even when Saul is not around and David is just talking in a relaxed, private setting with his men he refers to Saul as “The Lord’s anointed.” You can see his deep respect in his body language, in his attitude, in his speech – even in his conscience. And that is the most remarkable of all. The moment David cut Saul’s robe, immediately he was assaulted from two opposite directions. His men were all over his case over his failure to be harsh against Saul, and his conscience was all over his case over the fact that he was harsh against Saul. And instead of doing what most people would do – agree with the men and argue with his conscience, David agrees with his conscience and argues with his men.

I doubt most people aspire to be like David in this instance. I think most people read this and think, “Wow, David really had a hyper-sensitive conscience when it came to respect for Saul.” I think there are a lot of people who watch David go against Goliath and think, “I want to be like that!” They see his great faith, his great courage, his great commitment and say, “I want to be like that.” But I don’t know if there are as many who see David’s great respect for Saul and say, “I want to be like that. I want to learn to respect and honor and revere President Obama like David did with Saul.”

The things our President is doing with regard to abortion – using tax money to fund the killing of unborn children, or trying to force Christian doctors to have to perform abortions. Those are truly wicked things. There is no question President Obama has a lot of blood on his hands.

But Saul had plenty of innocent blood on his hands too. But David showed him the utmost respect and honor because he was the Lord’s anointed – chosen by God to be the king. And President Obama was chosen by God just as much as Saul was.

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All authorities have been placed into their position of authority by God, and so in that sense they are just like Saul. David showed deep respect for Saul not because of Saul, but because of God. It was because David has such reverence for God, and he stood in awe at God’s authority.

Forgive Your servant, dear Lord, for the lack of respect in my heart toward those You have appointed over me. In my pride I have despised them and was not afraid to belittle them or speak evil of them because I have not had sufficient regard for Your awesome authority, oh King of kings. Impress on my heart Your greatness, that I might learn to honor those You place in power.

Failing to respect authority is not a minor sin; it is a sin against the very authority and honor of God Himself. And this principle applies not only to the President, but to all who are in authority. That includes your teacher at school if you are a kid. It includes your mom and dad, your husband, your boss. Show them the utmost respect. There is no end to the Christian marriage books that say, “Wives, be respectful and submissive to your husband so he will in turn treat you the way you want.” No – be respectful and submissive to your husband because he bears the very authority of God! When was the last time you did something that demonstrated honor and respect toward the one in authority over you who does not treat you well?

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Day 5: Overcome Evil with Good

The effect of David's love and respect on Saul is astonishing.

16 When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" And he wept aloud.

This is the great King Saul – standing there crying. This is the man who watched Doeg slaughter the entire city of Nob - children and babies and women – without saying a word. His heart was as hard as granite, but it was softened by David's love and respect. There is incredible power in repaying evil with kindness.

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