

1 Samuel 24 // Self Control and Choosing Good over Evil

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[0:00] Today we're going to be in 1st Samuel chapter 24. You want to open your Bibles or tap and swipe your way there, however you get to it.

We're in our last week talking about the fruit of the Spirit. Not our last week in general, of course. We've got to live it. But our last week teaching it for a little while.

And I find it interesting that self-control is the last one. Because self-control is needed for all of the others. Think about it. In order to have joy, we have to have self-control to set our minds towards it. Because happiness is up and down all the time. Happiness is not joy. You can wake up on a Monday morning and it could be, you know, figuratively raining inside your house. Because you're just not happy. And that's okay.

Everybody has unhappy days. But joy is something that should remain constant. And it takes self-control to decide towards that. And I can go through the entire list.

[1:07] But we know patience takes a measure of self-control. You hear something that you know is just blatantly wrong and you're just going to see through it. And, oh, Lord bless you, brother.

Self-control. And we all have different experiences. I will share this. My father was not a man of great self-control. I couldn't really look at his life and say he was a disciplined, self-controlled person.

But when you heard self-control in him, it left you stopping for a moment. And the example I have is when my brother wrecked our car.

So I was pretty young. I was about six, I think. And my grandma lived with us on my dad's side. And I don't know.

My brother's name is Dan. I call him Danny. I don't know what Danny was up to. I'm not too sure. But I do remember the car left. And then I remember the car didn't return. But Danny did. And he was underage.

[2:05] And he just took it out for a joyride. And it just went into the ditch not far from home. But we had one of those older houses, you know, built in the early 70s, late 60s, where one heating vent was like the tin can telephone game to every other house or room in the house.

You could put your ear up to that and you could hear what's going on. It was just, it was amazing. So my grandma, you know, came to read to me and stuff. But we chose to have our ears to that heating vent, listening to the conversation that was going on downstairs between my mom, my dad, and my brother Danny.

And it was interesting to hear Danny's account of the whole thing. And what sent a chill down my spine was the silence that my father had. In that moment, he had self-control.

And you could hear him breathing through it. And the only words he says is, you'll pay for every penny. And I could hear him leave the room. And I'm just thinking, I better go to bed. I don't want to be caught up, you know.

Self-control can come in different places in different times in our lives. We absolutely have to have it on a regular, consistent basis. It's a part of the fruit of the spirit because I truly believe we need the Lord in order to have proper self-control in our lives.

[3:20] To decide away from sin. To decide toward love. To decide away from gossip. And decide toward kindness. To decide away from judgment.

And decide toward mercy. These things take self-control. The passage that we're about to read through is one of my favorite examples of it.

So let's just dive in. Now, this is a time when God was training David to be one of the greatest kings Israel will have ever known outside of Jesus reigning himself.

And every person, every one of us has a training process. And it doesn't really end until we're called home to heaven. And in between our birth and that moment, we are trained by God.

We have our ups and downs. We have our victories. We have our failures. Those are normal.

That's normal human life. But self-control is something we need to master.

[4:26] It's something that we need to work on very, very, very, very hard. Verses 1 to 2. After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, David is in the desert of En Gedi.

So Saul took 3,000 able young men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the crags of the wild goats. Saul was relentless.

And I hope you haven't run into people like this, but I have. Where they are right in their own rightness. Right? You cannot correct them to save your life.

They are just always right. There's something deeply wrong with that. And Saul had a bit of it. And the thing is, is as we're about to learn, it wasn't Saul's personal opinion.

It was the whispers of others. And David had incredible self-control to be able to weed through that. Okay? But we'll get there in a moment.

[5:32] It can be discouraging in our Christian life. Trials feel like they just keep coming. One right after another. We want a victory to be our last victory.

In a way, we'd like to, okay, if we could just get through this week, then another week begins. You hear the jokes and you see the reels and the memes. About 2025, my favorite, I think Crawford brought it up recently, is like, I don't want a fresh new 2026.

I want to gently use 2013 or something like that. You know, just another, right? And you find yourself just kind of wishing for a better moment. Anyways. But the fact of the matter is that enemies and trials will come our way.

We know that. And it takes self-control to be able to navigate these things. Now, En Gedi is an unusually beautiful area.

When you walk into it, when you're going on the main road, let's put it that way, where these 3,000 soldiers would have been hiking around, it actually looks pretty barren.

[6:34] It's not far from the Dead Sea. And it looks like you're in a desert. There's rock outcroppings. And if you follow this one little trail, you're going to see that the cliff sides are just riddled with caves.

I mean, like, caves everywhere. I could see where a significant number of people can hide in these. If you walk far enough in, it is a shockingly beautiful waterfall oasis where there's green, the water is just amazing, and it just falls from this decent height.

It's a picturesque beauty. But you don't see that right away. And so I wanted to give that, because I actually probably should have brought a picture of it, because I'm not describing it well enough.

It is a desert oasis, as you can imagine. It's beautiful. And there are caves littered everywhere. This is where David chose to hide out.

And I can understand. Fresh water. You're hidden from enemy's eyes. It makes sense. Verse 3. He came to the sheep pens along the way. A cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself.

[7:46] David and his men were far back in the cave. You know, there's so many reasons why I appreciate the Bible. One of them is that it's a real book about real people. Saul had to go to the bathroom.

Right? And that's why he went into this cave. Because he didn't want to do that in front of his 3,000 men. Now, I have known people, not me, but I have known people that have really, really struggled with, to try and figure out, was this number one or number two?

Okay? Because when you get into it, you realize David had to have some time. Anyways, okay, that's a rabbit trail. I'll stop right there. You deserve better than for me to go on with that thought.

But let's just say, the Bible's a real book about real people. If this was a marketing piece, right, if this were a lie, why include that detail? Okay?

Saul went into the cave. And it just happened to be the cave where David and his men were hiding out. Now, I don't believe in happenstance.

[8:50] I don't believe in coincidence. I believe the Lord arranged that. And as we're about to see, I think David faced a temptation in this moment to take things into his own hands and claim a victory for himself or to wait upon the Lord and let the Lord's fingerprints be upon the solution.

Outside of the mouth of the cave, it would have been incredibly noisy. So let's just keep that in our heads because otherwise, this can seem like a little fantastic. You got 3,000 guys out in this valley.

It would be nothing like being in a city street, 12 noon, buses and cars going by, right, all kinds of things. It would be really loud. So I would understand why Saul wouldn't hear David's men in the background going, right?

I could understand why he wouldn't hear David sneak up behind him. Verse 4. The men said, This is the day the Lord spoke of when he said to you, I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.

Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe. David, this is your moment. His men were tired. They were hungry.

[10:09] They had been on the run away from loved ones. They were in the wilderness, but they're following the new king that is to come. They were loyal to him. But this was the moment.

David, you could rid us of all of this pain. You could rid us of all of this abandonment and frustration. Kill the guy. He's right there. And I think David, in this moment, must have felt a temptation.

I could end it all right now. I could solve this problem. He would no longer be chasing me for nothing. I could end this right now if I just take this into my own hands.

Take the promise of God that he gave to you right now, David. But, David sneaks up. His men's hearts are racing.

This is it. We're going home, boys. This is it. I won't miss the game next week. Whatever it is, right? Like, this is it? But I believe God changed his heart along the way.

[11:12] David didn't kill Saul. He cut off a piece of his robe. Just a piece. And he starts to come back. I imagine his men probably thought he was pretty crazy.

What? You could have ended this. You could have taken this into your own hands, David. What are you thinking? What are you thinking? The promise was that God's going to give you all your enemies, David.

The promise was that God's going to give you the throne of Israel, David. But right here, David faced this temptation. Are you going to wait to receive God's promise?

Or are you going to try and seize it yourself? There's a difference. Sometimes when we're wrestling with God's will, it's so easy to drag God along for the ride and to say, just bless what we're doing.

The hard part is the waiting. Waiting for God. It's kind of easy to come to church. We can pray.

[12:18] We can be in God's presence. This is a good thing. But waiting upon the Lord, waiting for his deliverance in something is a 24-7 task that just simply ain't easy to do.

And we know that. Are you going to wait to receive God's promise or take it through your disobedience? See, it was disobedient for David to kill Saul because Saul was God's anointed king. So David would be coming at it sideways, hijacking God's plan that he already had in place. But it sure would take the sweat off of David's brow.

It would take the pressure off of David and his men might be able to go home. It's tempting to take things into our own hands. It really is. But it's not David's job to remove Saul.

It was God's job. And as much as we get tempted to try and do something on our own, there are things, many, which are just simply in the territory of the Lord.

[13:25] And we need to leave it to him. We were talking about it in Bible study earlier. The term, God will be my justice, is something that I've come acquainted with.

And you may feel it too. People can say hateful, spiteful things to your face without having a shred of understanding. People can cut you off in traffic and do all kinds of things that annoy us.

But God will be your justice. It may not be immediate. It may take time. But God will be your justice. And I have seen this through multiple decades of ministry. I'll tell you that right now.

Stay close to him. Keep doing what he's told you to do. He's got your back. God will fulfill his promises, but he'll do it his way and in his time.

We can be tired of running and fighting. We can be tired of wanting to seize things with our hands.

We can be tired because sometimes life just feels a little too long. And if we just take this one shortcut, if we misinterpret scripture just one little way to make it easier on ourselves, we might just be short-cutting God's plan for our lives and it would always be better than anything we planned.

[14:42] Always. David knew one thing. When he was to be king, he wanted God's fingerprints to be all over it.

All over that crown. Not his own. David wanted God to bring him into the fullness of that position. Not somebody else and not himself.

We want to live our lives so that the hand of God does the work even if it means waiting. Even if it means waiting.

David would later be able to go to sleep as king without his conscience bothered. He would be able to rest his head on his pillow knowing, Lord, you put me here. I know you're going to take me through.

I know you're going to get me the rest of the way. And what a gift that is to rest at night with that kind of comfort. Whereas if David had devised something for himself, if his fingerprints were all over that crown, he would go to sleep at night wondering, I wonder when someone's going to take it from me.

[15:54] And that's not the right heart to have, not the right attitude to have, and it means he didn't come by it the right way. When God places someone in a place like that, when he crowns a king, he is king indeed.

And David knew that and he was able to rest at night. But another thing I find very interesting here is David's heart did not fill up with bitterness and resentment.

Even though he was being hunted, he wasn't bitter and resentment. He kept a tender heart. We have to have self-control to avoid bitterness and resentment in our lives.

That takes self-control. Breathing in and out. David learned how to keep a short account before God. And oh man, I don't think I need to say that very much to this crowd or anyone else that's been a Christian for a while.

Keep a short account of the things that go wrong. Keep a short account of the things that happened to you. And I mean short account. Be a goldfish. Okay? They forget something almost immediately.

[17:07] What a gift. Because you see, when you harbor bitterness and resentment, you make up a story. Well, I don't like how that happened. And all of a sudden, I don't like how that happened became, oh, I hate that guy or girl.

Right? And that then becomes this whole other thing. They're a monster. And before you know it, then you have factions. Show me biblically where that lives.

Show me biblically in the life of the Christian where that lives. No, self-control must reel it back.

We're going to talk a bit about that next week. To be reeled back and to do things properly within the Spirit.

Approaching things through His Word and not our concocted circumstances. You see, Saul lived in that world of dreamt circumstances.

Whispers from other people, David's trying to kill you. He wants your throne. He's a terrible person. And David did nothing to Saul. What did he do? He took a little piece of his garment.

[18:10] He didn't kill him. Well, shame on David. No, that's not what happened. Let me get it down in a minute. Verses 5 to 6. Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe.

He said to his men, The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lay my hand on him, for he is anointed of the Lord. David had such a soft and tender conscience towards God that even cutting the robe bothered him.

That is not a heart of resentment. That's not a heart of bitterness. But it is a heart after God. Keep a short account of things. Forgive, release, let it go.

And then, have a short account and be tender-hearted. Both of those things together. This was one of the beauties of David. See, David wanted to treat Saul the way he wanted to be treated as king. He honored Saul. Not because Saul did a lot of nice things to David, but simply because God put Saul in that position. There was a beauty there. I wish each of us had a conscience as sensitive as that.

[19:28] When there's gossip, when there's something negative, when there's stuff like that, keep a short account and have a tender heart. Forgive. Ephesians 4, chapter 4, verse 32.

Forgive one another. Be tender-hearted towards one another. Right? It gets easier to find enemies who do not exist and hold misplaced bitterness that displeases God.

It gets easier to do that without self-control. It's like when you're on fire. Did you ever learn this? My elementary school, I was raised in the 70s and went to high school in the 80s.

I was telling right now, we had the weirdest things from an earthquake hiding under a desk that'll never protect you. Or if you're on fire, which I can honestly say has never really happened in my life so far, you stop, right?

You drop and you roll. Put it out. And I like to look at gossip like that. You hear gossip? Unless the person's in the room to defend them, deflect.

[20 : 39] Stop, drop, and roll. Otherwise, you're an accomplice. Be very careful. Have self-control. Deflect people away. What I do on a regular basis, if someone comes to me with a complaint, I'll hear, I'll pray, and I'll say what Matthew 18 dictates.

Have you gone and made your case with that person? No. Go and make your case with that person. Matthew 18. Go do it.

And if they listen to you, you've won a brother or a sister. Goodness has happened. Praise the Lord. If they hear it and they say, I'm sorry, that's not what I meant, then a good thing has happened.

If they say, I don't know what you're talking about and you're crazy, the Bible, Jesus himself, says, go and take a witness with you. And it's not to kind of create a posse.

It's just simply, you know, maybe I'm not saying this right. Maybe my words aren't just coming in a way that I need some, so like this person is going to just be a buffer and maybe say it in a different way so we can get to the truth of the matter.

[21 : 47] Have that kind of heart. And if the person says, oh, I get it now. Wow, I'm really sorry. You've won a brother. You've won a sister. It says it there in Matthew 18. Then, if they say, you're crazy, you don't know what you're talking about, you go to the church.

What so many people do so often, though, that I've experienced is they go immediately to the church and they bypass the first two. There's no room for reconciliation. And bitterness happens. Resentment happens. And all the while claiming to be biblically mature. It's hard for me to hear that. I need self-control when I hear that. Part of me is like, okay, I'll pray through this.

Matthew 18 is a recipe for reconciliation. And David gives Saul a chance to reconcile here. He really does. Verse 7, with these words, David sharply rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul and Saul left a cave and went his way.

David could have killed Saul and had his conscience clear by his men's standard. But then verse 8 goes on. Then David went out of the cave and called Saul, my lord, the king.

[23 : 05] And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. David, are you crazy? This man is trying to kill you.

You're showing him love and honor? That doesn't make sense in my worldly human point of view. This was his chance to reconcile with Paul right now.

David wanted to take this chance because maybe, just maybe, he could get things right with Saul. Maybe. And he was risking his life. Or was it rather that he was trusting God?

You see, David was anointed to be king. And if God wanted that to happen, God will see that happen regardless of who is hunting David. And David knew that.

So he went and looked for reconciliation. Verse 9, he said to Saul, why do you listen when men say David is bent on harming him? What love?

[24 : 06] What compassion? What mercy? David shows. First of all, he doesn't kill him. Now he gives him an out. Why are you listening to all of those lies? My king, why?

Why are you letting people poison your mind? Stop. Be direct. David is addressing this as if none of this is Saul's idea.

Why are you listening? It's not, why do you think? Why are you crazy, Saul? No, he didn't say any of that. Why are you listening to this, my king? Verses 10 to 11, this day, you have seen with your own eyes how the Lord delivered you into my hands in the cave.

Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, I will not lay my hand on my Lord because he is the Lord's anointed. See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand.

I cut off the corner of your robe, but I did not kill you. See that there is nothing in my hand to indicate that I am guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life.

[25 : 13] Saul was living with a delusion. He was living with a lie. David's out to get me. Instead of Saul going to David peacefully and saying, son, I've heard the wackiest stuff, he got 3,000 guys to go out hunting for David.

Wrong, wrong idea. Bad. Not Matthew 18, though, you know, he gets that later. We get that later. David is out to get me and it was a lie.

And when David holds up that little piece of robe, the lie was shattered instantly because it couldn't possibly be true that David was out to get him because David didn't kill him even though he had a

chance to get that close.

No, something else was going on. The light goes on for Saul. Verses 12-15. May the Lord judge between you and me and may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me but my hand will not touch you and as the old saying goes, from evil doers come evil deeds so my hand will not touch you.

Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Who are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? May the Lord be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it.

[26 : 32] May he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand. David was trusting God to have the fingerprints of God on the crown and not David's.

God put you in a position and God will deal with you. You're God's problem to get rid of Saul in other words. And sometimes when God is wanting to discipline someone and they're not listening he'll send someone else.

I don't know if you've had that happen in your life and it's happened in mine. I didn't want to hear what God was saying so he brought someone that said pretty much the same thing in a way in very direct ways at times and I was like oh that's what God was trying to get you know across my thick head.

I get it. Okay. Right? David was sent to get Saul's attention and David could have taken it into his own hands but he chose to honor God's plan all along and spare Saul.

Verses 16 to 22 and I'll close shortly thereafter. When David finished saying this Saul asked is that your voice David my son and he wept aloud you are more righteous than I he said you have treated me well but I have treated you badly you have just now told me about the good you did to me the Lord delivered me into your hands but you did not kill me when a man finds an enemy does he let him get away unharmed may the Lord reward you well for the way that you treated me today I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands now swear to me by the Lord that you will not kill off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's family so David gave his oath to Saul and Saul returned home but David and his men went up to the stronghold could you imagine that for a moment when Saul realized how wrong he had been and tears are flowing down his face and he's realizing that he's been spared but not only that that he has gained a son again in his heart imagine that moment of Saul realizing he was wrong our pride so often doesn't allow us to look in the mirror and ask ourselves this one simple question what if

[29 : 00] I'm wrong what if the bitterness and resentment that I hold against someone is misplaced what if I am getting in the way of God's plan because of what I grip with a white knuckle grip and will not release and let go of because I will not forgive I can't answer that stuff for you I have my own clown car I deal with that's up here okay but I do want to challenge all of us to consider this today that self control is a beautiful fruit of the spirit and it will ripple throughout all of the others and as we grow in self control we'll become a person who will be well let's just put it this way you know that there are some people when you're around them you feel peace and other people where you feel fear there are some people where you're around them and you feel you can just kind of let down your guard and other people where you just feel you gotta have your walls and your shields up high pray for them pray that they won't be a

Saul you see someone taught me something a while ago and it was quite a while ago and one of my favorite books in ministry and I recommend it highly to anyone who will read it is a tale of three kings by Eugene Edwards it's a tale of Saul David and God Saul had the choice he could have mentored David imagine what a world that would have been like if Saul had mentored David into the throne and said son I'm gonna teach you some of the things that I learned you know I made some mistakes did some good things Saul in his early career was it was actually some cool stuff if you read there he was tending a farm some priests had said people are being held and you know what Saul did left the farm and he raised an arm and he took them back we want to think Saul was a crazy guy but he wasn't always Saul in this book tale of three kings had the choice to be a mentor or what is called a spear chucker there's someone new coming up and I'm threatened throw a spear and cut him down or mentor everyone in ministry has to look in the mirror and ask themselves that question are you being a mentor or are you being a spear chucker are you threatened by someone coming in your house are you threatened by someone coming up that may take your job or are you mentoring them knowing that God has a plan and he's seeing it through we have to ask ourselves that now I've sent three guys out to plant churches so far I'm not done sending people out to plant

churches okay and the only way you can do that is by not being a spear checker by celebrating when people come and you raise them up so that they go off and do bigger and better things than you ever could possibly imagine isn't that what we want for our children go be bigger go experience life follow the

Lord into ways that I was too afraid to go this is how we need to mentor people not be spear chuckers so we can identify with Saul as a mentor or a spear chucker we can identify with David as one who will honor God's plans or take things into his own hands and seize the throne well one thing I know for sure God wins we don't and the sooner we get that straight in our heads the better time we will have let's pray do!