

David Spares Saul

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Date: 26 December 2011

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back to the chapter we read in 1st Samuel chapter 24. And I want us to think of this chapter really as a whole tonight, but if we focus anywhere we look at verse 8.

Afterwards, David also arose and went out to 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, and so on. Now as we know, life can often be quite complicated because so often we're called upon to deal with different situations and because we have different personalities and different likes and different dislikes in life.

We often find that life brings its own problems and its own tensions. And we often have to stop and reflect as Christians, how do we deal with these sort of things?

And I, this was very much, I was reading this chapter and it struck me very much that here we are on the last Lord's Day of the year. And when we come to the end of a year, we're looking at that this morning, we're looking at Psalm 100, a milestone, Psalm, and a milestone, we saw how 100, 100 is always a milestone.

[1 : 34] There are particular points and places in life that it's good for us to stop, to reflect, to think back, to plan, all these kind of things. And here we are at the last Lord's Day of a year.

And within our own hearts and within our own minds, there are often things that we have to deal with. We often talk about, are we often in our house, we have to clear out. Some people are an awful lot better at clearing out than others.

But we always have to get rid of stuff. And we say, well, you know, we've got to get rid of that. We've got to do a spring cleaning. And sometimes at the end of the year, we kind of almost do a spring cleaning within our own mind.

At least I think we ought to. It's a sort of thing that we should be doing regularly, not just at a level within a house or within an office or within your work or whatever, but within our own heart, within our own life.

And I think that this chapter highlights for us very, very much some of the principles that this great man, this man David, used.

[2 : 44] Because David's life had become increasingly complicated. And David was on the run, not because of anything that he had done, but because he was being chased by a man who was obsessed by David.

This man had lost sight of life's reality. This man, Saul, could only think of one thing. I've got to get rid of David.

And you know, when a patient becomes so obsessed with one, they begin to lose the picture a wee bit. And so Saul is determined to get rid of David. And it's David's attitude to Saul that really that I'm wanting us to think about tonight.

Because I think it's so helpful for us in our dealings with one another and our walk before God. Now, as we know, David was being hunted just as an outlaw.

And Saul was determined to kill him. And the basic, the bottom line was it was all about jealousy. Saul was jealous of David.

[3 : 51] Because there was a day when Saul thought the world of David. And particularly after David had killed Goliath and such like. And David was such a wonderful musician.

And he had been, remember, playing for Saul. And Saul had found therapy through David's playing. But after the slaughter of the Philistines, the Israelite women were singing as Saul and David returned from battle.

And the women were singing, Saul has slain his thousands. And you could almost see Saul's chest puff out. But then came the line, which just went like an arrow into him.

Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands. And from that moment, Saul was determined to get rid of David.

He saw David as a threat. He said to himself, the public preferred David to me. And he began to view David with completely different eyes.

[4 : 59] Beforehand, he was looking at David. And he appreciated David. And he liked David. And all of a sudden, he changed. And we've always got a guard against this. We've said it before.

Jealousy is a fearful cancer that will eat and eat and eat away. And it will destroy. And it has the ability, sadly, to destroy both the one in whose heart the jealousy is and to destroy the one that the jealousy is centered against.

And there are many examples. We've spoken about it before in the Bible. And were it not for the fact that God came and delivered, we would have seen the destruction of so many people.

Were it not for the fact that God was delivering David, David would have been destroyed. Were it not for the fact that God delivered Daniel out of the den of lions and Joseph from the dungeon in Egypt.

And you go right through the Bible and you see the number of people. Jesus was put on the cross because of envy. Out of envy, they delivered him up. That's what we're told in the word of God. And I've said it so often before.

[6 : 05] We need to guard against this fearful sin. And again, one of the reasons there was a growing awareness in the heart of Saul.

That as he looked at his own life and he was beginning to see his life was beginning to unravel. And Saul is such a sad character from such a promising beginning.

There is a downward spiral until the end. We find that he's not consulting the Lord God, but going to mediums and to witches. He's moved so far away.

And as Saul looked at David, he saw David was everything he wasn't. And he saw David such an upright character, such a good person.

And he saw there was an integrity in the life of David. And this riled Saul all the more. He couldn't bear to see what he was seeing. And so he was, because David in many ways was such a rebuke to Saul.

[7 : 07] Saul was seeing in David the potential that he himself once had. But he had blown it. And he was saying to himself, that man is highlighting to me where I could have been and what I should have been.

And so he was determined to get rid of David. But again, we've got to see that there's a spiritual aspect to all this. Because we can never truly follow the Lord and seek to walk in his ways and honor him.

But Satan will be out to try and hurt you and harm you. And we believe that there is something of this as well. And it's not just in the Bible we come across that.

That is true to this very day. That if you are committed to the Lord and seeking to follow the Lord and to honor the Lord, then Satan will do everything in his power to try and interrupt that and to spoil and to mar.

Anyway, we find that when we come to the incident here, we find that Saul is chasing David. And Saul, we read here, he's got this, you would say almost it's like his 3,000, he's taken with him 3,000 chosen men.

[8 : 22] This would be like sort of the commanders, like the Marines. He would have taken a crack unit. Here were 3,000 specially trained. So this would be his elite band.

The best that he had. The SAS of the day. And they were going into the mountains and the rocks of En Gedi to try and sniff David out, get rid of him.

And there was only one order. David, dead. David, of course, he has a band of men who are sympathetic to him, who are following him. They're with him. But here's this. We're going to get David.

And very interestingly, we find that David is hiding in this cave, that Saul comes to this particular cave.

And it tells us in verse 3, And he came to the sheepfolds, by the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now, it's quite possible that along with that, that he may have taken a wee siesta as well.

[9 : 27] I'm not altogether sure what all that was involved. But the fact of the matter is that Saul is here in this cave. And he has pulled aside for us just for a short time.

And David's men and David in the cave see there is the enemy. Here is the man who is hunting me. Here is the man who is determined to kill me and my followers. How does David react to this? Well, we see that David's men, they come to David and they tell him.

Now, this again, we see how subtle, how subtle things are. And we apply this spiritually. The men of David said to him in verse 4, 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.

Now, I don't think that's exactly what the Lord had said about Saul to David. But these men are quoting. But they're misquoting.

[10 : 39] And Satan is a master of doing that very thing. Satan will whisper to you. It's what, Satan did that, Satan did that in the garden. He quoted and he misquoted God.

Satan did that to Jesus. He quoted and he misquoted the word. And Satan is always doing that to us as well. That is why we have to know the word of God.

Because Satan will quote it, but he'll misquote it. He's a master of doing that. And he's saying, this is what God said.

Did not God say this? But it's not exactly what God said. Or he will misapply it. So that is why we need to be vigilant. Because he's like a roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour. And so David's men are saying to him, come on. The Lord has told you that he's going to deliver your enemy into your hand. And you can do with him whatever you want.

[11 : 41] Now, David is facing a real dilemma here. Because remember, these men are risking their lives to follow David. They, because they have given their all to David, they have become outlaws as well.

And not only are they living in danger, but their families are in danger. So by living with David and following David and identifying David, they have become dead men.

And here's the opportunity. What a temptation for David. Because David would say to himself, well, in order to prove that I'm a real man, in order for, see these men.

These men have given their life for me. It is only right. It is my duty. For them as much as for my own good, I will take this knife and I will plunge it into Saul.

Then their lives are free. My life is free. You see how it all seems so right. It's all so plausible. It all seems so.

[12 : 44] Everything seems to be fitting into place. The jigsaw is coming together. Here it is. Let's go. Let's do this. Well, the wonderful thing is that we find that there's another spirit within David.

And we find that David doesn't take the road of revenge. And David doesn't take things into his own hand. Because David was a young man of God.

And David had one thought in his mind. God had promised David he would be king. But David had made up his mind.

Saul has been anointed by God. I will not raise my hand against the Lord's anointed. I believe, this is what David was thinking, the Lord will deal with that in his own way and in his own time.

David was persuaded of that. But in these moments in the cave, as often there were particular moments in David's life, David's faith shone bright. And this was one of these supreme moments.

[13 : 58] Where he was so convinced of the justice and the rightness and the goodness of God. And he said to himself, no, I'm not going to do it.

The Lord has anointed Saul as king. It is not for me to plunge that dagger into him. It's not for me to take the kingdom away from Saul.

God will give me the kingdom in due time. And so David resisted that temptation. And you know that's something that we should so often learn as well.

Because so often in life, we are bad for putting out our hand. And taking over the Lord's word. One example is, maybe you've been praying for somebody to come to faith in Christ.

And all of a sudden you see somebody beginning to take a real interest. And straight away you wade in. And you say to yourself, I'll finish this off.

[15 : 02] And I'll... And the person begins to move away again. And the interest begins to die. And you're saying to yourself, I wish I had just allowed the Lord to work.

Have we not said that? And we see that so often. You see, the Lord says, look, it's my work. Yes, we are to do our duty. We are to do... There's no question whatever.

But often we can get in the way. So often we can... By trying to take over what God is going to do. And so we find that David is this classic example.

And I'm quite sure that there was many a day later on. David, as he sat on the throne some years later, he would have been so thankful that Saul's blood was not on his hands.

Because David could not have enjoyed the peace that he enjoyed during his reign. If he had taken that kingdom that day by plunging his sword into Saul, David would never have sat on the throne in peace.

[16:10] But as he sat on the throne, he enjoyed the peace of God because he waited God's way and God's time. God had promised, you see, the throne to David.

And God gives us promises as well. And sometimes, this is how it's so difficult. And you remember, and we know this, we know it from our own experience.

But if you're here tonight and you're going through a difficult time. And you believe that the Lord's promise, that the Lord's word is saying something to you. You believe that this is the word of God. Here you have his promise. It's here in the word. And yet providence seems to be going in a different direction. You cling to his word. God will not turn his back upon his word.

Remember, providence can change like that. And again, the Bible is so full of the examples. Joseph had a promise that one day he would be exalted.

[17:10] That one day all his brothers would bow down before him. His father would bow down before him. For years he languished in a prison in Egypt.

Where was that promise? Well, one day it was fulfilled. David had the promise that one day the kingdom would be his. That God was going to give him the kingdom.

And there were so many occasions where David barely escaped with his life. But one day Saul was killed in battle. And the kingdom was given to David.

God will fulfill his word. And may we be given the faith to believe that and the grace to wait for that. And so we find that David, we find this tremendous example set before us of the God-given, the Christ-like way of dealing with this situation.

And again, we find that this is a tremendous example to ourselves in the whole area of revenge. Because again, humanly speaking, revenge would say, right, this man has made my life misery.

[18:30] And that's really what David's men are saying. David's men are saying to David, hey, it's payback time. Payback time. And God has given you Saul.

Hit him. Hit him harder than he's ever hit you. That's the way revenge works. You do, somebody does something to you, you hit them back harder. But you know, there's no end to that.

It goes on and goes on and goes on. Goes on one hitting the other harder. There's no end to it. Remember what the Lord says. Avenge, this is in Romans, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath.

Vengeance is mine, I will repay. If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he's thirsty, give him drink. In so doing, you heap coals of fire on his head.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Now that's not easy. And nobody for one moment will say it's easy.

[19:30] Particularly if you are going through a difficult time. The natural reaction within everybody's heart is revenge. That is natural. You look at children, little children, watch them, even in a play group or something.

And often you will see the shove, the push, one push, another pushes back. It's instinctive. But the Lord says, that is not the way of grace.

Christ is saying to us, that is not the way. And so we find David refused to kill. But what he did was he crept up behind Saul very, very stealthily.

And whether Saul had taken off his robe at that time, I don't know. But he crept up and he cut off a wee bit of Saul's robe. And this is what I find wonderful about David, is that no sooner had he had done that than David's heart struck him.

We're told that in verse 5. David in verse 4, David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe. And afterwards, David's heart struck him because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

[20:40] What does it show us about David? It shows us that he has an incredibly tender conscience. Little things trouble him.

And you will find that is so true of a person who walks close to the Lord. Little things. Little things.

What others may look at as insignificant. They are, these things trouble the tender conscience. And straight away, David says to himself, I shouldn't have done that.

That's the Lord's anointed. And David is seeing himself striking the position. It's not so much the man as striking the position of king. God's made this man king.

And look at what I've done to his robe. And straight away the tender conscience. My friend, nurture it. There might be Christians who will laugh at your tender conscience.

[21 : 39] God loves the tender conscience that he sees in his children's heart. And David was a man who exemplified this. David knew Saul was wrong.

Evil burned in the heart of Saul towards David. But how does David handle the situation? Well, it's amazing. David here is the one who is wronged.

But what does David do? David takes the initiative. That's important. You might say to yourself, well, it's up to Saul. If these two people are to sort things out, then it's the one who is in the wrong that has to go and make the first move.

Saul was never going to make the first move. And that's often the problem. David was the man after God's own heart. David, although he was not in the wrong, David is the one who gets up and he is the one who makes the first move.

And he goes. And he bows before Saul. He calls Saul. And that, my friends, again needs grace.

[22 : 49] That is not the easy thing to do. To take the first move or to take the initiative when you've been wronged. And you see also that David speaks the absolute truth before Saul.

There's this integrity of character about David. David is, and David says to Saul, look, why are you doing what you're doing? God is going to judge between me and you.

And there's only going to be. That's really what David is saying. God will judge correctly. Saul, you are wrong. And Saul recognizes that.

Saul's heart is smitten by David. That's just what we said about the coals of fire. If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If thirsty, give him drink. In so doing, you heap coals of fire on his head.

Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. There's a prime example. David's that example. David is saying to Saul as he holds up the bit of robe. Saul, check, check, check your back.

[23 : 58] There's that cut taken out. And there's David holding it. David says, I could have killed you. God put you into my hand. But I didn't. And David is pleading before Saul.

And so, I am living in a way of integrity of character before you. Why are you hunting me? Why are you hounding me? I am your servant.

And David, his reaction is such that it breaks Saul. And at that moment, now of course, Saul is an incredibly unstable man.

And he swings in every direction. At that particular moment, Saul is humbled before David. And he recognizes the goodness of David. And he says, you're a righteous man.

I'm wrong. And in fact, he even recognizes that the kingdom will eventually go to David. You know, the greatest way to destroy an enemy is to make him a friend.

[25 : 00] And that's exactly what David was trying to do. Now, I know that all this can be incredibly difficult. But you know what we've always got to do in these things.

And particularly if you're in a situation and you may be saying to yourself, ah, well, it's all right hearing about that. But if you knew what was happening in my life. If you knew what I was going through.

Well, let's take a step back. Let us take one step back and say to anybody who might be saying within their heart, I can't forgive. Stop and think of what God has done for you and for me.

Did God say, I can't forgive? No. What did God do? Here we are and we're living in rebellion against God.

In disobedience against God. Trampling his word underfoot. Just saying, no, I don't want you. What does God do? He sends his son Jesus to rescue us.

[26 : 06] And he sends his son Jesus to die. The second person of the Godhead. Taking human nature. To rescue us. Imagine if the Lord God Almighty had said, I can't forgive these people.

We would all be dying in our sin. That would be it. We wouldn't be here tonight. There'd be no gospel. There'd be nothing. But God has said, I'm going to deal with it.

I love these people. Their lives are in a mess. They can't get their way back to me. But this is what I'm going to do. The Father says, I'm going to send my son into this world to die as a sacrifice for

sin.

He's going to take all their sins upon himself. I'm going to punish my son in that place. That, my friends, is the ultimate forgiveness that this world has ever seen.

It's the ultimate display of love. Every soul that is brought into the kingdom is an example of this lavish display of God's love.

[27 : 17] How can we in turn say, I can't forgive? When we see what it cost our Father in heaven and cost the Son to forgive us.

And that is what we've got to remember. That's where we've got to go. Always go back. Well, may God's grace be in our heart.

And as we move from one year to another, and as we have to deal with all the different issues of life, may we remember how God has dealt with us. Remember the part of the prayer, forgive us our debts.

What does it say? Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. As we forgive those who have wronged us. So we're saying to our Heavenly Father, Father, forgive us in the same way as we forgive those who have wronged us.

Are we able to forgive those who have wronged us? Well, if we can't, dare we ask the Father in heaven to forgive us?

[28 : 31] Because that's what we're saying. Father, forgive us our debts as we forgive those who have wronged us. God treats the whole area of repentance and forgiveness seriously.

May we do as well also. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we pray that as we face up to life and face up to all its complexities and demands, we pray that in a pressurized society with all its difficulties, that we may be able to have and display the grace of God in our dealings one with another.

And it is there that the Spirit of Christ is manifested. And it is there that people see up a higher principle at work. O Lord, we know that these things are difficult.

And sometimes it's not a place that we can arrive overnight. But we pray to work in us and to show us a way in which you should go.

And we ask, O Lord, that we might have that Spirit within us, even as Christ on the cross, as he hammered the nails into his hand, was praying, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

[29 : 55] Lord, bless us. Keep us all safe and take us all home safely. And guide us in all that we're about. Forgiving us all our sin.

In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.