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1 Samuel 24

David Spares Saul

1And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David *is* in the wilderness of Engedi.

It is important to remember when God selected Saul as the first King of Isarel, God pointed out several things Saul would do. One of the most important things Saul was to do was to protect Israel from the Philistines.

1 Samuel 9:16 To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.

In our earlier chapter Saul had surrounded David and was about to capture him when the King was told the Philistines were attacking Israel. Saul true to his appointment by God had to break off his pursuit of David and defend Israel.

King Saul put down the assault against Israel and now has returned to pursuing David. They were south of Jerusalem near the Dead Sea and En Gebi.

2Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

Three thousand men is a substantial army, in any day but quite impressive in David's day for a man hunt. It shows the determination of King Saul to find and kill David at quite some expense to his own men.

The "rocks of the wild goats" reveals a location near En Gebi and also reveals a possible source of food for David and his men. We know that these steep canyons and rock outcroppings had springs in them which would account for a water supply. The jagged terrain would account for hiding places, so it was no easy task to find someone who was actively hiding.

3And he came to the shepercotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

There were flocks of goats that were kept in this area by shepherds. These natural caves made for great protection of these flocks at night from predators so herders would corral their

flocks in these caves for protection. It offered protection at night and cool shade during hot days and basic protection from weather.

Saul was human and needed a place to relieve himself, so he chose one of these caves out of sight of his men. This cave happened to house David and his men who shrank back against the sides of the cave and became invisible from anyone looking in from the outside.

Also, when coming into darkness from light it takes a person's eyes as much as 30 minutes to adjust to the darkness. Looking from the dark into the light you have clear vision but not so looking from light into darkness.

So, King Saul enters an unlit cave to relieve himself unaware of the proximity of David.

4And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

David's men were undoubtedly going to be treated no better than David, so they encouraged him quietly to kill Saul when he entered the cave. It was David's men's belief that God had

delivered Saul to David, but they put the final decision in David's hands.

David chose to show Saul Mercy and removed a small part of his robe without Saul knowing it. We are not told what possessed David to do that and it bothered David to have taken advantage of the moment.

5And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. **6**And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD. **7**So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on *his* way.

It was never God's intention in the case of Saul and David that David would take the life of Saul. It was not to be a regime change by death for a variety of reasons. First God is the One who puts Kings in their place and removes them. That doesn't mean God could not make the opportunity for David but it would have caused all kinds of chaos within Israel to say nothing of David's wife's family.

The world would know that David killed Saul and the taint of that ascension would never go away. David would have always been known as the man that killed God's first chosen king of Israel.

There were those within Saul's army that were loyal to Saul and so David could never be certain that he was not a target of a coup.

So, God withheld David's hand from killing Saul but did allow him to show Mercy to the man who wanted to kill him. God was fully capable of removing a despot king in any fashion He so choose.

8David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

In this instance David showed the type of character all of us hope we have when put to the test. Bravery, contriteness of heart, mercy, grace in the face of certain death.

9And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

David's own son Solomon would later write Proverbs, undoubtedly learned this from his father David that do not listen to gossip or men's assessment of other men but Trust it the Lord.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

David never intended to hurt Saul but Satan put within Saul an untruth about one of his most loyal members of his own household. David in what appears to be a final attempt to show Saul that he honored and respected him exposes himself and his men to certain death to show Saul his true heart.

10Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and *some bade me* kill thee: but *mine eye* spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he *is* the LORD'S anointed. 11Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that *there is* neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.

David in an eloquent speech points out how close Saul had come to losing his life. David does not tell Saul that David's men had encouraged David to take Saul's life. David's men had surmised that God had delivered Saul into David's hands.

How much different would life had been for David if he had listened to his men instead of God speaking to David in his heart.

God's voice is so quiet it is often hard to hear in our own lives. When God speaks sometimes, He may use a heart felt conviction of something. Other times God uses His Holy Spirit to convict us

in our heart again with a voice so quiet that if you don't yield to it you will miss on something amazing from God.

12The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

David calls on God to judge between he and King Saul. It is a heartfelt commitment to God and to His judgement as being nothing but Righteous. If David is wrong then he is asking God deal with him, however if King Saul is wrong then God will deal with him, but David on his part will not raise his hand against King Saul.

13As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. 14After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea. 15The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

David is being what God calls all of us to be and that is a Believer with a contrite heart. It is a heart fully given to God and willing that God would judge our hearts and our motives with His Righteous judgement.

David is pointing out that evil actions come from an evil heart. David at this point has a pure heart toward God and toward King Saul. Saul could not say the same the same in all truthfulness.

David's Oath to Saul

16And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.

God cut Saul's heart to the quick. Saul's heart is crushed in a moment of sanity and love of God. He calls out to David as "my son David". The impact of God's crushing blow to Saul caused him to weep for his evil actions.

17And he said to David, *Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.*

The very thing David had recalled from Proverbial language that evil actions come from an evil person. Saul in an instant of sanity recognized what he had been doing to David and repented.

18And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.

His spared life was not lost on Saul. He came that close to dying in that cave at the hands of an innocent man that he had pursued

with the intent of killing him. For that very man David to spare Saul's life rang through to Saul's Spirit and he fell to God's Will.

19For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.

How many of us with bitterness in our hearts can repent and turn away from the wickedness of our flesh. Giving Mercy to those we have trouble with and set ourselves free from this evil in our hearts?

20And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.

Saul knows his days are numbered as King. He also knows that it will not be David that ends his life and that he can love and trust him son-in-law and best friend of his own son, Jonathan.

21Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. 22And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

We have seen in our studies that new kings especially those who committed a coup to gain the throne would often kill all the family members at least the sons of the deposed king. Saul is concerned for his own family after what he had done to David. Saul asks for

David's word as the future King of Israel that he would not annihilate Saul's family when David comes to power. It was not hard for David to agree; he loved Saul and his family.