

## 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel Ch 24

We find ourselves this evening still in the portion of scripture that deals with the life of David before he became the king of Israel. From the time that David was anointed *king* over Israel to the time he actually took the *crown* of Israel was (some say) 15 even as many as 20 yrs, and no less than 10 of which he was in exile, fleeing for his life from the present king of Israel whom as you know is king Saul.

Now during those years of waiting we can see as we examine the scriptures that they weren't wasted years, they weren't years whereby David was just sort of on the shelf waiting to be taken down and used by God at His leisure and convenience. But rather they were critical years in the life of David whereby God was taking a simple shepherd boy, and molding and shaping his heart, his perspective, his motives, and his mentality so that he might be the greatest overseer and shepherd of the flock of God, (the entire nation of Israel), that Israel would ever know outside of the Son of David, the Greater than David Jesus Christ Himself when He will take the throne and rule and reign over the nations in righteousness and peace for 1,000 yrs during the millennial reign of Christ.

Now during this time in David's life whereby God was shaping and molding him into the man that God would have him to be, we're all familiar with the fact that there was a season (as I mentioned) of exile in his life where he was literally on the run for his life from the present king, Saul, for no less than 10 yrs. and It's in this interim period in David's life between being anointed king, and taking the crown that we find ourselves this evening. and I love the example of patience that we have in David because he knew that God had great plans for his life, he knew that he was ordained of God, and anointed of God to be the king over God's nation. But yet he never moved his hand to make it happen, or to try and help God out along the way so as to hurry this thing up. How many times God will whisper to our hearts, or even make known before witnesses a plan that He has for our lives, and then we immediately seek to see that plan established. Our mind starts working, and the wheels start spinning in order that we might set the dominos up, in just the right way that we might see this thing come to pass. and Generally all that does is stir trouble and bring heartache into our lives, how much better just to praise God for His goodness, and then patiently wait and endure, learning the lessons He would have us to until He brings it to pass for His own names sake and His glory.

And that's what David is doing; he's refusing to manipulate circumstances so as to favor him in order to help God along with His plan for his life. But rather he's going to let God bring that to pass as He sees fit, he trusts that God is more than able to establish him when the time is right. But meanwhile he's on the run, why? Because when you're the present king of Israel, you don't appreciate it too much when there's another man who's been anointed king of Israel who's just waiting to take the office that you're in. Add to that, that Samuel the prophet has told you that the kingdom has been torn from you and given to another who's better than you, and you've got the ingredients for bitterness and jealousy to set right in there, and that's exactly what happened.

So David refuses to take by force that which has already been given into his hand, and Saul refuses to let go of that which has already been taken from him. Instead he tries to safeguard his position and he figures that if he can just kill David, then problem solved.

But unfortunately for him, David is under God's "witness protection program" and no matter what he does he can never quite accomplish his agenda in bringing David to an end.

And we saw last time in chapter 23 where once again David just narrowly escaped being captured and no doubt killed by Saul as he pursued him to the wilderness of Maon, and Saul was but a step behind David. and David went around the backside of this mountain, and Saul sent a portion of his men around one side, and the other portion of his men around the other side and they were just about to come upon David and take him when "Just in the nick of time" news came to Saul from a messenger that Israel was being invaded by the Philistines.

And so Saul pulled back from pursuing David, and David was saved once again and we read in vs 29 of Ch 23. (Read)

And there's a great deal of relief when the salvation of the Lord visits us and we're spared for the moment a seemingly disastrous situation, but notice how the episode continues.

Vs1-2

And David is no doubt wondering, is this ever going to end? I mean at the end of ch 23 we see where David is miraculously delivered from the hand of Saul, as Saul's pursuit of David is deviated due to an invading army. But then as ch 24 opens, what do we find? Saul right back on David's trail, he's relentless in his ambition to destroy David, as soon as he was done dealing with the Philistines, he went right back to pursuing David.

And this is so often what has the tendency to discourage us even as I'm sure it did David. It isn't that we're confronted with a trial, and that God grants us the victory to His glory, it's that the trials and tribulations just keep coming relentlessly. Something happens, and God delivers you miraculously from the "Saul" that's in pursuit of you and it seems like before you even get a chance to breathe, as the next ch in your life begins to unfold, here comes "Saul" again, relentless in his pursuit to somehow bring you to an end.

And we often wish that this next victory, or our *present* victory could just be a *permanent* victory, and that the spiritual "Saul's" who are pursuing us would just give up and leave us alone. But the fact of the matter is, that even when we have the victory, or even when our enemies are distracted for the moment, they're going to come back, and they're going to keep coming back until the day we go to be with the Lord.

You're thinking, "What an encouraging lesson out of God's Word tonight, that even as David was pursued by Saul, that spiritually speaking we'll be pursued by the enemy until the day we die, and his pursuit of us, and his desire to destroy our lives, and derail God's plan for us will be relentless till the day I draw my last breath." Well, I wish I could paint a nice rosy portrait for you as to what it means to follow God, but instead I'm bound before God to tell you the truth. and The fact is, and Jesus said it, "*In the world you will have tribulation.*" John 16:33 Now He did add to that, "*Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" So that we can rest and be assured that as long as we abide in Him, as intense as it may be at times, He will be faithful to give us the victory in His time. But until we're before Him face to face, we'll have to deal with and wage war against the things of this world. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, and then add to that the spiritual dynamic of powers, principalities, rulers of darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places and you've got the ingredients that make for trials and tribulations.

But on the positive side of that we can know that even as God would use the fiery furnace of trials, testings, and tribulations in David's life to give him the demeanor and disposition in life that God would use mightily for His glory, even so God will use such times in our lives to mold us into the man or woman that He would have us to be that He might use us for His glory as well. But the lesson here is that the trials are just going to keep coming, and so our necessary response to that is that we're to keep trusting in the Lord, knowing that even as He's been faithful to us in the past, there's no reason to doubt Him now, and God will see us through.

Now for what it's worth, "En Gedi" means, "The wild goat" and so David is in the Wilderness of the wild goat, and it's basically an oasis in the midst of barren wastelands, there's a fresh water spring, wild goats that make for food, caves to abide in, and so as far as hideouts go, this is a great one. But here comes Saul, and 3,000 of his choice men, out numbering David 5 to 1. And they're riding right by the place where David and his men are tucked back in the deep recesses of this huge cave.

Vs 3

Now if you think about this for just a minute, this is a pretty amazing scene. Here comes Saul, 3,000 men ready for war, they're on the lookout for David, and they come to this area outside this cave and Saul puts and halt to the expedition, he has to take a bathroom break. Now he's been looking all over for David, and wouldn't you know that the very cave he decides to go into to attend to his needs has David and his men scrunched back in the deep recesses there not even breathing they're trying to be so quiet. What are the chances of this? Even in this we see the engineering hand of God, of all the caves in the area, of all the places he could've stopped, as clueless as he and his men were regarding the exact whereabouts of David, the very place he decides to relieve himself, is where David is.

At 1<sup>st</sup> I would imagine David and his men were freaking out, they were probably psyching themselves up for the fight of their lives thinking, “Man, this is it.” But then as they await the situation, from the blackness of the cave peering out into the light, all they see is Saul coming in alone, now the law was very clear about sanitation, and how a soldier was to remove themselves from the camp when using the restroom and all (Duet 23) and so as they assess the situation and they realize Saul and his army don’t have a clue that they’re in there, they start thinking, God has brought him right to us.

Now the question is, why? and There’s a couple of spins you can put on this, but one thing is for sure, Saul wouldn’t want body guards to accompany him on this venture, and so wherever he decided to take care of business he would be absolutely alone. and If you picture the scene, at the mouth of the cave there’s 3,000 men, horses equipment, it’s noisy, David’s trying to be as quiet as possible, as you come into a cave you can’t see anything, but looking out from a cave you can see everything, and here comes Saul...alone. This is no coincidence, and everybody knows it.

Vs4

So this is the way David’s men see it. They’re thinking “Praise the Lord, David you can end this thing right here and now, God’s made you a promise, and here’s the fulfillment, just slip up there, take off his head, carry it out of the cave and this whole ordeal will end.” They’re sick of living on the run, wondering who’s going to betray them next, God’s promised David the throne, and they see this as God’s delivering His Word to David. But notice how David responds to this situation as it unfolds before him here at the end of vs 4 (read).

So here’s Saul, doing his thing, David unsheathes his sword and he’s stealthily creeping up behind Saul, the hearts of his men are beating, they’re thinking, “Our time as fugitives is all about to end, Saul’s been given over into our hands.” and As David gets closer approaching him (very possibly with the intent to kill him) but with each step, David’s thinking, “What am I doing?” “God placed him where he’s at.” “I can’t do this.” and God changes David’s heart so that as he eases up behind him, he just holds up his sword and slices off a bit of the corner of Saul’s robe. Again refusing to take the office unto himself, but he’s going to let God vindicate him and eradicate Saul.

David isn’t going to justify sin in his life, by the murder of Saul, with the promise of God’s Word, he wasn’t about to twist the promises of God to justify sin in his life. We spoke about that Sunday morning, yeah God had told him that He would give Saul into his hand, but He didn’t mean, “Go ahead and murder him” this was another opportunity for David to show his integrity and demonstrate the folly of Saul’s thinking, and believing that he was out to kill Saul. So as to where the one spin on this situation is justification of sin, the other is opportunity to demonstrate integrity and the true position of David’s heart in not meaning any harm towards Saul. And so rather than being overcome by evil, David was overcoming evil with good.

You see, David was determined that when he sat on the throne of Israel, it wouldn't be because he got Saul out of the way, but because God got Saul out of the way. He wanted God's fingerprints on that work, not his own, and he wanted the clean conscience that comes from knowing it was God's work. Notice vs 5

Vs 5-7

David's heart immediately felt conviction in that he'd dishonored the king in even the smallest way, the hem of his robe was the symbol of his authority, and his royalty, and David took it from him. and He just said, "Look, this whole thing is wrong, God forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the man whom God placed in the office that he's in." F.B. Meyer makes this comment, "It was a trifling matter, and yet it seemed dishonoring to God's anointed king; and as such it hurt David to have done it. We sometimes in conversation and criticism cut off a piece of a man's character, or influence for good, or standing in the esteem of others. Ought not our heart to smite us for such thoughtless conduct? Ought we not to make confession and reparation?" How easily we can stealthily sort of ease up behind someone and cut just a bit of a man's integrity away from him in the sight of others, and place a bit of a question mark on him, and God help us to recognize when we're doing that, that we might be quick to repent of such actions and in so doing restrain others from engaging in like manner.

You see it was those words that restrained his men, what words? The words of a humble, and tender conscience before God, the words of a man who was convicted at even the slicing of a mans robe. and When they saw how careful David was to want to honor God with even the smallest details of his life, their hearts were restrained from doing evil against Saul. and So Saul rose up, and went his way from the cave.

Vs 8

Again this just an amazing scene here because as if David hasn't displayed incredibly tender conscience and heart towards God already, now he becomes even more bold in his faith as Saul stands up and heads back outside. All he had to do was stay put and Saul and his men would've passed right on by, I mean lets not forget that standing outside that cave were 3,000 men allwith one express purpose to kill David. David's men probably think he's lost it, but David here sees a chance to reconcile this situation, and demonstrate the integrity and honest intention of his heart here before Saul and all his men and so he sets the concerns for himself aside and follows Saul out of the cave. and When he steps outside of the cave he humbles himself as he calls out to Saul and bows himself to earth in humble submission. You might think that he'd have come out of the cave as sort of an equal rival of Saul's, "Hey Saul, I know you're anointed and God's put you there, but you know that God's anointed me, and I'll be there soon enough, so from one king to another, here's your robe, I could've killed you but I didn't." But he didn't do that, notice vs 9.

Vs9-15

Few things quickly here, 1<sup>st</sup> of all back in vs 10, we see this phrase, “I will not stretch out my hand against my lord for he is the Lord’s anointed.”

This phrase has been the justifier of much sin in some men’s lives. You’ve heard the cliché “Touch not the Lord’s anointed.” and Sometimes this phrase is used in church circles to somehow cover the sinful actions or doctrines of some Pastor or church leader. You know someone is teaching some heretical doctrine, or they’re in rank sin and immorality or something and someone seeks to confront the issue, and up pops the reply, “Touch not the Lords anointed!”

And it’s used to prevent a biblical evaluation of a man’s teaching, or to squelch criticism or rebuke, now I’m not trying to come against what David’s saying here. What was he saying when he said he wouldn’t stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed? He was saying that he wasn’t going to run him through with a sword simply because he was in error over his perspective. Now we can agree on that, there’s no need to run a Christian leader through with a sword just because they’re somehow in error. But it didn’t mean that he wouldn’t seek to expose his error and encourage him to repent, that’s exactly what David is doing in this very scenario. So we appreciate the principal that when God places a man in an office, it’s God’s responsibility to remove him. But at the same time lets not take the Word out of its context so as to insulate the Christian leader from all sense of evaluation, or accountability over his actions or what he’s teaching. Yes God will deal with them, but they need to be placed in check, to be confronted with their sin, and given opportunity to repent.

And no doubt when Saul saw that piece of robe that had been torn from him, his mind went racing back to that piece of robe that he’d torn from Samuel. We remember when Samuel had rebuked Saul for his lack of obedience to the Word of God and we read that as, “*Samuel turned around to go away, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. So Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.”* 1 Sam 15:27-28

And now here’s David holding onto that symbol of royal authority that’s been torn from Saul and given to another, Saul is reaping what he’s sown, and having sown to the wind, the bible says we’ll reap the whirlwind. and David says as for me, I’ll let the Lord vindicate me in this matter, but I’m not going to lift up my hand against you. He’s holding the evidence of Saul’s life in his hands, and yet he did brought no harm upon Saul, Saul’s delusions are shattered, there’s no way you can deny that, “He could’ve killed me, but he didn’t.” and David assures him that there’s no way that he’d every purpose evil towards Saul, because he’s not an evil man. (Vs 13)

“Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.” Which is to say that a man’s character is revealed by his conduct, we don’t sin therefore we’re sinners, we’re sinners therefore we sin. We just prove out our hearts and who we are by the way we lead our lives, Jesus said it like this, “*You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.*” Matt 7:16-18 and Then in vs 20, “*Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*” Matt 7:20

And David tells him, “You’re just wasting your time pursuing me, I’m just a flea, jumping from cave to wilderness, to stronghold, to cave. Just a dead dog out here in the wilderness, and I’m just going to trust God to see me through all this.”

Vs16-19

Saul is saying, “Now I know you’re no enemy, because I was with in your grip, and an enemy doesn’t let an enemy walk away unharmed, you’ve proved your loyalty and the intentions of your heart towards me.”

Vs 20-22

Now if it’s all good now, why then did Saul return home, but David went back up to the stronghold? Why didn’t David go home, or back to the palace, or into the city in order that he might return to a normal life?

Because David understood the principal that repentance isn’t demonstrated in the sincerity, or emotional upheaval of a moment, when the tears are flowing, and the right words are being said. But repentance is demonstrated by the ongoing direction of a person’s life that opposes their former disposition. In other words, to say, “I repent” doesn’t carry much weight, those words come easy, the proof of repentance is shown by the genuine consistent continuance in my actions, attitude, and behavior concerning the issue. So though David is pleased with the way it just went, he’s been here before, and so he goes back to give Saul some time to let the dust settle, and then he’ll know. and We all know, that this is not genuine repentance, but a moment of regret, how easily *regret* likes to masquerade as *repentance*, but God help us to bear fruits worthy of *repentance* when we error in understanding, or attitude, or action so that God might be glorified in our lives.

Alan Redpath made this comment, “What a miserable picture Saul is! What is the use of saying, ‘I have played the fool,’ if he goes on playing the fool? What use are his tears and confession before David if he doesn’t act upon his remorse?”

Don’t be brought to a moment of confrontation over an issue in your life and let it slip through your hands, you see we can be an individual of regret, or of repentance, lets choose repentance.