

Session 11 Trusting God’s Leadership When Mistreated (1 Sam. 24)

I. A FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE

- A. One important aspect of our spiritual life is how we respond when mistreated or falsely accused. We will be all mistreated many times. If we respond in the right way, we will grow deeper in God. If we respond wrongly, a residue of bitterness builds up in us, causing us to live with a dull spirit.
- B. ***Foundational principle:*** Believers no longer have the primary ownership of their lives because Jesus bought and owns them (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Therefore, for any who seek to obey His leadership, *He takes responsibility* to intervene to help us fulfill His will in our life and to answer when we are mistreated in ways that affect our reputation, body, money, possessions, position, impact, etc.
¹⁹You are not your own...²⁰For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)
- C. In Psalm 31, we see how David interacted with the Lord when he was being greatly mistreated. By trusting God to intervene and refusing to retaliate, he brought God into the conflict. This was partly how David engaged in spiritual warfare in personal conflicts and released God’s blessing.
⁵Into Your hand I commit my spirit...¹⁵My times are in Your hand. (Ps. 31:5, 15)
- D. When David “committed his spirit” into God’s hands, he was committing to God everything that deeply touched his spirit—his reputation, money, possessions, position, and impact, etc. He was ***entrusting the outcome*** of the most important issues in his life to God’s leadership. To commit “our times” to God includes ***trusting His timing*** to answer us as He helps us fulfill God’s will in our life.
- E. The issue was to whom did David look as his “primary source” to gain the promotion, blessing, and resources related to fulfilling God’s will in his life. The Lord alone had the power to establish this for him. He did not need Saul’s favor to fulfill God’s will for his life. Our temptation is to look to people or favorable circumstances as our “primary source” instead seeing them in a secondary way.
- F. *No one could stop David from fulfilling the will of God for his life*—not Saul, nor the Philistines, nor Satan. The only man who could stop David was David by resisting God’s leadership in his life.
- G. In the next three chapters (1 Sam. 24-26) David was tested regarding whom he *looked to as his source* and how he would *respond to his adversaries* (who resisted him and blocked his goals).
- H. David was given two chances to kill Saul—in *En Gedi* (24:5) and in the *Wilderness of Ziph* (26:8). On both occasions, David chose to trust the Lord’s leadership to deliver him as he refused to take matters into his own hands. The Lord was testing David, while also giving Saul a chance to repent. Such testings are “divine appointments” impacting our future—we must be alert to recognize them.
- I. The Lord allows sudden reversals of our circumstances to test us in different ways. For example, in 1 Samuel 23, *Saul surrounded David*, and then in 1 Samuel 24, *David surrounded Saul*. In each of the circumstances, the Lord was testing both Saul and David by putting them in different positions—the one in a “position of power” was reversed, revealing different things about each.

II. SAUL ENTERED THE CAVE IN EN GEDI (1 SAM. 24:1-3)

- A. When David was hiding in the wilderness of Moan (23:25) the Lord used a military invasion by the Philistines to divert Saul from capturing him (23:27-28). After that David fled to En Gedi (23:29).
²⁷... the Philistines have invaded the land! *²⁸Therefore Saul returned from pursuing David, and went against the Philistines...* *²⁹David went up from there and dwelt in strongholds at En Gedi. (1 Sam. 23:27-29)*
- B. After Saul finished fighting the Philistines, he returned to Gibeah where he employed 3,000 soldiers to pursue David (24:2). Saul was informed that David was in En Gedi, thirty miles from Gibeah.
¹Now 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." *²Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats.* *³So he came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs. (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.) (1 Sam. 24:1-3)*
- C. **Returned from the Philistines:** Saul pursued David again as soon as he returned from the conflict with the Philistines. The implication of "returning" with his army intact is that he had a victorious campaign. God gave Saul victory over the Philistines for the sake of the people of Israel with the added benefit of demonstrating God's goodness in order to give Saul opportunity to repent.
- D. **Leadership lesson:** Outward "success" does not always prove that God is pleased with a person. Often people are not moved to repentance even after receiving tokens of God's goodness to them.
⁴Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (Rom. 2:4)
- E. **It was told him:** It is probable that the Ziphites told Saul of David's location (23:14, 15, 19; 26:1).
- F. **En Gedi:** The name *En Gedi* means "the spring of the goat." About 15 miles northeast of the Wilderness of Maon (23:24) on the western seashore of the Dead Sea (in the territory of Judah), it is a rocky, mountainous area with many deep ravines, caves, and an oasis of fresh water springs. Because of its springs, it is fertile. As such, it was a good place for David and his men to take refuge in its many caves, some of which were very large. However, the caves were potential traps.
- G. **Attend to his needs:** Saul went into the cave to "relieve himself" (see NRSV; NIV) and then probably take a nap in the shade to escape the heat of the sun. Saul was vulnerable in this private moment as he took off his garments and laid his weapons aside, defenseless and vulnerable.
- H. **Leadership lesson:** The Lord allows circumstances that can be interpreted in various ways. Most of the men around David thought it was God's will for him to take vengeance on Saul. The knowledge of God's Word with a heart to obey are essential in interpreting events in our life in the right way.
²"But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word." (Isa. 66:2)

III. DAVID CUT OFF THE CORNER OF SAUL'S ROBE (1 SAM 24:4-7)

- A. David and his men, looking *outward* toward the entrance, could see Saul as he entered the cave. However, as Saul entered the darkness from the bright sunshine, he could not see anything after coming in from the glare of sun. So he was unaware of David and his men.
- ⁴Then the men of David said to him, "This is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.'" David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe. ⁵Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe. ⁶And he said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD." ⁷So David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. Saul got up...and went on his way. (1 Sam. 24:4-7)*
- B. ***This is the day:*** These circumstances were so unusual that David's men concluded the Lord had sovereignly arranged it. Saul was the only obstacle that stood between David and the throne.
1. David crept up to Saul and cut off a piece of his garment. Imagine the tension as they watched David move quietly to Saul's side and pull out a knife, expecting David to thrust it into Saul's body. How shocked they must have been to see him cut only the corner of Saul's robe!
 2. This was one of the most important moments in David's life and future! Would he listen to his men pleading with him to remove Saul and take his place of honor and power on the throne, and thus be finished with poverty and wandering through the wilderness as a criminal?
- C. ***Saul's robe:*** David cut off a corner of Saul's robe; it was significant because a king's robe was a symbol of his authority. When Jonathan gave David his royal robe, he was acknowledging the fact that David was the future heir of the throne (18:4). By cutting the robe, David symbolically touched Saul's kingship, disrespecting his calling as God's anointed king. Moreover, the Law of Moses required tassels in the four corners of men's garments (Num. 15:38-39; Deut. 22:12). Cutting the corner of the robe removed some of the tassels and caused the robe to violate the Law.
- D. ***David's heart troubled him:*** He repented of cutting Saul's robe and disrespecting his office as king. David's tender conscience was the strength of his relationship with God and of his kingship.
- E. ***The Lord's anointed:*** David respected Saul as *the Lord's anointed*, because he looked at things from God's point of view. He was not viewing Saul as his personal enemy, but as one whom God had anointed as the king of Israel. The Lord commanded the Israelites not to curse their rulers (Ex. 22:28). God judged men severely for violating this because it was a sin against God's authority and thus against His purpose and people (Num. 12:2-15; 16:1-35).
- F. David did not see Saul; he saw the Lord's authority on Saul. David was not afraid of Saul; rather, he trembled before God's authority.
- G. ***David restrained his men:*** David restrained his men from sinning against God's anointed (24:7). David controlled himself and his men, using all of his influence to stop them from harming Saul.

IV. DAVID’S APPEAL TO SAUL (1 SAM. 24:8-15)

- A. The main themes in this section are David’s loyalty to Saul, his confidence in the Lord’s leadership, and Saul’s confession of his own sin and the conviction that David would prevail and be king.

⁸David arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, “My lord the king!” And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down.

⁹David said to Saul: “Why do you listen to the words of men who say, ‘David seeks your harm?’

¹⁰Look, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, ‘I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD’s anointed.’¹¹Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand...see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand...yet you hunt my life to take it. ¹²Let the LORD judge between you and me, and let the LORD avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you.¹³As the proverb of the ancients says, ‘Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.’ But my hand shall not be against you. ¹⁴After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea? ¹⁵Therefore let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand.” (1 Sam 24:8-15)

- B. David’s appeal for reconciliation is one of the best examples of an appeal in Scripture (it is similar to Abigail’s appeal in 1 Samuel 25). He affirmed his love and loyalty for Saul, did not emphasize Saul’s responsibility in their conflict, and appealed to his heart. He presented the problem without accusing Saul, focusing on those who provoked Saul by giving false reports about David (22:10).
- C. **Leadership lesson:** By imitating David’s approach we can minimize much strife among leaders!
- D. **Called out to Saul:** Rather than cursing Saul, David honored him by calling him “my lord” and “the king,” speaking as one of Saul’s loyal subjects (24:8). Saul must have been shocked to see David!
- E. **Your eyes have seen:** The piece of Saul’s robe in David’s hand was proof of his integrity (24:10).
- F. **The Lord delivered you into my hand:** The Lord gave Saul into David’s hand, but He did not give David into Saul’s hand (23:14). David convinced Saul that he had no evil motives towards him.
- G. **I will not stretch out my hand against the LORD’s anointed:** David’s honor and loyalty for Saul was based on his respect for God’s authority. David was resolute that, no matter the circumstances, he would not take matters into his own hands to harm Saul and avenge himself. Had David killed Saul, he would have been taking things out of God’s hands and into his own.
- H. **Let the LORD judge:** For the Lord to “judge” or “decide” between people is to allow Him to orchestrate the circumstances to establish His will in the midst of a conflict. The Lord is a just arbitrator. He will judge or decide the right answer for each of them (24:13). [Gen 13:9; 16:5; 31:53; Num. 12:1-13; 16:4-5; 1 Sam. 24:12, 15; 26:9-11, 23-24; 2 Sam. 2:1; 15:25; 16:11-12; 1 Chr. 12:17; 19:13; Ps. 28:1; 31:5, 15; 35:1; 54:4; Jer. 11:20; Dan. 6:22; Rom. 4:20-21; 2 Pet. 2:23]

¹²Let the LORD judge between you and me, and let the LORD avenge me on you...¹⁵Let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case...” (1 Sam. 24:12, 15)

- I. The only weapon David used here was prayer. God has all authority and alone is able to judge between His people (24:12, 15). David's action was based in his conviction that God was watching.
⁵***Commit your way to the LORD, trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass...⁷Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret...because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. (Ps. 37:5-7)***
- J. ***Wickedness proceeds from the wicked:*** The point of this proverb is that “actions express attitudes.” David was saying that since he did not do evil, then Saul should conclude logically that David was not an evildoer. David implied that if he were an evildoer, Saul would have been dead long ago.
- K. ***A dead dog and a flea:*** A dead dog and a flea express self-abasement and insignificance (24:15).
- L. ***Summary:*** First, David honored Saul as his lord and king (24:8). Second, he claimed lies had been told about his disloyalty (24:9). Third, he appealed to his actions to prove his innocence (24:10). Fourth, he committed not to retaliate (24:10, 12, 13). Fifth, he asked God to settle the issue (24:15).
- V. **SAUL RESPONDED TO DAVID (1 SAM. 24:16-22)**
- A. Saul responded to David with great emotion (24:16-22). David loved Saul as a father, obeyed him as king, and honored him as the Lord's anointed. Saul was touched by his kindness.
¹⁶...Saul said, “Is this your voice, my son David?” And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. ¹⁷Then he said to David: “You are ***more righteous than I***; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. ¹⁸And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when ***the LORD delivered me into your hand***, you did not kill me. ¹⁹For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. ²⁰Now I know indeed that you shall surely be king...²¹swear now to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me....”²²So David swore to Saul. Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold. (1 Sam. 24:16-22)
- B. ***Is that your voice:*** Saul was far enough away that he could not see David's face (24:16).
- C. ***You are more righteous:*** Saul acknowledged David's integrity and that he returned good for evil. Saul admitted that David's goodness went beyond natural goodness—only one who fears the Lord acts like David in such a situation. However, Saul responded from self-pity, not repentance (24:16).
- D. ***You have dealt well with me:*** Saul was touched by David's mercy. Unbelievers are moved by acts of kindness. Saul recognized David's graciousness and also perceived the sovereignty of God.
- E. ***Saul blessed David:*** Saul affirmed that David would one day surely be king (24:20; cf. 15:28; 16:12). This confirmed the words of Jonathan (23:17).
- F. ***Saul's plea:*** Saul was so confident of David's success that he desired from David an oath. Like Jonathan, Saul asked David to spare his family (20:13-16). He did not ask for political favors, but only that his family line be spared. He pled with David to promise that he would not cut off his descendants after he died (24:21), as it was the customary to kill the descendants of the former king when a new king came to power.

- G. **David swore:** David promised Saul this (24:22) as an extension of the oath he had made with Jonathan (20:14-17, 42). David fulfilled this promise by giving Jonathan's son Mephibosheth a position of honor and restoring to him Saul's property and flocks (2 Sam 9:1-13; 19:29; 21:7).
- H. **Saul went home:** The king returned to his home in Gibeah, while David went up to the stronghold. The stronghold is either the one at Adullam (22:1) or their previous place at Hachilah (23:19).
- I. **Leadership lesson:** Forgiveness with showing kindness to enemies is **not** the same as trusting those who have repeatedly chosen sinful decisions.
- J. **Saul's "sweet rebellion":** Saul's speech (24:17-21) is an example of spiritual sentimentality. He wept (24:16), admitted David's integrity, confessed his sin (24:17), acknowledged God was helping David (24:18), blessed David (24:19), and prophesied his victory (24:20). Many experience a temporary sadness over their sin when it causes negative consequences, yet they do not change.

VI. APPLICATION: ENTRUSTING OURSELVES TO GOD WHEN WE ARE MISTREATED

- A. Jesus entrusted Himself to the Father to be vindicated in the right way and in the right timing.
²³While being reviled, He [Jesus] did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. (1 Pet. 2:23; NASB)
⁴⁶He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." (Lk. 23:46)
- B. When we commit ourselves into God's hands in times of mistreatment, we make a transaction with God to trust Him to intervene and establish **His will** in our lives in **His way** and in **His timing**. This involves **transferring our personal rights** into His hands, thus transferring responsibility to Him. For example, because all our money has been committed to Him, if someone steals it, they are stealing from Him. He is responsible to intervene to restore our loss in His time and His way.
- C. The Lord will provide for and/or vindicate His people in His time and way. We entrust our future and the mistreatment to God by trusting His leadership to answer in His way and in His timing.
- D. By trusting God to intervene in our conflicts, by refusing to retaliate, and by committing to do good to our enemies, we bring God and His activity into the situation.
¹⁹Do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to [God's] wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord...²⁰if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink...²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12:19-21)
- E. **Vengeance is mine:** Saul continued to seek to kill David, pursuing him with 3,000 soldiers, and David continued to commit his cause into God's hands (26:24). Several years later, the Lord Himself removed Saul—he died in battle by the hand of the Lord (1 Sam. 31; 1 Chr. 10:13-14).