

1 Samuel 24

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[0 : 00] Today's scripture reading comes from 1st Samuel chapter 24 and may be found on page 234 of the Red Pew Bible. The children's programs are taking a break from the summer, but there are some activity packets on the back, at the back there to keep the children occupied during the sermon.

Today we're doing something a little bit different in that we're having an interpretive reading, so there will be five of us reading today's scripture. Again, it's 1st Samuel 24 on page 234.

You may remain seated for the reading of God's word. When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, Behold, David is in the wilderness of En Gedi.

Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the wild goats' rocks. And he came to the sheepfolds by the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to relieve himself.

Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave, 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 : 12] Then David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe. And afterward David's heart struck him, because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

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.

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. Afterward David also arose, and went out of the cave, and called after Saul, My Lord, the King!

And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth and paid homage. 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 me today, into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you.

[2 : 17] I said I will not put out my hand against the Lord, for he is the Lord's anointed. 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.

May the Lord judge between me and you. May the Lord avenge me against you. But my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, Out of the wicked comes wickedness.

But my hand shall not be against you. After whom has the King of Israel come out? After whom do you pursue? After a dead dog.

After a flea. May the Lord therefore be judged. And give sentence between me and you. And see to it. And plead my cause.

[3 : 26] And deliver me from your hand. As soon as David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, Is this your voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept.

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, and 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. And now behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand.

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. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Well, if ever there was a context ripe for revenge, our chapter holds this.

[4 : 54] Saul had been pursuing David for some time now and had been hunting him down.

And when it looked as if David was in the worst of all predicaments, without any options before him, Saul was delivered into his hand.

And the opportunity for revenge had come. I don't know if you've ever experienced a relational rupture.

I'm sure many of us have. This is a relational rupture of the most severe kinds. Did you notice that David, in the midst of the text, actually calls Saul his father?

Indeed, he had been drawn into the family of Saul through his great victory over Goliath and through his marriage to Saul's daughter.

[6 : 05] And yet the relational breach had extended to the point where Saul would have his life at all costs. The narrative for the first seven verses simply shows us what happens when the opportunity for revenge came calling.

Notice how it begins, the setting. Saul there with 3,000 men of war.

David, according to the previous chapter and verse 13, had men that numbered 600. So David and his men are outnumbered, if my math is correct and it often isn't, some 5 to 1.

It also presents a setting where they are at En Gedi, or at the spring of the young goats down along the edge of the Dead Sea.

Now, I've never been to Israel. So my only acclamation with the contour of the land has been through maps, videos, things online.

[7 : 39] I long one day to go to Israel. In fact, I hope we will go someday as a church. I want to do it before 2020 for a number of reasons. But at any rate, when I go to Israel, this is one of the highlights for me.

I long to see Jerusalem and the old city and the wall, but I am eager to be in this area where David ran the rocks and hid from Saul.

It seems so true to life. The anointed on the run, ever in weakness. And there he is, down along the Dead Sea, hiding in a cave.

Evidently, there are holes in the rocks and caves, the kind of which I only know of in Kentucky, where you see mammoth caves, where there's a small opening, but immediately after the opening, perhaps a number of angular ways through rock that lead you to great caverns.

David was so on the run at this point and so out of gas, as it were, that all his men were now hiding in the deepest recesses of a cave.

[9 : 12] Not a place from which you could fight a war. You're found out in that cave. You're done. They just wait you out.

And there he was. It says, interestingly, verse 3, and I love these little topographical markers, you know, in front of the wild goats' rocks, and he came to the sheepfolds by the way.

The sheepfold was an early, typically dry stone, stacked stone, semi-circular enclosure that would have been the most primitive and early of sheep pens.

It's where the shepherds would have run the sheep at night and then laid across the opening. So I'm imagining that the terrain at that point where there are sheepfolds still is in the area where the sheep can immediately be let out to pasture.

So perhaps the rock rises from there and you're on a plain, and now there are 3,000 men in front. And a short walk along a splintering stone up an embankment, perhaps 30, 40 feet as a whole, and David and all of his men are there.

[10 : 35] David, being the warrior that he is, undoubtedly had somebody at the front peering out in camouflage and seeing the entire army out across in front of him.

3,000 men. Saul, of course, would have been known among them. He was head and shoulders above all other Israelites. It wouldn't have been hard to pick him out on the battlefield.

And suddenly, Saul himself begins to leave the band of warriors and their encampment and begins to make his way up the shale and the rock.

And the man knows exactly what's happening. He's coming our way. My guess is, and the text isn't entirely clear, he winds his way back through some cracks and crevices and all the way back to where David is and his men and says, he's coming.

He's heading here. And the dialogue ensues. What a setting. When the opportunity for revenge came calling.

[11 : 51] What's astounding is what David did. He took action, but the action is marked by two things in the text, verses 5 through 7.

The action is marked one by regret and then secondly, verse 7, by resolve to never list his hand against the anointed. Take a look in verse 5.

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. They've really altered the text that the Lord had given him early, namely, that the Philistines would be given into his hand, but they apply something that the Lord had said concerning the Philistines to Saul himself, for indeed, if you have friends like Saul, who needs enemies?

So Saul is nothing in the men's eyes other than a Philistine. And so this is the day that God has given your enemy into your hand. David, David, literally in the Hebrew, he really went off on his men.

There's a sense of he had to argue them down all the while Saul nearing the entrance. And then he comes.

[13 : 15] Verse 6, 6, David arose stealthily and cut off, 5, cut off, what a phrase, he cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

And here comes the regret, verse 5 or 6, afterwards, after his heart struck him, that's conviction, because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe, and 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.

What a move. Here comes Saul in the text literally to uncover his feet, to use the cave as a bathroom. I mean, what a detail in the Bible.

Fortunately, we don't read these things all the time. But there are 3,000 men on the plain. And Saul's looking for a little privacy.

He comes in, perhaps one of these early crevices off the corner. His robe is off. He enters into the cave. He does his business.

[14 : 27] Meanwhile, David has wound his way to there and actually come upon the robe of Saul and takes his sword. At this point, maybe even still the sword of Goliath that he killed Goliath, or it used to be Goliath's sword, and he cuts off a corner of it and then goes back to his men and he's filled with regret.

Why? I mean, he should have killed him. He knew that cutting off the corner of the robe in a sense was laying claim to the office of the king.

He was, in a sense, symbolically taking Saul out. Your robe, sign of your reign among all your men, is now with me.

And while he symbolically takes it, he doesn't kill him and therefore the signet ring of all the power of the kingdom yet rests with Saul.

You know, we learned a couple of weeks ago that it was obvious that David had made a covenant with Jonathan on numerous occasions.

[15 : 41] And when we looked at the text carefully, we began to see that the covenant he had made must have in part been that he would not lift up his own hand against Jonathan's father Saul, that he would wait for God to bring him into his own rather than speed up the process and take it for himself.

And so he regrets because in a sense he symbolically has taken it. When the opportunity for revenge came calling, the regret was there but the resolve was all the firmer.

Look at verse 7. So David persuaded his men with these words and did not permit them to attack Saul. I don't know if this happened when he came back with the corner of the robe or what. And they're like, what?

You're coming back with a robe? You should be coming back with a head. And now he's making his way back down to the camp. Let me go get him. I can get him still. And David says, no.

Scene 1, verses 1-7, when the opportunity for revenge came calling. What's the upshot? the upshot of it? Look at verses 8-15.

[16 : 57] When that happened, here's what actually occurred. It was mercy who opened the door. When the opportunity for revenge came calling, it was mercy who opened the door.

Look at the demeanor of David when he now makes his way that Saul has his way back to the men. Afterward, David arose, verse 8, and he went out of the cave. I can imagine him now lifting his body in the sight of all.

And he calls after Saul, my lord, the king. What a phrase. What a phrase to a man who had been hunting him down and seeking his life. My lord, the king.

It is an address that is marked by respect and humility both in word, my lord, the king, and in deed.

Look at what David does when Saul looked behind him. David bowed with his face to the earth and paid homage. This is an astounding man, the character of which I know little about.

[18 : 11] How many of us could do it? How many of us, when so severely injured by personal breach of relationship, can speak with that humility, that respect, and pay homage to the authority?

I find David to be an astounding individual on the pages of scripture. given the breaches of relationship.

And then two things happen. When mercy opens the door, it speaks with respect and humility. Look at verse 9 through 11. There's an argument given to Saul concerning his own innocence.

9 through 11, he said to Saul, why do you listen to the words of the 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's the Lord's anointed. See, my father, the corner of your robe in my hand.

[19 : 31] For by the fact that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, you may know there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you.

A declaration of innocence. It almost was like a legal argument. And then he moves from there to an appeal that the Lord would be his own avenger.

Look at verses 12 to 15, how they're bracketed by these phrases about the Lord as judge. Verse 12, may the Lord judge between me and you.

That's the front end. And then verse 15, may the Lord therefore be judge. After making an argument to Saul concerning his own innocence, he makes an appeal before Saul to the Lord that he will be his avenger.

The use of the term judge. You think of it, what's the role of a judge? Well, a judge in part is the one who declares innocence from guilt.

[20 : 45] And not only that, a judge is able to apportion amounts of monies or fines or in a sense rewards given to the one who was innocent.

And what David says is, I have not done anything against you. May the Lord be the one who makes the proper declaration of who is innocent here and who is guilty.

So here he is declaring his innocence. May the Lord be the one who apportions appropriate reward. what an amazing thing then to realize that he is trusting in God to make good on all the injustices against him in life.

Do you hear that? I want you to hear that. He trusts God to make good on all the injustices of life. He rests. He waits.

He depends on God to deliver. You know it's fascinating to me when you start reading the Psalms the particular Psalms that encompass David's years of wandering.

[22 : 11] I've been rereading them. Psalms like Psalm 34 52 57 a few others. What struck me lately in reading them over and over these weeks as we're in the narrative part is how he's always praising the Lord.

My soul praises the Lord. He's praising the Lord every day. So while his mouth is frothing feigning lunacy in the presence of the king of Gath he's writing a psalm that is declaring that he will always give praise to God.

Imagine the breach of relationship and what he actually was able to put down on paper. All these things are coming against him unjustly and what you hear from his lips is I choose to praise God.

God is amazing. My heart knows little of the depth of the heart of David.

when the opportunity for revenge came calling verses 1 to 7 it was mercy that opened the door and cried out 8 to 15 and then finally that same mercy extended grace upon grace verses 16 to 22 look at the two aspects of Saul's speech there's a declaration of fault I'm in the wrong not much else he could say at that point I'm in the wrong I declare fault verse 16 to 19 but then look there is a desire verse 20 and 21 for forgiveness there is an actual desire to be forgiven and what he requests by way of

[24 : 23] Hebraic amplification is his name and the name of his offspring swear to me therefore by the Lord verse 21 that you will not cut off my offspring after me what did you catch the word cut off David cut off the corner of the robe David held it up in his face and said I cut it off but I'm not going to take your life and Saul says although you've cut off the corner of my robe do not cut me off or that which follows me by way of amplification David had made his appeal to him and said you come after a dead dog and now Saul is requesting that his own name would go on take a look at how this request is fulfilled 2 Samuel 9 after

Saul's death and I encourage you to turn there after Saul dies on the battlefield and David comes to power he has an opportunity to do whatever he wants with Saul's house the offspring and look what he does in 2 Samuel 9 verses 1 to 8 David said is there still anyone left in the house of Saul that I may show kindness for Jonathan's sake now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba and they called him to David and the king said to him are you Ziba and he said I am your servant think about how scared that individual was to be affiliated with the house of Saul now being summoned into the presence of the new king when everything in ancient history would say you wipe all those people out are you Ziba I'm your servant in other words no I'm not anyone I'm with you

Ziba realizes something actually good might be going on here he says there is still a son of Jonathan he's crippled in his feet and the king said to him where is he and Ziba said to the king he's in the house of Amiel at Lodabar then king David sent and brought him from the house of Amiel the son of Amiel at Lodabar that had to be one you are now summoned O son of Jonathan son of Saul to see the newly appointed king no wonder David says to him in verse six well let's go back verse six Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan son of Saul came to David and fell on his face I bet he did and paid homage what a striking thing the very thing David did to

Saul and David said Mephibosheth and he answered behold I am your servant and David said to him do not fear for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father and you shall eat at my table always and he paid homage and said what is your servant that you should show regard for dog and Jonathan's own son says when invited to the table of the king why this grace why grace upon grace I am nothing but a dead dog and do you realize that Mephibosheth spends the rest of his days as a wealthy man eating at the table of the king grace upon grace when the opportunity for revenge came calling mercy is what opened the door and extended grace upon grace now what do we do with it two implications for us

David is an incredible example to us just a straightforward example in fact the new testament in first Peter three uses David and his sufferings under Saul as an example for not taking revenge yourself you can go read it later David is an example of what we are to do in life when we are wronged and injured by way of example he quietly waited for God and did not execute justice on his own in fact he was merciful and gracious grace upon grace in other words David in this passage informs us of how our conduct ought to be in relation to others it teaches us how we are to treat others and if you think about it in terms of first Peter three the context there are three main arenas of life where injustices are coming at you the first is governing authorities ungodly authorities and when ungodly authorities come at you you are to be like

[29 : 49] David and to open your door mercifully and extend grace upon grace the second is what happens in a workplace today by a shorthand I could put it that way when you are at work and you are unjustly treated you are to be like David to extend mercy grace upon grace you are not to lift your hand to climb the ladder on top of someone else no matter how ungodly they may be you are to wait for God to vindicate you and the third arena is marriage in first Peter three where you have this entire thing within a family and the breach of relationship and what is to answer the door is mercy and grace upon grace it's an incredible example overwhelming with real weight overwhelming overwhelming but nevertheless straightforwardly there but it's more than mere moralism

David is not merely an example to us from this text we also are informed about God's conduct toward us that Jesus becomes a substitution for us let me tell you what I'm trying to get at here the meta narrative or the big picture of the Bible is not merely an ethics track for how we are to treat each other David did it do like David it's not merely that the Bible is a story about how we interface with God it's the humanity's picture with a living God the Bible at its core says something about our relationship with God and in this light you and I are a lot more like Saul than like David how many of you actually read the passage today and were identifying with Saul my guess is not many of us oh I'm like Saul no we're all actually saying boy I gotta get to be like David or that's the way

I try to do it but imagine identifying yourself with Saul in a big picture way that is true all of us grasp for power that is not ours all of us lift our hand willfully against God as the anointed and our ruler all of us have lived lives in ways where we pursue the doing away with the divine limitations that are purportedly put upon us in the scriptures by God sometimes we don't want to live as we hear it read here there are times where we pursue God in our life to rid our life of him so we can go on have you ever done that have you ever thought gosh if I could just get away from God I've seen so much junk in the God world I only want to get away from the God world I want to get away from God

I want to do what I want when you do that you're like Saul you're like chasing God around the mountain side trying to vanquish him from your life and for this reason then we are according to the Bible rebels we are God's enemies his wrath is upon us we are in need of what mercy and grace with God and that's where Jesus comes in think of Jesus coming in as a rescuer to right your rebellious relationship with God you're trapped you're in a cave of rebellion though not righteousness think of what Jesus does when he's on the cross or in the garden when or before Pilate I'm not exactly sure but at some point he says my kingdom is not of this world do you not know that

I could call thousands of angels from heaven to war for me in other words if this is my hour of revenge I could take it but he didn't do it think of Jesus on the cross and some of those final words where he says father forgive them for they know not that which they do I mean that is that is the appearance of mercy on the scene think of the patient dependent gracious way of Christ when he finally says on the cross father into your hands I commend my spirit I'm trusting you I'm waiting for you you vindicate me and he does all that as a substitution for our rebellion that when we come to know him and come to him we are again rightly related with God and guess what happens rather than our name being blotted out our name actually gets written into a book of life and it goes on in perpetuity!

[35 : 10] from generation to generation it's amazing grace it is so sweet rich beyond me that God would not take revenge or even just rightful rule but send his son and just as David invited Jonathan's son the son of his enemy to his own table for the rest of his life here is the table that you are invited to that signifies that mercy and grace comes to you and you embrace it and you actually taste it grace again there is no way for you to begin extending grace or mercy to others other than in a moralistic exemplary way which is good enough but there's no way to do it fully as a

Christian until you do it understanding that I am here to please God I'm offering grace to others because I'm pleasing Jesus he changed my life he was gracious to me he owes all my actions from gracious I forgive why because God has forgiven me that's it because God has forgiven me and if an infinite and eternal and righteous and holy God is willing to forgive the finicky sins the preferential defeated discouraged life in sin that we have all put forth then how is it that we would not be willing to extend some measure of that into the lives of others if we can't do that how do we come to this but what a celebration to come to be invited to the table although your feet are lame he couldn't even walk to the table

I can't get to the king's table and the king says come because I'm not taking out my revenge on you I am mercy opening my door and I am grace upon grace to you and to those that come after you come who doesn't want that meal who doesn't need it our heavenly father we thank you for the table that we are about to partake of and as we stand patiently and we wait in line may there be something sensory taking place that with each step forward to the sacrament we are coming forward to our king who laid down his life for our sin that we would be invited to his banquet forevermore how sweet this meal is may it be real a table of thanks!

giving we pray to the glory of your name amen