

# David Spares Saul's Life

## I Samuel 24

- I. (1Sa 24:1-2) Saul seeks David in the Wilderness of En Gedi.
  - a. When Saul had returned from following the Philistines: In the previous chapter, God miraculously delivered David by drawing Saul away to fight the Philistines at the moment Saul was ready to capture David. But when Saul was done with the Philistines, he went back to pursuing David
  - b. The Wilderness of En Gedi: The En Gedi canyon runs westward from the Dead Sea. With its waterfalls and vegetation it seemed more like a tropical paradise than the middle of the desert.
  - c. One can also see the numerous caves dotting the hills. This was a great place for David and his men to hide out. In the middle of barren desert, scouts could easily detect approaching troops
  - d. This must have been a large cave to hold 600 men plus David
  - e. (1Sa 24:3) Saul unknowingly comes to a cave where David and his men are hiding.
  - f. The fact that Saul went in to attend to his needs (sleep/clean/etc.) also meant that he went into the cave alone. His soldiers and bodyguards were out of the cave waiting for him
  - g. This was no coincidence but arranged by God to test David, to train David, and display David's godly heart.
- II. (1Sa 24:4-15) David restrains himself and his men from killing Saul.
  - a. V. 4- David's men were excited at the opportunity and believed it was a gift from God. They knew it was no coincidence that Saul came alone into that cave at that moment. They thought this was an opportunity from God to kill Saul.
  - b. You can almost hear them singing- This is the Day!
  - c. David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe:

- i. We can imagine the scene as David approaches slowly. Perhaps his men are relieved thinking this is the end of all of this wandering and fear. They may have thought they would soon be in the King's court once David takes his rightful place
  - ii. But as David came close to Saul and put forth his sword he didn't bring it crashing down on Saul's neck or thrust it through his back. Instead he secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe.
- d. David decided to spare Saul
- e. He knew that God's promise said, "You will inherit the throne of Israel." He knew that Saul was in the way of that promise. But he also knew it was disobedient of him to kill Saul, because God put Saul in a position of authority and it was God's job to take care of Saul not David's. David wanted the promise to be fulfilled but he refused to try and fulfill God's promise through his own disobedience.
- f. Sometimes when we have a promise from God we think we are justified in sinning to pursue that promise. This is always wrong. God will fulfill His promises, but He will do it His way. Instead, we need to be like Abraham, who obeyed God even when it seemed to be at the expense of God's promise, willing to sacrifice the son of promise (Genesis 22).
- g. There are no shortcuts to God's will- Remember Jesus, who didn't take Satan's offer to "win back the world" at the expense of obedience (Luke 4:5-8).
- h. This was a question of: God's providence or temptation?
- i. In all this, we see that David knew not only how to wait on the Lord, but he also knew how to wait for the Lord. "We wait on the Lord by prayer and supplication, looking for the indication of his will; we wait for the Lord by patience and submission, looking for the interposition of his hand." (Meyer) David was determined that when he sat on the throne of Israel it wouldn't be because he got Saul out of the way but because God got Saul out of the way

- i. The typical things we do: manipulate, nag, lie, push our way in to God's will
  - ii. Romans 12:19- Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.
  - iii. Leaving it in God's hands is not a weak move- Psalms 54:5, 58:6-9
  - iv. David clearly was not bitter
- j. David's heart troubled him: This is a remarkably tender conscience in David
  - i. Saul's robe was a sign of his royal authority. See I Sam 15:26-28
  - ii. We sometimes in conversation and criticism cut off a piece of a man's character, or influence for good, or standing in the esteem of others. Ought not our heart to smite us for such thoughtless conduct? Ought we not to make confession and reparation?" (Meyer)
- k. David had respect for Saul's office as King- even though he knew firsthand of Saul's poor character
- l. So he restrains his men, and runs out and reveals himself to Saul
- m. David took a big risk here!
- n. The phrase touch not the Lord's anointed is misused among some Christians and among many leaders. Often to them it means: "A leader in sin is above rebuke, so just keep quiet." But when David recognized that Saul was the Lord's anointed and refused to harm him, what David would not do is kill Saul. He did humbly confront Saul with his sin, hoping Saul would change his heart. But it is entirely wrong for people to use the idea of touch not the Lord's anointed to insulate a leader from all accountability.
- o. See the corner of your robe in my hand: This was proof that David had full opportunity to kill Saul
- p. Let the Lord judge between you and me: David didn't need to do anything more to defend himself before Saul; he referred the matter to the Lord. David would let God plead his case and be his judge

- q. You could say David was even implying I'll let God kill you instead!
- r. It was inevitable that Saul would be judged, and that he would lose the throne. But it was absolutely God's business to accomplish that

### III. Saul's reaction to David- v. 16-19

- a. (1Sa 24:16-19) Saul honors David's mercy towards him.
- b. This was a dramatic change of heart in Saul
- c. Saul knew David would be king all along (1 Samuel 23:17) but now he really acknowledges it.
- d. Therefore swear to me know by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me: Saul simply wanted the same kind of promise from David that he made to Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20:13-16. In that day, when one royal house replaced another it was common for the new royal house to kill all the potential rulers from the old royal house
- e. V. 22- Many times, a person repents and claims to recognize their sinful ways just like Saul did. But the validity of repentance and a changed heart isn't demonstrated by the emotion or sincerity of a moment. It is demonstrated by the ongoing direction of one's life and David had every right to say, "I'm going to stay in the stronghold until I see the direction of Saul's life."

### Conclusion:

- The application we can learn from tonight is how can we discern God's providence from temptation? Every open door is not necessarily the door God wants you to walk through

### A STRATEGY FOR GODLY DISCERNMENT

1. PROVE ALL THINGS- The word prove means to "examine" and is translated from a very common and familiar word. It carries the idea of testing something in order to ascertain its true character or nature.

2. HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD- Have you ever participated in a tug of war? You get a good grip on the rope and try not to let go. What things do you "hold fast" to in this life? We are to "examine everything carefully" and when we find things that are good, we are to get a firm grip on them.

3. ABSTAIN FROM ALL APPEARANCE OF EVIL- Abstain is a strong word. Literally, it means "to shun away from." It is the idea of being repulsed by something gross

-Brent Armstrong (excerpt from [ministry127.com](http://ministry127.com))