

1 Samuel 24 — Love Your Enemy

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If you are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. It is great to have you. As a church, we are working our way through the book of 1 Samuel. Today we are in 1 Samuel 24. If you are a visitor, to get you up to speed, let me tell you what happened last week.

Background

Last week, it was business as usual, with King Saul pursuing David. David and his 600 men were in the wilderness of Ziph. When we think of wilderness, we think of an area with trees, animals, and streams of water. The wilderness in this part of the world is different. It is a barren desert. David and his men were hiding from Saul and his massive army in this desert and struggling for their life. It was a hard and depressing time. At the end of the last chapter, Saul found David and his men were hot on their tail. David and his men were on one side of a mountain. Saul and his men were on the other side.

We learned Saul and his army were attempting to perform a pincer move. They were trying to encircle the bottom of the mountain to cut off David and his men as they were trying to escape down the mountain. It looked like Saul was finally about to capture David and his men. Moments before the pincer snapped shut, a messenger arrived telling Saul the Philistines had invaded the land. Saul and his army needed to leave and defend the nation immediately or there wouldn't be a kingdom to come back to when the Philistines were done.

God providentially had the Philistines attack at just the right time to save David again. When the last chapter closed, we read about David and his men

moving to a new place to hide. It is called the region of the Engedi. It was right next to the Dead Sea. Personally, I think this was a much better place for David and his men. From the map, we can see it was close to water, even if the water was the Dead Sea. In the last chapter, David and his men were hiding in the desert and dying of thirst. Here at least, there is water in the area so they can get a drink.

How does this chapter break apart? Once again, it is about Saul chasing David. The chapter breaks into three parts. 1. David spares Saul's life. 2. David speaks kind words to Saul. 3. Saul's heartbroken confession of his guilt. Along the way, we will learn many practical lessons. Some will be about the importance of respecting those God has put in authority over us. We will also learn lessons about the importance of speaking gentle words in a conflict. All of us struggle with respecting those in leadership over us, and we struggle with how to handle people with whom we disagree. This should be a practical study for everyone.

Not every opportunity is God's will.

When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, "Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi." 1 Samuel 24:1 (ESV)

The details of Saul's fight with the Philistines to save the nation are skipped over. It is implied that Saul successfully



defended the nation from the

Philistine invasion. As soon as he was done with the Philistines, he

heard that David was in the region of the Engedi, so he

returned to pursuing David. As I said earlier, this area has



shale rock cliffs that overlook the Dead Sea. This was an ideal place for David and his men to hide because these cliffs have hundreds of caves in the walls. These caves go deep underground, and many connect. You can be like a groundhog and go in one hole but pop out another hole.

There is also a number of fresh water springs flowing down the cliffs for David and his men to rehydrate, which is much better than the desert.

Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Wildgoats' Rocks. 1 Samuel 24:2 (ESV)

David had about 600 men. Saul chose 3,000 of his best troops to go after David. These were Saul's green berets, his special forces, and his best-trained special operations men. Saul had a 5-to-1 advantage. Remember whom David had for his men. They were the downtrodden, the social outcasts, the oppressed, and the misfits. Once again, David and his men are severely outnumbered and overmatched. This seems to be a common theme in this book.



Saul and his forces arrived at a place called the Wild Goats' Rock. This was an area of rock cliffs overlooking the Dead Sea that was frequented by mountain goats.

And he came to the sheepfolds by the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to relieve himself.... 1 Samuel 24:3a (ESV)

At the base of these rocks, on the path, was a sheepfold, where there was a cave. We already know there are hundreds of caves in this rocky area. Most of the caves go deep into the rock. Many of the caves connect deep underground. At the base of this area were sheepfolds where shepherd kept their sheep.

King Saul realized he had a sudden and irresistible urge for a potty break. He stopped the 3,000 soldiers and headed into one of the caves to relieve himself. I guarantee you every other soldier needed to hold it and couldn't stop for a potty break, but when you are the king, you can do those kinds of things. Usually, potty breaks are not included in the Bible, but this one was. Here is why.

...Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave. 1 Samuel 24:3 (ESV)

There is a lot to think about in these verses. Who prompted Saul's bowels to have an irresistible urge to use the bathroom at the right time to send Saul running into the exact cave where David and his men were hiding? God. I know this sounds silly, but I am serious. If God could direct Saul where he wanted him to go by giving him a sudden and irresistible urge to use the restroom, God can certainly direct us where he wants us to go the exact same way. Yes, God is even sovereign over potty breaks.

So mom and dad, when you are on a road trip, and one of the children in the back seat tells you they need to use the bathroom right now and you roll your eyes, look at the bright side. Maybe their sudden and irresistible urge to use the bathroom is a divinely scheduled potty break, not just an inconvenience. Nothing happens by chance.

Next, we read that Saul went in to relieve himself. That is pretty straightforward. The Hebrew is a little more descriptive. It says, "Saul uncovered his feet." It appears Saul disrobed. He didn't want to soil his royal clothes so he took off his sword, his robe, and probably much more. There he was, sitting on a rock in the cave, either fully undressed or almost completely undressed in the

most vulnerable position. He likely was facing to the front of the cave so he would have some light to see what he was doing. He felt secure with 3,000 special operation soldiers guarding the entrance of his royal port-a-potty. He had no idea that David and his men were right behind him deep inside the cave, watching his every move.

And the men of David said to him, “Here is the day of which the LORD said to you, ‘Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you.’ ”... 1 Samuel 24:4a (ESV)

David’s men were convinced this moment was a gift from the Lord. Saul was vulnerable, defenseless, and caught with his pants down. They could kill Saul in an instant. He was defenseless. His troops outside wouldn’t even hear a whimper.

To encourage David to take this opportunity, David’s troops reminded him of what God said to him, “Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you.” There is a problem with that quote.

God never said it. In 1 Samuel 23:4, God said, “I will give the Philistines into your hands.” But God never said, He would give David’s enemies into his hand to treat them any way David wanted. In addition, David never claimed Saul was his enemy. Saul labeled David as his enemy. Saul tried to kill David more times than we can count. Up to this point, David never called Saul his enemy. David consistently tried to be a loyal subject of the king, even while Saul was trying to kill him. Everybody knew it. If you remember earlier in the narrative about Saul killing the priests of Nob. Ahimelech the high priest, spoke about David being known as Saul’s most loyal subject.

If the tables were turned, and Saul caught David alone in a cave on a bathroom break, it would have been over. Saul would have killed David. Just because Saul would kill David in that situation does not mean David should go out of his way to kill Saul in the same situation.

Think of how tempting this would have been for David. In a moment, he could slice Saul's throat. All of the running for his life would be over. All of the fear and living in deserts and facing starvation would stop. David knew he was going to be the next king. God had told him that. This opportunity seemed to be given by God. It was an opportunity to get rid of an evil tyrant who murdered almost the entire family of the high priest because of his paranoia. Saul was definitely a person who deserved to be killed. What would David do?

Ever so slowly, in the complete darkness, David began moving forward with his sword in his hand. He was so stealthy that Saul never heard him coming. Finally, David was right behind Saul, only a foot away from him. David slowly lifted the sword in his hand. In a moment, it would be over. Then we read these words.

...Then David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe. 1 Samuel 24:4 (ESV)

Instead of the sword slicing through Saul's neck, David sliced off a corner of his royal robe.

When we use our kitchen knives to cut something, do they make a sound? Yes, they do. Our knives are rather dull. They tear through cloth or vegetables. My son Daniel works for a knife sharpening company in Ames. They sharpen knives for slaughterhouses around the midwest. They make some of the

sharpest knives on the planet. They are so sharp that when they cut, they cut in almost complete silence and with very little pressure. This means David's sword was so sharp that it cut off the corner of Saul's robe in complete silence when the robe was right next to him. Imagine what that sword could have done to Saul's neck.

Holding the cut off corner of Saul's robe, David slowly retreated into the cave with no blood on his hands. You can imagine the outrage of David's men who were looking for blood but all David did was cut off the corner of Saul's royal robe.

And afterward David's heart struck him, because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe. 1 Samuel 24:5 (ESV)

This seems wimpy. Saul would have killed David if the situation had been reversed. Why does David feel bad about just cutting off the corner of Saul's robe? Saul murdered the high priest and 85 other priests in his family. Saul has more assassination attempts on David's life than we can count in this book. Why does David feel bad about this?

David felt bad because, for the first time, he displayed a small gesture of vindictiveness against Saul. Before this, no matter what Saul had done, David had done nothing injurious toward him in any way.

He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the LORD's anointed." 1 Samuel 24:6 (ESV)

David realized that even cutting Saul's robe insulted the one God put in power, and to this time, God had kept him in power. The reason Saul was still in power was not by accident. It was God's will. God put Saul in charge, and it

would be up to God to remove Saul from office. It was not God's will for David to become king by murdering the current king.

Yes, one day, David would have the kingdom. God did not want David to take it by murder. God would take the kingdom out of Saul's hands and put it in David's hands in God's own way and God's own timing.

So David persuaded his men with these words and did not permit them to attack Saul. And Saul rose up and left the cave and went on his way. 1 Samuel 24:7 (ESV)

The ESV is too mild in this verse. I don't think it captures the graphic nature we see in Hebrew. The text literally reads that David tore his men apart with his words to restrain them from killing Saul. They were saying, "David, if you are afraid to kill him, I am not afraid to kill him. Let me at him." David had to tear them up with his words in the back of the cave to keep them from murder in this moment.

Before we go any further, let's stop and learn a few lessons these verses teach us.

1. **Just because God provides an opportunity, that does not mean it is God's will for us to exercise that opportunity.** Sometimes God provides opportunities to test the state of our hearts. When Jonah arrived at Joppa, and found a ship bound for Tarshish already in port, which was the exact opposite direction God commanded him to travel, that didn't mean it was God's will for Jonah to take the ship. That ship was a test to see what Jonah would do. He did the wrong thing and headed the wrong way.

The opportunity to murder Saul in this moment was not revealing God's will. It was testing David's will. Would David jump at getting something he wants but get it sinfully?

In the same way, God gives us opportunities to get things we want, but to get those things in ways that are unwise or sinful. For example, take the area of finances.

Maybe you want a big-screen television. Just because Visa sends you a credit card on the same day you see a big-screen television on sale for ten percent off in a Lakes News Shopper flyer, that does not mean it is God's will for you to purchase a television. In that case, God is not revealing his will. He is testing your will. Will you be greedy and go into debt to get what you want?

Sometimes similar things happen in relationships. Maybe you are in a difficult marriage. You want a relationship that has thrill, risk, and surprise. At work, you meet someone. You have the perfect spark between you. You connect. There is fun, excitement, and surprise. You start to think, maybe this new relationship is God's will for you. God seems to be answering your prayers and giving you what you want, a relationship with fun and excitement.

Think again. Maybe that person has come into your life not to reveal God's will but to test your will. Will you be faithful to your spouse and do the hard work of working on your marriage or will you take the easy road, the sinful road to getting what you want and have an affair?

I have seen this with people who get involved in dating relationships between a Christian and a non-Christian. As Christians, we know it is not God's

will for us to date or marry an unbeliever. There will be people who come into our life who will be interested in us but because they are not Christians, they are not God's will for us. Sometimes we try to talk ourselves into violating that truth.

Maybe you were in line at Starbucks and the barista mistakenly switched your drink order with the guy behind you in line. You end up talking to him and enjoying him. Soon you find yourself thinking maybe you should date him. The problem is that you already know the person does not know Jesus. People say to me, "Pastor Kurt, I know it is God's will for me to date this person. The barista switched our orders. God did that." Maybe this person has come into your life not to reveal to you God's will but to test your will. Will you do the right thing and keep waiting on God or will you compromise and try and satisfy your dating desires by trusting your wisdom instead of God's timing?

I see this with divorce. They say, "I know it must be God's will for me to divorce my husband because now that we are separated, I am much happier. There is less stress in my life." Did you think that maybe God's will for your life is not to be happy and stress-free? Maybe God is testing you in that situation to see if you will do the hard work of humbling yourself and working through the problems rather than taking the easy way of running away from the problems.

So just because God gives us an opportunity, that doesn't mean those opportunities are always God's will, especially when they involve getting something we want in a sinful way. Those are tests of our will, not God revealing his will.

2. **We need to respect those God has put in leadership over us, even if we may not agree with them.** David respected Saul as the leader God put over the nation, even when Saul was a terrible leader. He murdered innocent people. He was filled with jealousy and kept trying to kill David even though David was always loyal to him. In spite of all those flaws, David kept respecting him because Saul was the leader God put over him. Today, we are not good at respecting leaders over us. The media is constantly criticizing leaders in our government. It doesn't matter what party they come from. There are new organizations that are committed to undermining government leaders. That gets into us. We don't just lose respect for government leaders but we are bred to show disrespect to all leaders. We are suspicious of them and undermine them. If you work in a factory, the workers on the floor of the plant instinctively want to disrespect the leadership in the plant. This also happens at church. If leaders in the church choose a carpet color or design decision that some people don't like, there are people whose reflex reaction is to speak openly against leaders in a divisive or disrespectful way. That is not because the leaders have done a sinful thing. It is only because they have chosen a style or strategy that some people do not like. These are all secondary issues.

It really struck me how David respected and refused to undermine a wicked murderous leader that God had put in charge. David chose to respect him and refused to undermine him with his words or his actions. Yet it is easy for us to show distrust and speak against Christian leaders in the church, not because

they have done wicked things, but because they have chosen a different style and strategy from what we would choose.

Look what the Bible says about the importance of respecting our leaders, especially our church leaders.

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 (ESV)

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Hebrews 13:17 (ESV)

Are Christian leaders in the church perfect? Of course not! They are human. If they are teaching the gospel and working hard, the best thing we can do is to pray for them, submit to them, and encourage them.

I like the way Hebrews talks about this. Help their work be a joy, not a matter of groaning. When their work becomes a matter of groaning because of people who are undermining them and speaking bitter of them, it is of no advantage to you! In other words, no progress is made. There is a ton of sideways energy wasted. Instead of reaching people with Jesus, Christians waste their energy fighting among themselves instead of loving one another and the lost.

This thought struck me. If David feels convicted that he was disrespectful when he cut off the corner of an evil, murderous king's robe who is trying to take his life for no reason, I should be ever so careful about undermining those God has put in leadership over me, whose only difference from me would be on minor style issues.

David did not have the New Testament, and the verses I quoted, but he have the Old Testament which has similar verses on the same subject.

“You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people. Exodus 22:28 (ESV)

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. Leviticus 19:18 (ESV)

A soft answer turns away wrath.

After Saul finished relieving himself, he moved some distance from the cave and apparently down a hill to his troops. When Saul was far enough away, David popped out of the cave like a cuckoo in a cuckoo clock. Look what he said.

Afterward David also arose and went out of the cave, and called after Saul, “My lord the king!”.... 1 Samuel 24:8a (ESV)

Can you picture Saul hearing David’s voice right behind him? He suddenly realized the person he wanted to kill had been next to him. Notice how David addressed Saul. “My Lord, the King.” This was extreme respect. Most people would say, “Hey Saul,... You are a fruitcake! Guess where I was!” David handled this moment differently. He showed extreme respect.

...And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth and paid homage. 1 Samuel 24:8b (ESV)

David did not have to bow in front of Saul, especially after everything Saul had done to him, to kill him, and to make him suffer for who knows how many years. How could David treat Saul this way? As long as God had Saul as the king, no matter how David felt, he decided to treat Saul respectfully as the king.

As I read this, I thought of a bit of practical wisdom in Proverbs that shows us what David was doing in this moment.

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1 (ESV)

Whenever we are in a tense situation with someone who is angry at us or intends evil toward us, be soft, loving, and respectful. Take the temperature in a tense conversation down. Don't be the one who heats it up. David was doing that by showing Saul great respect.

And David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Behold, David seeks your harm'? Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the LORD gave you today into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, 'I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed.'" 1 Samuel 24:9–10 (ESV)

David continued being gracious. So far, Saul is the only one we have seen who was intent on harming David. At this time, rather than David pounding his finger into Saul's chest about his murderous motives, David graciously deflects Saul's sinful behavior to other people. David is extending to Saul the judgement of charity. He was assuming the best of Saul, not the worst. He confronts Saul by saying he was being led astray by people who were not telling him the truth. This is intended to make it much easier for Saul to repent in this moment. It allows Saul to repent and still save face. If David had rhetorically pounded his finger in Saul's chest, directly crediting him for all the sinful murderous plans, it would have only elevated the conflict, not reduced the conflict.

Do you see how David was doing everything he could to make it easier for Saul to repent and save face?

In addition, he tried to provide a model for Saul to follow. David told Saul that he had people who were telling him to murder Saul, but he chose to not listen to them. Saul should also not listen to people who were telling him David

was rebelling against him. Saul, I didn't listen to the people who were telling me to hurt you. Now I ask you not to listen to the people who are telling you to harm me.

Lastly, he proved it by saying, "Check your robe. You will notice that a piece is missing. I have it in my hand. God gave me the opportunity to kill you, but I didn't take it. I spared you." I will not put my hand against you because you are the Lord's anointed. God put you in your position, and I will respect you in your position as the king.

I want you to notice that David's words were designed to subdue, not to inflame. They were all designed to be gracious, kind, and loving. They were designed to assume the best of Saul and to show Saul he had nothing to fear from David.

When we are in conflict with a person, how we speak our words is very important. Do we raise our voices? Do we assume the worst of a person and say, "You do this! You do that! You are a problem! Nobody listens to you!" When we act that way, we are very unwise.

Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. Proverbs 16:24 (ESV)

The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, but gracious words are pure. Proverbs 15:26 (ESV)

In this high-risk encounter, David spoke gracious words, not words that were hurtful or hateful.

See, my father, see the corner of your robe in my hand. For by the fact that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, you may know and see that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you hunt my life to take it. 1 Samuel 24:11 (ESV)

David held the symbol of his innocence in his hands. You were hunting to kill me. God gave me the opportunity to kill you, but I never took it. This is proof of how close I was to you and I did nothing to harm you.

May the LORD judge between me and you, [may the LORD avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you.](#) 1 Samuel 24:12 (ESV)

David did not say Saul was free from sin. We all know about Saul's sin. He said he would leave it in the Lord's hands to be the judge between Saul and David. David would not take revenge on Saul, no matter what he did. David entrusted any vengeance into God's hands. He would not take vengeance into his own hand.

You see, the problem with us taking justice into our own hands is we almost always do it wrong. We overestimate the hurt done to us, and we over-respond as we try to get even. Sometimes we underestimate the sin done because we do not know all the facts, so we undergo justice. We never get it right because we don't have all the facts. In addition, we are often harsh with people and not patient with people. This is why God is the only one who is in a position to carry out fair justice.

Thank goodness, he will do that one day. One day, at the end of time, everyone will stand in front of the judgment seat of Christ and justice that is completely fair will be handed out. The only people who will not face justice for their sins are those who have trusted Jesus to forgive their sins. Jesus will have taken the just punishment that we deserve to receive.

This is why our job is to submit to our leaders and not carry out vengeance. Look what the Scripture says.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Romans 12:19 (ESV)

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. Leviticus 19:18 (ESV)

As Christians, we are not to be known for getting even with people. We are never to be known for bearing a grudge, especially against our own Christian brothers and sisters. We are to be known for loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Some of you in this room are young enough that one day you will remember this sermon and walk over my grave. When you are standing 6 feet above my body and reading my tombstone at my grave, the thoughts I want to come to your mind are that your pastor loved Jesus, and he loved people. If what comes to mind is that I was a man who was about revenge instead of forgiveness, if the thoughts that come to your mind are that I held a grudge and couldn't forgive, I have failed miserably. That is not the legacy I want to leave behind. The truth is, this doesn't just apply to me. It applies to all of us. One day people in this room will walk over your grave. What do you want them to think about you? What legacy do you want to leave behind?

David continues.

As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes wickedness.' But my hand shall not be against you. 1 Samuel 24:13 (ESV)

This is a great Proverb. It simply means that out of wicked people will come wicked things. If, under all the stress of running from Saul, David had resorted to murder, that would have revealed the sinfulness of David's heart, not the purity of his heart.

When we are stressed or irritated, or people are doing things we don't like, that stress and frustration in our hearts will reveal the true state of our hearts. Out of wicked people, when they are under stress, will come wicked things. When there are leaders above us, especially in Christian circles, that make style and strategy decisions that are different from the ones we would have chosen, and we grumble about them or gossip against them, what has happened is the frustration in our life has revealed the sinfulness in our own heart. It did not create sin in our hearts. If, when we see sinful responses to minor wounds oozing from our hearts, in that moment, we are to call out to Jesus for grace and forgiveness of the sinfulness we now better see in our own soul.

If you want proof that this is the truth, look at Jesus. Jesus was whipped. Jesus was tortured. Jesus was beaten. Jesus had the flesh ripped off his back with cat-o-nine tails. He screamed in agony, but he never cursed out his executioners because the stress and pain in his life revealed the purity of his heart, not the sinfulness of his heart.

As the nails were being pounded through his wrist he may have cried out in pain but no vulgarity soiled his lips. If that is how Jesus responded to evil men, how are we to respond to brothers and sisters in Christ who love Jesus but may simply not do things the way you would do them?

If your AWANA leader, worship leader, elder, a pastor, who are all brothers or sisters in Christ, make different choices than you would, we must not disparage them. Hard times reveal the sinfulness and bitterness in our hearts. They don't create sin and bitterness in our hearts.

What are we to do with people who do things different from us?

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:18–21 (ESV)

We are to do everything we can to be at peace with everyone. We never take revenge. We are to let God take care of the Sauls in our world. Instead of getting even with people, as Christians, we are to be known for going out of our way to love those who hurt us. We don't just love our enemies, but we love people who irritate us. We take the initiative to love them. We don't avoid them.

Don't be overcome by evil. Overcome evil with good. If we have people in the church with whom we are struggling, maybe you don't like the style of the worship music, maybe you don't like the brand of the coffee. Instead of criticizing them, we go out of our way to build a relationship with them, do good for them, and love on them. If David refused to hate Saul a very wicked man, how can we allow ourselves to develop animosity for brothers and sisters in Christ?

After whom has the king of Israel come out? After whom do you pursue? After a dead dog! After a flea! 1 Samuel 24:14 (ESV)

David says, Saul, you need to know that you are pursuing someone harmless to you. I am no more of a threat to you than a dead dog. I am no more of a threat to you than a flea, than a fruit fly. You have nothing to fear from me.

May the LORD therefore be judge and give sentence between me and you, and see to it and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand." 1 Samuel 24:15 (ESV)

David calls on God and says he will trust God to protect him. I will let God plead my cause and deliver me from your hand. I will not deliver myself. I will not

go against you. This is David promising before God that he will never do anything to kill Saul or act as an enemy of Saul, no matter how vicious Saul becomes toward him. David will trust God to act as judge.

A soft tongue breaks a bone.

This is one of those moments where there is tension in the air. Will Saul listen to David's words. Will Saul change? Or will Saul call out the troops and attack the hill? Let's find out.

As soon as David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?"... 1 Samuel 24:16a (ESV)

David's words appear to have hit Saul very hard. For a long time, Saul called David "the son of Jesse." If you were with us earlier in this series, we learned that Saul's refusal to call David by his name and just call him the son of his father Jesse was intended as an insult. It was a way of saying David was nothing more than an insignificant little twerp. Here, for the first time in a long time. Saul calls David by his proper name. He also calls David my son. This is love flowing from Saul's heart. Then we read this.

...And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. 1 Samuel 24:16 (ESV)

David's kindness to Saul, his respect for Saul, and his refusal to hurt Saul cut deeper into Saul's heart than David's sword could. These were not a few tears. This was a grown man sobbing loudly for everyone to hear as tears ran down his face.

This reminds me of a proverb that describes what happened.

With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone. Proverbs 25:15 (ESV)

The softness and respect in David's speech shattered the hardness of Saul's heart. When he recovered sufficiently, he spoke.

He said to David, "You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. And you have declared this day how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the LORD put me into your hands. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safe? So may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. 1 Samuel 24:17–19 (ESV)

Look at the power of repaying people good when they have done evil. Look at the power of not seeing an opportunity for revenge as a reason God wants you to take revenge.

I love what Saul says in these words. May God reward you with good for the good you did for me. What a legacy to leave in Saul's mind. What a legacy to leave in the mind of Saul's 3,000 soldiers that were watching everything transpire. They clearly knew David was not like Saul. He was a man with a gracious, kind, and godly heart, unlike the king.

Look what Saul says next. It is something he has known for a long time but something he was afraid to speak out loud.

And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. 1 Samuel 24:20 (ESV)

All of the chasing and assassination attempts Saul attempted against David were to ensure David would never be king. After Saul experiences David's kindness and grace amid all this suffering, he can't help but say what everyone needs to hear. David, you deserve to be king. If David had slit Saul's throat, those words would never have been spoken from Saul's mouth. The troops would have never heard those words. David's legacy would have been that of a

man who murdered the king, not the man whose love, kindness, and respect earned the admiration and trust of everyone, even the king.

Swear to me therefore by the LORD that you will not cut off my offspring after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house." And David swore this to Saul. Then Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold. 1 Samuel 24:21-22 (ESV)

David and Saul parted ways and, at least for now, there was peace between them.

There were a lot of applications we covered this morning. Let me summarize a bit of what we learned.

Application

1. If God opens an opportunity, that doesn't always mean it is God's will for me to take that opportunity, especially if it involves getting something I want in the wrong way.
2. I am to respect those God put in leadership over me. If David honored a murderous king, I should honor the Christian leaders God put over me.
3. In conflicts, I am to use my words graciously, not to belittle or insult.
4. It is God's job to take revenge. As a Christian, I am to be known for loving my enemies, not for how I get even.
5. When I am irritated in a relationship, that frustration reveals the sinfulness in my heart. It doesn't create sinfulness in my heart.
6. Soft words break bones and persuade hearts. Harsh words stir up anger.
7. Jesus is the ultimate example of kindness and grace to an enemy.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess
the Evangelical
America. He enjoys
writing, and time with his family. Feel

him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)



is ordained in
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