

David (II): A Heart that Waits for God

Passages: 1 Samuel 24, 26

Memory Verse

“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” (Romans 12:19)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. David avoided sin by refusing to lift a hand against Saul.2. David overcame evil with good.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is sovereign.2. God is in control of all things.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Respect those to whom God has given authority.2. Remember that vengeance is the Lord’s.3. Wait on the Lord.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. David Spares Saul’s Life at En Gedi
- B. David Spares Saul a Second Time

Life Application

1. Respecting God’s Anointed
2. Vengeance Belongs to the Lord
3. Waiting on the Lord

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Instead of letting his emotions dictate his actions, David acted out of fear of the Lord. When we wait on the Lord in this manner, we can avoid sin and live in holiness.

Introduction

Last week, we learned a little about David's character as a young man. We learned about his dedication to the small tasks that were given to him while a shepherd, his unwavering trust in God when facing Goliath, and his faith that he expressed through his love and loyalty to Jonathan. Today, we'll be continuing our study of David in his adult life.

Although David was not a perfect person, he is still one of the greatest examples of faith in the Bible, for he truly loved God's law and put it first in his life. As a result, his kingdom later prospered under God's blessing. But before he became king, he faced a difficult obstacle in the form of Saul. Today, we'll be learning about how he handled this problem while still keeping God first in his life.

A. David Spares Saul's Life at En Gedi

Let's read 1 Samuel 24:1–7. In the past, Saul had tried to spear David twice in person, and when David escaped with Jonathan's help, Saul chased him down with his army in an attempt to kill him. David, once Saul's beloved armorbearer, had to flee from his own king and become a fugitive. He was forced to live far from his homeland and in constant fear for his life. On top of this, David knew that God had chosen him to be the next king of Israel. This makes his actions in the cave even more remarkable! David refused to let his fears and expectations impair his judgment of the situation. Whatever he felt about the situation, he knew that Saul was God's anointed.

Let's continue reading 1 Samuel 24:8–15. Did you notice how David greeted Saul? David not only called Saul his "lord the king," but also his "father," and "the king of Israel." David spent years as Saul's armorbearer, so perhaps he was reminding Saul of their past relationship with the first title. Saul was also David's father-in-law, as David was married to Michal, Saul's daughter. As for "the king of Israel," this was a clear sign of deference to Saul's position. David had no intention of forcibly claiming his position as king of Israel, and he showed this in the title he accorded Saul.

Everything about his situation was entirely unjust, but if we examine David's speech, we can see that there is no hint of accusation or hatred in his words. David humbly provides evidence of his refusal to raise a hand against Saul, and he respectfully lets his actions speak of his intentions. He stated his case before Saul and used wise words to defuse the situation and avoid conflict.

David's actions in this chapter show us that he not only had great fear of the Lord, but also possessed wisdom and grace even during an emotionally charged and dangerous situation.

1. David feared the Lord

It is normal human behavior to return hatred with hatred. This is normally because we act out of an instinctual sense of self-preservation and fear. But throughout this chapter, we can see that David didn't act out of fear for himself – he acted only out of fear of the Lord. Hebrews 12:28–29 teaches us that fearing God means showing Him respect and reverence. David respected the Lord, so he respected Saul because Saul was God's anointed.

Proverbs 9:10 teaches us that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." This means that the benefit of fearing the Lord is that we will receive wisdom! This is important to have, because if we have wisdom, we are less likely to fall into sinful desires. Joseph, for example, greatly feared the Lord, which gave him the strength to refuse sinning with his master's wife (Gen

39:12). The Lord Jesus refused to sin when tempted by Satan, because His fear of the Lord was greater than His physical desires (Mt 4:4, 7, 10). Although his very life was in danger, David's fear of the Lord was stronger than his desire to save his own life from Saul, or to elevate himself as king.

2. David shows grace to Saul

By refusing to lift a hand against Saul, David was also showing him great mercy, as he had the right to protect himself in this unjust situation. Yet, he held back his natural desire to get even or to protect himself and showed grace to Saul.

Romans 3:24 says that we have been "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Our salvation came at a price, paid for us by the blood of Jesus Christ. Nothing we did or could have done would have saved us, which is why Paul repeatedly reminds us that we have been redeemed by grace alone. The apostles understood this, and their actions teach us that since we have so freely received God's grace, we should also show this same grace to others (Acts 4:33–35; 11:15–17). Although he lived long before Jesus' time, David understood the mercies of the Lord, so he showed the same mercy to Saul.

B. David Spares Saul a Second Time

Despite his vow to leave David alone, Saul once again pursued David, this time into the Wilderness of Ziph, where he and his army camped in the hill of Hachilah. Let's read 1 Samuel 26:1–12. David's actions are once again contrary to the common sense of mankind. The first time, Saul had coincidentally entered the very cave in which David was hiding. This time, David managed to sneak into a camp of 3,000 men, right up to Saul himself! Saul had broken his vow to David, but David still refused to lift a hand against him, saying, "The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed" (v. 11). Abishai saw Saul as an enemy, but David only saw God's chosen king.

Let's continue reading 1 Samuel 26:13–16. Although the army was there to hunt David down, he actually admonished Saul's guard for being lax in his duties! This was again because he saw Saul not as an enemy, but as God's anointed. It is clear that despite the dangers he faced, David still feared the Lord, and therefore respected His servants.

Let's finish the rest of the chapter by reading 1 Samuel 26:17–25. David once again wisely emphasized his lack of action against Saul and showed both deference and respect towards the king of Israel. This was the last meeting between Saul and David, and because of David's fear of the Lord, they once again parted on peaceful terms.

1. David's discernment of God's will

From man's point of view, David had two ideal opportunities to eliminate the threat to his life. Any normal person would have killed Saul, justifying it as self-defense. David's men, for example, saw Saul as a threat to his life, an enemy, and an obstacle to the throne. Their actions reflected this view. They even attributed the ideal circumstances to God's will (1 Sam 24:4; 26:8)! But David feared the Lord, so he was able to discern God's true will. By refusing to kill Saul as he was urged, David protected both himself and his men from sin and judgment (26:9). This act alone reveals much of David's character and shows us why God considered him "a man after [His] own heart" (Acts 13:22)!

2. David's trust in the Lord

David's fear of the Lord had a solid foundation: he fully trusted in the Lord's power and provision. When he was a shepherd, the Lord protected him from lions and bears and gave him the strength to protect his flock. Later, the Lord protected him from Goliath and continued to protect him from Saul's grasp. They had a two-way relationship: God gave David His protection because David fully trusted in the Lord and served Him completely. We can see this in the numerous instances when David asked for God's guidance before making any move to act, and in the fact that he refused to kill Saul. His trust, however, extended beyond mere preservation of his life. He also trusted that the Lord would repay any wickedness done to him, and that his time as king would come when the Lord willed it.

a. Vengeance is the Lord's

We have very little control over many circumstances in life, but we do have control over how we react when faced with an unjust situation. Let's read Romans 12:17–21. This is an important teaching that David clearly acts out. In both instances, Saul admits that David is more righteous (1 Sam 24:17; 26:21) and returns upon seeing his own sin and shame.

David truly overcame evil with good and deferred the judgment of Saul into God's hands. He knew that vengeance belonged to God, and God alone. He emphasizes this in one of his psalms, where he wrote, "Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore. For the LORD loves justice, and does not forsake His saints; they are preserved forever, but the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off" (Ps 37:27–28).

b. Wait for God's timing

David's trust in the Lord extended far beyond the present and into the unseen, unknown future. David was anointed at quite a young age by Samuel, but it wasn't until he was thirty years old that he began his reign as king. If he were a teenager when he was anointed, then he would have waited for about fifteen years. This is quite a long time to wait! But David knew that God's time had not yet come. He could have become king the moment he killed Saul, but he submitted to God's timing with patience.

In Psalm 31:15, David wrote, "My times are in Your hand," showing his understanding that his entire life was in God's hand. In Psalm 27, a psalm of trust, David teaches us, "Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!" (Ps 27:14). He knew that God was in control of all things. So, although he may have felt impatient, angry, or upset at his circumstances, he chose to hold on to his hope and faith that the Lord had everything under control. He fully trusted God in all matters of his life.

Check for Understanding

1. **How did David greet Saul outside the cave in En Gedi? Why did he use these titles?** He called Saul his "lord the king," his "father," and "the king of Israel." He was conveying deference and respect towards Saul.
2. **What do David's actions at En Gedi teach us about his character?** David feared the Lord, and he also possessed great mercy.
3. **What was David's reply when Abishai offered to kill Saul for him? Why were their responses so different?** He said, "The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed." Abishai saw Saul as an enemy, but David only saw God's chosen king.

- 4. Why was David so adamantly against killing Saul?** He knew that Saul was God's anointed, and he feared God enough that he was able to discern God's true will. David was willing to wait for God's timing.

Life Application

1. Respecting God's Anointed

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves" (Rom 13:1–2).

These verses teach us that God has placed the government and given its leaders authority. Like David, we may not know why, but we are to respect the roles and positions given by God. Even if we disagree with them, they are still God's workmanship, placed in their position for the purpose of governing. When we honor these people, we are honoring God. This means respecting our teachers, employers, or officers, and respecting the positions that they hold.

Secular authorities are not the only ones that we should respect. There are also those appointed as authorities by God in the church. Let's read Hebrews 13:17. "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you." We need to "obey" and "be submissive" to authorities within the church, even when we know that they are also imperfect humans like us. This is not only because their concern is for our spiritual welfare, but also because by honoring our RE teachers, church council members, and ordained ministers, we are also honoring God (1 Pet 5:5–7).

Peter wrote, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to command those who do right" (1 Pet 2:13–14 NIV). In this verse, the emperor to which he referred was a corrupt emperor of ancient Rome. Yet, he tells us that we need to "honor the emperor" (v. 17 NIV) and submit ourselves to authority.

Submission doesn't come easily, especially towards someone with whom we disagree. As humans, we are naturally prideful, and on top of this, our leaders are just as human and imperfect as the rest of us. So how can we "submit," other than clothing ourselves in humility, especially if we can see this imperfection? Aside from showing humility, we must also trust God. We need to trust that they are His chosen, and trust that His justice and righteousness will prevail. Lastly, if we see or experience injustice, prejudice, or inequality, we can actively pray to God for those whom we feel are abusing their authority.

So, how are we supposed to "honor the emperor"? Paul once instructed Timothy to pray for the leaders and officials. Let's read 1 Timothy 2:1–2. "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence." By praying for our leaders, we are doing as God commanded us to do, and we will be rewarded with peaceful and quiet lives. It is important to pray for our teachers, ministers, and council members within our own church as well, so that they can lead the church with wisdom and peace in unity.

2. Vengeance Belongs to the Lord

Do you know the story of David and Nabal? David protected Nabal's servants and politely asked for some food in exchange. However, Nabal not only rejected David's messengers, but he also insulted David quite badly. David angrily rose up with his army to destroy every man in Nabal's household. However, Abigail, Nabal's wife, wisely intervened. After about ten days, the Lord struck Nabal, and he died (1 Sam 25:38). Upon hearing this, David said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept His servant from evil! For the LORD has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head" (v. 39).

Proverbs advises us: "Do not say, 'I'll pay you back for this wrong!' Wait for the LORD, and he will avenge you" (Prov 20:22 NIV). Moreover, Paul wrote, "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Rom 12:19). But why is it so important that we leave vengeance to the Lord?

a. Anger leads to sin

David said that the Lord had "kept His servant from evil" by punishing Nabal for him. When we get angry, we tend to lose control of ourselves. As a result, we end up doing something we regret. Have you ever gotten into an argument with someone, or perhaps been attacked in some way verbally or socially? It is often our instinct to respond with anger. But the Bible reminds us to "[cease] from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm" (Ps 37:8). Let's read James 1:20. "[For] the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

Share a time you became angry and did or said something that you later regretted. What about a time when you tried to act upon an unjust situation, but ended up making everything worse? What are some ways we can control our anger or desire for vengeance?

b. Live in peace

It is difficult to deny ourselves vengeance when there are always people who are mean-spirited or ignorant of the hurt that they are dealing to us. We are always particularly vulnerable to our family members, who are able to hurt us more because of their closeness. But the Lord desires that we live peacefully, even with those who hurt us. Jesus taught us, in both His words and His actions, "[Love] your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Mt 5:44). He embodied this teaching when He prayed for God to forgive the very people who crucified Him on the cross! Hebrews 12:14 also teaches us, "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."

Have you ever struggled to live in peace with someone? Perhaps with a quarrelsome family member, or with someone at school who loves to verbally jab you under the pretense of jokes? How can we change our environment and our actions so that we can live in peace with them?

When we seek vengeance, we give way to our anger and open the door to sin. To live a godly life, we need to control our desire for vengeance, and learn to let the Lord handle the situation instead. David refused to take vengeance for himself because he knew that killing the Lord's anointed was a serious sin. On top of this, he told Abishai, "As the LORD lives, the LORD shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish" (1 Sam 26:10). David understood that Saul's fate belonged to God. We should also remember this and strive to live out God's command to leave vengeance to Him, and learn to live in peace with our enemies.

3. Waiting on the Lord

One of David's remarkable characteristics was the amount of patience that he had. For around fifteen years, he lived first as an armorbearer, and then as a fugitive. While a fugitive, he was forced to fight constant battles. Yet during this entire time, David never made a single move to take the crown that had been spiritually given to him as a young boy when Samuel anointed him. Even when faced with two separate opportunities to kill Saul and finally take control of the kingdom, he refused! This is because David was able to wait on the Lord, and to completely depend on Him while waiting.

David wrote, "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him" (Ps 37:7), and also, "Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!" (Ps 27:14). Of course, waiting on the Lord is difficult when we want an answer to our problems *right now!*

Do you remember the story of Joseph? He was sold, made a slave, and thrown into prison, all entirely unjustly. Joseph must have continuously prayed for freedom, but it wasn't until years later that he was finally freed – and in a most miraculous way! Because Joseph waited for God's time and purpose, he was able to preserve his family, and to help lay down the foundation for the Israelite nation in Egypt. If he had chosen to try and escape, or to seek vengeance on his brothers, then the story would have turned out quite differently!

We naturally want to take matters into our own hands, but in order to grow and mature in spirit, we need to learn to rely on God more, and remember that God's way is the best way. Humans are impatient by nature, though, so we need to remind ourselves to wait, and to keep waiting, even when we have prayed about something for a long time with no reply from God.

Discussion

- Have you ever had to wait a long time for God's reply? Perhaps for the Holy Spirit, or for His help in a spiritual matter? What was the result of waiting?
- Why do you think God keeps us waiting for something that we have been praying for?
- Have you ever gotten impatient waiting for something and given up, only to find that God had already set in motion an answer to your prayers long ago?
- Do you think you are able to peacefully wait for God's timetable? Or do you like to take matters into your own hands?

Memory Verse

"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." (Romans 12:19)

Meaning

Like David, we must not let our desire for vengeance or justice get in the way of following God's will. God wants us to live in peace, not to avenge ourselves! One reason is because we are simply unqualified to judge others, being human and imperfect. God, on the other hand, is perfect, and His judgments are fair and just. So instead of becoming angry or seeking revenge for a wrong done against us, we should learn to live in peace as Jesus commanded, and let God enact His will in His own time.

Conclusion

Saul treated David unjustly in so many ways, yet David refused to take Saul's life. This is because of his great faith in God – He valued God's judgments and God's will more than his own desire for vengeance. Instead of letting his emotions dictate his actions, David acted out of fear of the Lord. Like David, we should learn to respect authority figures given by God, even if we disagree with them, and live in peace with everyone, including our enemies. When we wait on the Lord in this manner, we can avoid sin and live in holiness.

Lesson 9 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What is a reason we should not avenge ourselves?
Being human and imperfect, we are unqualified to judge others. God, on the other hand, is perfect, and His judgments are fair and just. Also, Jesus commanded us to live in peace.
2. “[...] He raised up for them _____ as _____, to whom also He gave testimony and said, ‘I have found _____ the son of Jesse, a man after My own _____, who will _____ all My _____.’” (Acts 13:22)
David, king, David, heart, do, will
3. How did David address Saul at En Gedi? Why did he use these titles?
He called Saul his “lord the king,” his “father,” and “the king of Israel.” He used these titles to show deference and respect to Saul and his position as king. He was showing that he had no intention of forcibly claiming his position as king of Israel.
4. How did David’s actions towards Saul reflect the Lord Jesus’ actions towards us?
He showed grace to Saul by having mercy on him and preserving his life. The Lord Jesus also gave us life through grace.
5. What are the differences between how David saw Saul and how David’s men saw Saul?
David’s men saw Saul as a threat to David’s life, an enemy, and an obstacle to the throne. David saw him as God’s chosen, the Lord’s anointed king over Israel.
6. Have you ever become impatient waiting for God’s response to your prayers? How can you remind yourself to wait on the Lord?
Personal answers.