

Lesson 16: My Enemy in My Hand, pt 1 (First Samuel 24)

9 The Experience: David at the Rock of Escape (v19-29)

Now we come to the actual experience of deliverance. There are two sections to this episode:

- 1) David's betrayal by the Ziphites to Saul (v19-24)
- 2) David's rescue from Saul's subsequent pursuit (v24-29)

1. Who are the Ziphites? (Psalm 54)
2. How does Saul react to the news that the Ziphites bring him?

So that is the end of the first section. We have the betrayal. The narrative now segues abruptly to David.

3. Where are David and his men now? (Psalm 71:1-5)
4. What causes Saul to call off?

6 9 Picture Comparisons

This is the second time David has been trapped by Saul in Chapter 23.

When David was at Keilah and heard that Saul plotted against him, he didn't immediately run. He stopped and inquired of God. Then he decided what to do with God's warning and ran. It was told to Saul that he had escaped, and Saul called off the expedition.

This time, David is trapped at Maon, and the author doesn't relate any effort to inquire of God. A diverting message comes to Saul, but it isn't because David has escaped this time. Even so, Saul calls off the pursuit.

- What is the difference between the two situations? What is missing this time, and why?

The account ends with the narrator's comment that David went to the strongholds of En Gedi which is right on the Dead Sea. En Gedi is the only real oasis because of the fresh water springs and waterfalls sourced from the canyons in that region. En Gedi means "spring of the young goat" and it is a place known for wild goats and ibexes.

Going forward: Picture Comparisons

6 7 8 9 Theme: God delivering David out of enemy hands

10 11 12 Theme: God delivering David's enemies into David's hands

13 14 16 Theme: David delivering himself into enemy hands

10 David at the Rock of Wild Goats

Read First Samuel 24:1-22

The picture opens with a dialogue piece instead of a narrator note, which means that it is linked to the previous picture.

"Then David went up from there and dwelt in strongholds at En Gedi." (23:29)

"Now it happened, when Saul had returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, 'Take note! David is in the Wilderness of En Gedi.' Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats." (24:1-2)

It is linked, but it is also its own picture because the theme is going to change now. Instead of God delivering David out of Saul's hand, He is going to deliver Saul into David's hands.

The narrator sets the scene for us. Saul has come back from fighting the Philistines and has picked up David's trail again based on a tip from another unnamed betrayer. He takes 3,000 men to En Gedi and begins to comb the Rocks of the Wild Goats for David and his men.

This section is structured around two conversations:

- 1) The conversation between David and his men
- 2) the confrontation between David and Saul

Conversation #1: David and his men (v3-7)

5. Where does the conversation take place?
6. What do David's men encourage him to do? (v4)
7. Did God ever say that to David? (v5)
8. Why would the men say that?
9. What's the problem with that thinking?

10. What does David do?

11. What does this act do for David?

Consider the order of the conversation:

(v4a) David's men: "This is the day . . . do to him as it seems good to you."

(v4b) David's action: David cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

(v5) David's reaction: David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe.

(v6-7a) David's response to his men: ". . . The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, . . ."

If David had rebuked his men first, and then cut off the robe, then that would imply that killing Saul was wrong, but taking the trophy was okay. But that isn't the order. David's rebuke of his men includes a rebuke of his own actions. Why does David's heart trouble him?

12. What is significant about the act of cutting cloth like this?

13. How does David see himself in relationship to Saul?

14. What is the effect of David's statement on his men?

Question for Reflection:

- How do you talk about the masters in your life?
- Whether they are good or bad, do you respect their authority as being God-given, or do you see them only as masters/leaders chosen by men to be challenged or taken down?
- How you speak about them has an effect on those who listen to you. What message should you be conveying to others?
- How is David's model in line with New Testament teaching? (1 Peter 2)
- Just because David has respect for the authority of the king, does that mean he sits silently and doesn't make an effort to defend himself against the king's persecution?

Conversation #2: David's confrontation with Saul (v8-22)

15. How does David confront this authority in his life who is persecuting him?

16. Why would David ask for the reward of being delivered out of Saul's hand?

17. What is Saul's reaction?

18. Why does Saul weep?

19. What kind of reward does Saul ask the LORD to give David in verse 19?

20. How does Saul finally acknowledge David?

21. How does David respond?

Application

The last four pictures from Chapter 23 showed God's deliverance of David when he was at the mercy of Saul. This time, by contrast, David faces the king from whom he will one day rightly take the throne (if he will wait for God's timing), but he is given a chance to deliver himself by his own hand, put his enemy under his feet, and take the kingdom. This is a temptation and a test.

Why is taking the kingdom by your own effort the wrong way to gain a kingdom?

Think of Christ and His temptations. Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their glory and tempted Him to take them. The kingdom was already His by the Father's determination, but the Father

had a greater purpose in deferring that reward. Satan offered Him a way to fast track things and played to the human desire in Jesus to forgo the suffering and take the kingdom by His own will and timing. All He had to do was switch allegiance.

It is not enough to pursue the right reward. It has to be pursued the right way. Vindication, validation, and the restoration of dignity are all valid rewards, but they will slip from your grasp if you take them by your own power and will instead of letting God reward you.

If we are in pursuit of a crown, we will have antagonists like Saul in life. There is the test of how we live from day to day with them, how we temper our behavior if they are masters over us, and finally, how we deal with them when given the opportunity to retaliate.

Taking vengeance is the key issue in this lesson. How we deal with our enemies when they fall into our hand is one of the biggest tests we face in pursuing our reward.

Vengeance goes beyond justice. Justice has a prescribed punishment for an offense. You deliver the punishment, receive the compensation, and then the issue is settled.

Vengeance is about inflicting injury, harm, or humiliation of like kind as it has been inflicted on you – and often to a greater degree, just to make a point. Vengeance is about showing your power over another person for your own pleasure and glorification. It is an act of domination used to re-establish one's reputation and authority when someone challenges it. It falls into the category of lusts of the flesh and the pride of life.

Saul has modeled vengeance for us. Taking vengeance for himself and for the wrong reasons was one of Saul's greatest failures as king. God had given him the crown but then took it from him for this reason, and yet he tried to keep it by force and by dealing out punishment and retribution against those he considered his enemies, both real and imagined. And now David is given the opportunity and the encouragement not just to end Saul's persecution but to take his own vengeance—to do to Saul as seemed good to him.

The Scenario

So, imagine that you have a Saul in your life. This is a person who is antagonistic to you without reason and beyond reasoning with. They hound and harass you daily. They persecute you. They lie and trash your reputation. They seek every advantage over you and wield their power with punitive force every chance they get.

In regards to living with them day to day . . .

There will be losses on your side. The losses may include the loss of physical benefits. You may endure physical and verbal abuse or harassment. More often you will suffer the loss of intangible things like dignity, justice, a good reputation, security, love, and peace. These are things that have to be returned to us for us to feel whole again – to have that reward of *shalam*.

- If you have lost any of these to your Saul in life, what would it take to have that wholeness returned to you? Is that something you can do for yourself?
- Did David taking that piece of Saul's robe restore what Saul had taken from him?

In regards to retaliation . . .

Our antagonist can slip up on occasion or get themselves into trouble or a vulnerable position. Maybe it was the imprudent email, text message, or Facebook comment that they didn't mean for us to see. Maybe it was a conversation overheard in the bathroom, or a receipt for something that they were trying to hide. Maybe it was proof of their harassment or prejudice against you. Maybe you caught them in an embarrassing situation or a lie. It's one of those moments where you can point the finger and say AH HA!

All your friends see it and they are telling you to go for it. You have every right; your antagonist deserves it, and it will get your antagonist off your back. Of course, we aren't talking about a literal kill, but there are many ways to twist the knife that can ruin a person socially, emotionally, or psychologically.

- When you have your antagonist at your mercy, what do you do?

David had Saul dead to rights there in the cave, and while he was magnanimous to Saul and didn't go in for the kill, per se, he did take a trophy. He took something that he could hold onto and bring out at a later time to show Saul and remind him that he had been caught.

We can take trophies like this. We can hold on to that damaging bit of intel. It doesn't have to be physical; we can just keep it in our minds. And we keep it as our little proof of having gotten the upper hand over our antagonist—of being the righteous one. These kinds of trophies can be a way of achieving our own vindication and validation. They can be something that we comfort ourselves with, something we gloat over privately, and maybe if our antagonist hassles us too much one day, something we bring out our little proof to remind them of how magnanimous we have been to them.

- Is there sin in that?
- Have you ever had a person hold something like that over you? Do you do that to others?

Knowledge is power, and the temptation to use that power to abuse your abuser can be potent. David didn't need to take that trophy. Simply following Saul out of the cave and accosting him would have been proof enough of the dangerous position in which Saul had placed himself.

David almost went down a wrong path in dealing with his antagonist, but he self-corrected and did what was right. He had a legitimate case against Saul, and he made his case and did not stoop to humiliating Saul once he had the acknowledgement of guilt.

While the breaking of a person may be necessary, humiliation should never be part of it. It may give you personal satisfaction to deal with them as they have dealt with you or even go beyond, but it will never gain their respect or restore peace to the relationship.

Vengeance does not create peace. It only promotes more conflict and strife. If you are a king in pursuit of a crown as David is, then *shalam* peace must be the goal. **Read Romans 12:9-21.**