

(1 Samuel) How to Overcome Evil With Good

by David Guzik

David's refusal to kill Saul illustrates the importance of obedience to God and trusting in His timing amidst trials.

Duration: 40:45

Scripture: 1 Samuel 24:1, 1 Samuel 24:20, Proverbs 20:22, Matthew 5:44, Matthew 7:12, Luke 6:31

Topics: "Overcoming Evil", "Gods Guidance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of David and Saul from the Bible. He highlights the moment when David had the opportunity to kill Saul but instead chose to cut off a corner of his robe. The preacher suggests that David initially intended to kill Saul but had a change of heart by God's intervention. He emphasizes the importance of seeking God's guidance in moments of revenge or retribution. The sermon concludes by reminding the audience that they will face struggles and opposition in life, but they can find victory and stay in it by trusting in God's power to overcome.

Transcript

1 Samuel, chapter 24, we're in the section of 1 Samuel that deals with the life of David before he became the king of Israel. There was some 15 to 20 years between the time that David was anointed to be the king of Israel and the time that the crown actually sat upon his head. And those years weren't wasted years, it wasn't on-the-shelf time, it wasn't waiting time.

It was time when God was training David to be the kind of man that God would establish as king over Israel. The greatest king that Israel would ever know until the Messiah himself, Jesus Christ, would rule and reign over Israel. Now in this time of molding and shaping that God was working in the life of David, there was a great time when Saul was out to kill David.

Saul was the present king of Israel, and when you're the present king of Israel, you don't appreciate it much when there's another man anointed to be king, even if that man treats you just fine. Saul's jealousy and anger towards David was evident in that Saul tried to kill David repeatedly. And we saw last time in 1 Samuel, chapter 23, that David had narrowly escaped being captured and killed by King Saul.

The army of Saul had just about encircled David and was just about to squeeze in on him and capture him and surely kill him, when Saul was called away suddenly by a messenger who came with news of an invading Philistine army. Well, David was saved. And there's a great deal of relief that happens when the

salvation of the Lord comes.

We're spared for the moment. Notice how the story continues here. 1 Samuel, chapter 24, verse 1. Now 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.

Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and went to seek David and his men on the rocks of the wild goats. Well, it just doesn't end, does it? Here, David is miraculously delivered from the hand of Saul in 1 Samuel 23. And what's 1 Samuel 24 open with? Saul's after David again.

Saul is an absolutely relentless foe. As soon as Saul was done with the Philistines, he went back to pursuing David. Now, isn't this what gets us so discouraged so often in our Christian life? It isn't just that we have a trial and we overcome it, but it's that the trials keep coming.

You're miraculously delivered from some trial that you're facing. Even as it happened with David, your Saul is called away and you're spared. And then what happens the next chapter in your life? Saul's pursuing you again.

We oftentimes wish that our next victory or our present victory would be a permanent victory and that the spiritual enemies who pursue us like Saul pursued David would simply give up and we wouldn't have to bother with them anymore. Friends, here's the fact of the matter. Even when we have the victory and even when they're sent away, they come back.

And they're going to keep coming back until we go to glory with the Lord. I don't say that to discourage or depress anybody here this morning. You might leave here, oh great, some good news from the pastor here this morning.

I'm going to have to face trials and spiritual attack all the rest of my day until I go to be with glory in the Lord. I wish I could paint a rosier picture before you here this morning, but I'm on or bound before the Lord to tell you the truth. The fact of the matter is Jesus said, in the world you'll have tribulation.

And he also said, be of good cheer for I've overcome the world and we can trust in that. The fact of the matter is, folks, is that Satan's going to keep coming after us. We're going to have to deal with the world, the flesh, and the devil until we pass from this life to the next.

And so we just need to keep trusting in the Lord each day, every moment of the day. Now, if you notice here in verses one and two, it says that David went to the wilderness of En Gedi. And it's at this moment that I wish that every one of you would have gone on a tour to Israel and visited En Gedi, because you could picture this spectacular scene in your mind.

You have this area of ground set in the midst of a huge, desolate wilderness. You make the trip from Jericho, which is up high, and you take the long, winding road from Jerusalem to Jericho. And there you're in the midst of that wilderness, which goes down towards the Dead Sea.

And in this whole area around the Dead Sea, the best term to describe it is probably dead. It's just desolate. It's barren.

You have these huge outcroppings of barren rock that look like the Mojave Desert, except even more barren than that. It's a spectacular landscape, but you say, man, nobody could live out here or prosper out

here. It looks pretty bad.

You've got the spectacular fortress of Masada at one end, and out towards another end, you've got the Qumran caves where they found the Dead Sea Scrolls. It's just desolate, barren wilderness. Then there's this one area where you go and there's a canyon that runs back.

It's the beautiful wilderness of En Gedi, where the one thing that can bring life to the desert brings it, and that's water. There's a spring up at the top of the canyon, and it flows down the canyon, and it's all green and verdant and beautiful. And as you hike back up the canyon, you see the cliffs, and you see the caves dotting the canyon on either side, and you see all this beautiful vegetation make your way back, and all of a sudden you're out of place.

Tremendous waterfall coming down, and it's misty and beautiful, and you see all this, and you're thinking, well, it's more like a postcard from Hawaii than the middle of the wilderness. But this is En Gedi, and this is where David chose to hide out. Smart man, that David.

He's thinking, I'm going to go to a nice place if I'm going to be on the run. And there's a lot of caves dotting all around us, some of them huge, back in the recesses. And David says, well, this is where I'm going to be, and this is where I'll hide.

And from here, we can send scouts out to look out over the wilderness, and we could see an enemy coming from a long way off, and one day that's exactly what they see. You know, 3,000 men can't be hidden. As they march their way, you can see the cloud of dust kicking up in the wilderness.

And David had advance notice. Here come the men of Saul. And David breathed another sigh.

Oh, here he comes again. Is this man ever going to give up? Well, let's hide. Let's escape into a cave.

And so they go into the cave, and they go way back in the recesses of the cave. David and his 600 men hiding from the attack of King Saul. We notice here, come to verse 3. So 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. What do you think about this? Here's Saul trying to find David with an army of 3,000. He's making his way around.

He's got to go to the bathroom. That's what it means when it says he had to attend to his needs. He had to go to the bathroom.

The Bible is a very real book, my friends. It deals with real people and real lives and real situations. What more can you say? Saul had to go to the bathroom.

But even the timing of something like that is so engineered by God. What are the chances? Saul has to attend to his needs at the very moment that he passes by the very cave where David and all his men are hiding. This was no coincidence.

This was engineered. This was arranged by the very hand of God. But here's the question, why? There's two different spins you could put on that, isn't there? Everybody knew this wasn't a coincidence.

But why did God bring Saul into the very cave where David and his men were hiding? See, David and his men back in the recesses of the cave. Now, let's understand something, the dynamic of all this. Outside of

the mouth of the cave, you have 3,000 troops with all their horses and equipment and this and that.

It's noisy out there, right? So it's no wonder why Saul couldn't tell that David and his men were back there. They were trying to be as quiet as they could. And with all the noise at the mouth of the cave, and you know how the dynamic is when you walk into a cave from the bright light you come in, you can't see anything.

But when you're in the cave in the darkness and looking out, you can see everything. And David and his men, they can't believe it. The army's stopping right in front of the very cave that they're at.

They're thinking, oh man, we're caught for sure now. Maybe an informant, maybe a mole has gone out and told them that we're here. And they're just as simple, they're going to wipe us all out.

And then all of a sudden, instead of seeing the army coming in with torches and swords ready to just wipe them all out, Saul comes in all by himself. I mean, he doesn't want anybody else there with him. No bodyguards, no soldiers.

He's there all by himself. They're whispering to him. And David's out at the very front of all of this, right? He needs to make the decisions, what they're going to do.

They see Saul come in all by himself. You know what David's men say? This is no coincidence, David. Praise the Lord.

Look at what they say in verse 4. Then 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 seems good to you. They're thinking, David, this is it. This is your moment.

This is no coincidence. God has laid it out right before us. Now, David, the Lord made you a promise.

And here's the promise, David. The promise is that He's going to deliver your enemies into your hands. Now, we don't know exactly when God made that promise to David or how He made it.

Maybe it was through one of the prophets. Maybe it was through the high priest. We don't know.

But God made David that promise. And David's men are on his list. David, it's the promise.

It's written in God's Word. He's promised you a throne. Now's the time to take it.

It's just laying out on a silver platter to thank you, Jesus, for this marvelous opportunity. All you have to do is creep up to Saul, draw your sword and kill him. And David, if you don't do it, then we will.

We're tired of living on the run. We're tired of living as hunted men, as fugitives, wondering about everybody, wondering about who's going to betray us next. David, we're sick of this.

Go out and do it. Take the promise of God. It's right there for you.

Look at what David did at the end of verse 4. And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's road. You see the situation here? David goes up. His sword is drawn.

His men, their hearts are beating. They're thinking, oh, yes. Thank you, Lord.

This is all from you. All are running. All our time as fugitives.

It's about to end. Thank you, God. And David gets closer and closer.

And I believe that David, and by the way, the ancient rabbis would agree with me on this too. David approached Saul with the intent to kill him. But before he got to Saul, God changed his heart.

And he reaches out and he just slices out a little corner of Saul's robe. And then he takes it back to the men. I know if the men are thinking, oh, David, you're good.

You delivered that blow so quickly, so firmly. He didn't even have a chance to yell. The guy, oh, David, yes, this is great.

David, this is marvelous. And what does David do? He holds up a piece of robe. What's wrong with you? What have you done? See, my friends, as David secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe and didn't cut off Saul's head, there was something powerful that David was expressing through that.

You see, we ask ourselves, what made David decide, I won't kill Saul, I'll just cut off the corner of his robe? You see, David did have a promise. The promise was God's going to give you all your enemies, David. And the promise was God's going to give you the throne of Israel, David.

And what David was faced with right here was a temptation. Are you going to receive God's promise and try to win it through your disobedience? Friends, that's the issue before David. Because he knew that it was disobedient of him to kill Saul.

It was disobedient because Saul was made a king by God. Therefore, it was God's responsibility to take him away from the throne. Saul was anointed by the Lord.

God anointed him. God put him on the throne. Therefore, it's God's job to get him out.

And no matter what promise David had of taking the throne one day, it was not David's job to get Saul out. It was God's job. And so David could not try to fulfill the promise through his own disobedience.

But friends, sometimes when we have a promise from God, we think that we're justified in sinning to pursue that promise. As if somehow our sin can further the promise of God. It's always wrong to do that.

Here, a husband may say, you know, God has promised me abundant life according to John 10.10. That's his promise, right? I've come that you might have life and have it more abundantly. Thank you for your promise. The husband says, you know, God's promised me fullness of joy according to Psalm 1611.

He's given me fullness of joy at his right hand. And the husband says, you know what? I can't have abundant life or fullness of joy being married to my wife. And so I'm going to leave her because I found someone else, because I want to find someone else who does give me fullness of joy and abundant life.

Thank you, God, for your promise. Friends, can I tell you that that is always sin? Always. God will fulfill his promises, but he'll do it his way and he'll do it righteously.

Instead, we need to be like Abraham, who obeyed God even when it seemed to be at the expense of God's promise. It's a marvelous example here when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Isaac was the son of promise, and God promised that he would raise up a whole lineage to Abraham through

Isaac.

But Isaac hadn't had any children yet. And God told Abraham sacrifice. And Abraham's thinking, wait a minute, Lord, if I kill Isaac, your promise can't be fulfilled.

So what do I do? Do I obey you or do I seem to act against the promise? Abraham said, you know what? I'm going to obey God and let God take care of the promise. And God did. Friends, that's his call to you and I. Instead of trying to figure it out for God and trying to fix his promises for him, we take our hands off and simply say, Lord God, I will obey you and you can fulfill the promise.

It's a difficult thing for David to do. I can imagine all the ways he was tempted, all the excuses, all the self-justification. I mean, I know maybe I'm just good at thinking up these for myself, but I would say, well, it's self-defense.

Why is Saul out there? Is Saul just taking a pleasure tour through the canyons of Israel? No, he is there to kill David. This was self-defense if David chose to do it, but he didn't do it. Or I might have said, hey, listen, it's all right.

God promised me the throne anyway. Or I might have said it's all right because I'm in the right. Everybody knows it.

Or I might have said this is a God given opportunity. I have to take it. Or how about this? I'm just so tired of running and fighting Saul.

This can end all of that right now. I just can't take it anymore. And so I'll kill Saul.

Friends, no, David refused to make any such excuses. And he had a radical, obedient trust in God instead. And you know what all this demonstrates about the life of David? Please, track on to this point.

It means that David knew not only how to wait on the Lord. Waiting on the Lord is seeking God in prayer. It's spending time with God.

It's seeking Him. I hope you're here this morning because you're waiting on the Lord. But David knew not only how to wait on the Lord, he knew how to wait for the Lord.

A lot of people I know who know how to wait on the Lord. They know how to pray. They know how to seek God.

They know how to spend time with Him. They know how to wait on the Lord. They don't know how to wait for Him because as soon as they leave the Lord's presence, they go out and do their own thing.

Trying to help God along. But friends, that's always wrong. It's always going to get you into trouble.

And so here David's faced with this challenge. Lord, not only do I want to wait on You, I want to wait for You. We need to wait for the Lord by patience and submission, looking for the hand of God to do it.

Because David knew one thing, that when he sat on the throne of Israel, when the crown of Israel was placed on his head as king, he wanted God's fingerprints on that crown, not his own. Isn't that where you want to be in your life? Isn't that what we want at this church? That when work is done, when God blesses, we don't have to wonder, well, you know, was that just some slick campaign or was that the hand of God?

Was that just, you know, brilliant marketing or was that the hand of God? Was that this or was it the hand of God? You want to live your life and you want to conduct all things so that it's the hand of God that does the work. And that's why David wouldn't disobey.

You know, when David finally received the crown and lay his head down at night and would sleep, he didn't have to be bothered in his conscience. That's a precious gift God gave him through this. He didn't have to have his conscience bothered.

Well, was this really of the Lord or was it of me? Was it of the Lord? Was it of me? He knew it was of the Lord because he wouldn't take it into his own hands. One other thing I could say about this. David's heart didn't store up bitterness and anger towards Saul.

If David had this big reservoir of bitterness and anger towards Saul, how well do you think he could have resisted the temptation to cut off his head instead of cut off that piece of the robe? No, but David kept a short account before God. He kept taking all of his hurts and all of his bitterness to the Lord and he received the cleansing from the hurt that the Lord can give. If David had stored up bitterness and anger towards Saul, Saul would have been a dead man.

Now, all of this is pretty amazing, isn't it? Don't we stand back and kind of want to give David a standing ovation and say, what a man of God. But it gets even better. Look at David here in verse 5. Now, it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe.

And 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. Hello, David, what's this? You feel bad that you cut off the corner of his robe? Look, if this was written of me, it probably would have said, verse 5, Now, it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he did not cut off Saul's head. That's the only regret I probably would have been feeling about that.

David, what a man of God. David has such a soft, tender conscience before God that when he comes back, all he's holding is a little piece of Saul's robe in his hand. And he feels bad about that.

You see, Saul's robe was a picture of his royal authority. And David's saying, you know what? I shouldn't have done anything to cut away Saul's royal authority. He's the anointed of the Lord.

I don't need to be messing with his authority at all. David's thinking, you know what? When I'm king, I don't want somebody killing me. When I'm king, I don't want somebody cutting away my royal authority.

I should treat Saul the way I would want to be treated when I'm king. And so his heart troubles him. And the first thing we say is, what a glorious, sensitive conscience that David has before the Lord.

This convicts me. It makes me say, man, Lord, I wish I had a conscience that was as sensitive as that. You know, sometimes we see our consciences, they seem to get harder and colder.

And they're not as sensitive. They're not as alive. They're not as active before the Lord as they were.

Things that once before we were outraged to trouble that now it's nothing. It's like, Lord, give us a soft conscience before the Lord. But it also shows us how David had such a godly heart before God when it came to dealing with other people who hurt him.

Oh, can we talk? Just let's put it up front here just for a moment here. Let's compare how Saul hurt David compared to how David hurt Saul. What had Saul done against David? Well, he took away his job.

He took away his family. He took away his place in the palace. And he's done nothing but try to kill him for the past several years.

OK, that's what Saul's done against David. Pretty bad. What's David done against Saul? Well, he cut away a piece of his robe.

Are you weighing the two? Yet David feels convicted about what he's done against Saul. Doesn't this get us into trouble so many times? Somebody sins against us and we feel justified in sinning against them. And our attitude is, well, I'll repent of what I've done to them when they repent of what they've done to me.

That wasn't David's heart at all. He says, listen, I know Saul's messed up. I know Saul sinned against me.

But you know what? I've got my own account before God to keep clear. It doesn't matter if Saul sinned against me 90% and I've done 10% or Saul's done 99% and I've done 1%. Doesn't matter.

Whatever I've done, I've got to get it right before God. So this troubles David. Verse 7, it says, So David restrained his servants with these words and did not allow them to rise against Saul.

And Saul got up from the cave and went on his way. Friends, this is amazing, too, because this is probably the last thing I would have done if I was David. I would have said, well, you know, he's the Lord's anointed.

I can't kill him. I can't lift my sword against him. He is the Lord's anointed.

But if somebody else does, what can I do? Instantly, about a dozen guys would have gone out against Saul and made him a pincushion. David wouldn't allow that because he knew that's just manipulation. That's just a dodge, right? David was a better man than that.

And his own example of integrity, his own soft and tender conscience before the Lord made everybody see, look, we're not going to raise our hand against Saul. If David feels bad at cutting away a corner of his robe, how could we kill him? No, we're going to hold back. We're going to restrain ourselves from coming against Saul.

And so Saul gets up and he leaves the cave. My friends, so far, we're just amazed at David, that he restrained himself from killing Saul, that he restrained his men from killing Saul, that his conscience was so soft that he felt bad about just cutting away the corner of his robe. But as spectacular as all of that was, David is going to get even bolder in his faith right here in verse 8. Notice it.

It says, David also 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. This blows my mind.

I want to shake David and say, Are you nuts? God just spared you. The army is going to pass on. You're safe.

And what does David want to do? He says, This is my chance. I might be able to reconcile with Saul right now. I'm going to take the chance.

And so he rushes out of the cave. Can you see David's men thinking he's gone mad? He had the chance to kill Saul. He didn't take it.

He feels bad about cutting away the corner of his robe. And now he's rushing out of the cave. David, there's 3000 troops out there with one mission to kill you.

And you're running out of the cave. Why are you making yourself so vulnerable? Because maybe I can get things right with Saul. And so he comes to Saul in terms of utmost humility.

He calls out to Saul. He doesn't say, Hey, buddy, you looking for me? He says, My Lord, my King. Friends, this is amazing.

I might have thought that David had the right to come to Saul as an equal. You know what I mean? To kind of come out of the cave and say, Hey, Saul, listen, we've both been anointed by God to be king and you're king right now. I know it.

I can accept it. But you know, I'm going to replace you. So listen, from one anointed king to another, here's this piece of robe.

I could have killed you, but I didn't. David doesn't do that. David comes in terms of utmost humility.

He says, Saul, you're the boss and I know it. I respect your place as my leader and as my king. I'm bowing before you.

If you want to kill me, then kill me now. It's an amazing display of love. It pours out into David's speech.

Look, verse nine. And David said to Saul, Why do you listen to the words of these men who say, Indeed, David seeks your harm? David, you almost want to stop him and say, David, don't love Saul this much. He's not worthy of it.

Do you see how much David's loving Saul? Look at those words carefully in verse nine. Why do you listen to the words of men who say, Indeed, David seeks your harm? David is addressing Saul as if none of this is Saul's idea. It's all somebody else's idea.

And Saul just bought into some bad advice. He's making it easy for Saul to repent, for Saul to say, Well, yeah, you know, those guys who were advising me, they were wrong, David. David knows it isn't true.

But in love, he's making it easy for Saul to repent. In love, he's covering Saul's sin. He's saying, Look, let's just put it away.

I'll give you an easy way out, Saul. I'm not trying to back you into a corner. I'm not going to try to wrangle true confession.

Let's just get it right, Saul. And then he says, verse 10. Look, 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 eyes spared you. And I said, I will not stretch out my hand against my Lord, for he is the Lord's anointed. Moreover, my father, see, yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand, for in that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you.

Know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand. And I have not sinned against you, yet you hunt my life to take it. Friends, Saul was living his life on a lie, on a delusion.

And the lie was simply this. This is what Saul told himself every day. When he woke up, he said this to himself.

When he went to bed, he said this all through the day. He said to himself, David is out to get me. Now, as soon as Saul believes that, then he feels justified doing whatever he wants to do to David, right? Then it's all self-defense.

Well, I have to kill David because he's out to kill me. I have to chase out David who's out in the middle of the wilderness because he's trying to kill me. And he goes through this lie, and he's cemented, and he's living under this delusion.

Now, when David holds forth the piece of the cut-off robe, that delusion is shattered in Saul's mind because he can't... Wait a minute. If David is out to kill me, then why didn't he kill me? And at that moment, the light goes on for Saul, and the delusion is gone. David continues here.

Verse 12, he says, Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, Wickedness proceeds from the wicked, but my hand shall not be against you.

After whom has the King of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea? Therefore, let the Lord be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand. Saul, I'm trusting God in all this. I'm trusting that He'll cover me, that He'll plead my case.

And here's the piece of robe in my hand. And there's a few things that I need to say, which I think are very important about this whole scene. First of all, it was when David said to Saul, if you notice it here in verse 10, I will not stretch out my hand against my Lord, for He is the Lord's anointed.

There's an important principle there. David is saying, look, Saul, God put you in your position, not me. God's going to have to deal with you.

You're God's problem, not mine. I may wish you were gone. I may hate what you're doing to me, but you're God's problem to get rid of, because God put you in there.

However, I have to say that from this whole incident comes forth a cliché, a phrase within the Christian world that I need to speak to you about just for a few moments. How many of you ever heard the phrase, touch not the Lord's anointed? And sometimes that's used in church circles or in religious circles to cover, to conceal the sinful actions of a pastor or a leader. Or sometimes the sinful teachings or doctrines.

Friends, I've encountered it where a man is teaching things that are just unbiblical. They go against the Bible. They're dangerous heresies.

And when you try to confront people about this, what do they say? Touch not the Lord's anointed. Or there's incidents where a pastor's in rank sin or immorality and people try to confront him about it. And what's the reply? Touch not the Lord's anointed.

You see, sometimes it's used to prevent a biblical evaluation of a man's teaching. Sometimes it's used to squelch criticism or rebuke. Friends, can we say that we are in full agreement with what David said right

here? When David said, I wouldn't touch the Lord's anointed, what did he mean by that? He meant he would not thrust a spear through Saul's body and kill him.

I think we can agree on that. That should not be done to Christian leaders who are in error. Touch not the Lord's anointed.

We can agree with that completely. But it didn't mean that David wouldn't try to tell Saul where he was wrong. That's what he's doing right here.

It wouldn't mean that David wouldn't say, Saul, here's the cutoff rope. Saul, think about this. Saul, consider this.

So, friends, we understand and we appreciate the principle that when God puts a man in a position, then it's God's problem to get him out. But it's entirely wrong for people to use the idea of touch not the Lord's anointed to insulate a leader from all evaluation or from all accountability. That's done sometimes in the Christian world today and it's wrong.

Friends, at the same time, if a Saul needs to be brought down, let the Lord do it. You don't want any part of that. Jesus said something that's really sobering.

He said, it's inevitable that offenses should come. Offenses. It's inevitable.

But woe to him through whom the offenses come. When God is going to judge somebody, when God is going to discipline somebody, he may do it through another person, but I don't want it to be me. I don't want to be caught up in that.

Let the Lord do it through somebody else. Because it's inevitable that offenses may come, but woe to him through whom they come. David understood this and that's why he wouldn't be an instrument of judgment against Saul, even though Saul deserved it.

Saul gets out. Saul goes his way. Here's David.

He has the corner of the robe in his hand. Saul is confronted with this. He knows that he's in sin.

He knows that he's an heir. And so what does he do? Look at verse 16. So it was when David had finished speaking these words to Saul that Saul said, Is this your voice, my son David? And Saul lifted his voice and wept.

Then he said to David, You are more righteous than I. For you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. And you've shown this day how you've dealt well with me. For when the Lord delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me.

For if a man finds his enemy, will he get away safely? Therefore, may the Lord reward you with good for what you've done to me this day. Oh, my friends, it's just precious. Here, Saul's glorious response.

Saul's sense here that he's sinned, that he needs to be forgiven. He says, Oh, David, you're righteous. David, you're right.

The tears are flowing down Saul's face. He means it. He feels it.

He knows it all at that moment. We see the amazing, amazing transformation that David's love had in the life of Saul. Amazing.

David does this and his coals of kindness upon Saul's head have melted him. Chapter concludes here, verse 20. And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand.

Therefore, swear now to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me and you will not destroy my name from my father's house. So David swore to Saul and Saul went home. But David and his men went up to the stronghold.

Now, this is amazing, isn't it? A beautiful reconciliation between David and Saul. There they are together again. There they are.

Just oh, Saul's apologetic and he's crying and he's weeping and he's broken and everything seems perfect until the last few words of verse 22. There's just something wrong with that, isn't it? And Saul went home. But David and his men went up to the stronghold.

Wait a minute. If it's all reconciled between David and Saul, why did Saul go home and David remained out in the stronghold? Why didn't David go home? Why did David go back to his family, to his palace, to all those things? What's wrong here? Because David knew something. David knew that as much as Saul meant it at the moment, that it would take time to demonstrate whether or not that repentance was real.

Friends, this is a very real dynamic in our lives, isn't it? We can have sweet victory from the Lord in a moment and then lose it. For a lot of us, this is how it is when we come to church. And we have such peace.

We have a sense of joy. It's like, yes, God, yes, I'm trusting you. Yes.

It's like you're sailing a ship and you turn the wheel of the ship and you're pointing under the compass in the right direction. You go to the right course. Yes, this is great.

And then as soon as you step out of the walls or on the next morning, when you wake up, the winds blow and it blows you off course. And suddenly you're not on course. You were right there.

You were locked in. And then you get off course. And this is, of course, what happened to Saul.

He meant it at the moment, but then it got away. Friends, this shouldn't characterize your Christian life. No, you see, many times a person repents and claims to recognize their sinful ways.

But the validity of repentance in a changed heart isn't demonstrated by the emotion of a moment or by the sincerity of a moment. It's demonstrated by the ongoing direction of someone's life. David, every right to say, I'm going to stay in the stronghold until I see the direction of Saul's life.

So what a miserable picture Saul is. Alan Redpath wrote, what is the use of saying I have played the fool if he goes on playing the fool? What good are his tears and confession before David if he doesn't act upon his remorse? Matter of fact, his emotional outburst probably leads him into a deeper place of sin and rebellion because he didn't respond to it right. Friends, our struggle here isn't just to find a place of victory in the Lord, but to stay in it day by day, hour by hour.

Now, let me just conclude with saying we really have two people before us. I think God wants us to see something in both of them. You see yourself in David, don't you? You have people who have wronged you, and you perhaps will have at some time or another an opportunity to take retribution or vengeance against them.

Do you hear God's word to you now? The Lord says, vengeance is mine, says the Lord. Let the Lord take it. Let the Lord do it.

Let your characteristic, let your mark be of mercy and grace. Now, you know what you say? Well, what if I'm too merciful? What if I'm too gracious? Friends, if that's the worst thing we have to answer for before God on the day of judgment, you know, you stand before the Lord on the day of judgment. He's evaluating all your works.

You know what? You are too merciful right here. I'll live with that. So we see ourselves in David.

But friends, honestly, don't we see ourselves in Saul too? How often we've been brought to a moment, but it slipped through our hands. There's another way we're like Saul. You know, Saul deserved judgment from David.

He really did. And we deserve judgment from God. And just as much as David said, I won't execute that judgment, I'm going to hold my hand back from it.

Instead, I'm going to humble myself and work a reconciliation. That's what Jesus Christ did for us. We deserve judgment from him.

But Jesus came out of the cave, humbled himself and said, I want to reconcile it between you and I. And we're called to come to the same place Saul did, where we repent before him. We confess our wrong, except we're called to stay in that place instead of leave it so quickly like Saul did. Friends, leave here today saying, Yes, Lord, I want to be right with you and act right towards others like David did.

The Lord will build that in your heart. Let's pray. Father, we do ask that you would build that within us.

Lord, you know the things we go through and the challenges we face. Lord, you know the trials that beset us. And some of them, Lord, are just plain hard.

But Lord God, I know that you want to do a work in us here this morning. I know that you want to make us more like David, less like Saul, but most especially, Lord, like Jesus. You want to conform us into the image of your son.

Well, Lord Jesus, we thank you that you didn't execute your judgment against us when we deserved it, but you spared us. And that you invite us now, Lord, by your humility, by your humble going to the cross to come to you and to be reconciled. Lord, that's what we want to do this morning.

So I pray that you'd strengthen, Lord, the believer who's struggling with this. Strengthen the one who's struggling with bitterness or forgiveness, that you'd set them free by your power, that you'd pour out your grace upon us, Lord, in Jesus' precious name.

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