

1 Samuel 23-24 • The Heart of David

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1 Samuel, chapter 23. David is still on the run from Saul, who is hunting him down like a dog. He wants him dead, but for only reasons of jealousy, and that sort of thing, and fear that he'll lose his position.

And David is literally on the run. Here's about 400 men who have come alongside him that he's traveling with now. That's a small town that he's just traveling with. That's it. It's got to be a big deal.

But it says here in 1 Samuel 23, we open up this chapter by hearing that, *“Now they told David, ‘Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are robbing the threshing floors.’”* (ESV) Stop there. Let me explain what's going on.

The Philistines would do this. They were scavengers as a people and they weren't the only ones that did this. There were other nations that did as well. But what they would do is, if they were the big guy on the block, and they could bloody the other guy's nose, they would wait until their neighbors had brought in their crops.

And can you imagine yourself as a farmer, you've worked months planting your fields, growing your crops. Making sure that they're cultivated and the weeds aren't growing up, and everything's well-watered, and everything. And then you go out and you do that hard work of harvest, bringing in your crop, and then you get it to the place of the threshing floor where you're going to separate the husk from the wheat kernel. And during that process of threshing, you're right there at the end of bringing in your harvest and making it something that you can begin to use to feed your family, to sell, and so forth and so on. The Philistines choose that time to attack and to raid the threshing floors.

In other words, they come and they steal the food, instead of doing their own work. They just come in and in raiding parties. They ride in hard and fast. They brandish a sword, get everyone afraid, and they just basically take the food, all of the wheat, and run off back home again. This is stuff that happened on a fairly regular basis. Well, the word is getting to David that the Philistines are actually going against a particular town of Keilah. He hears about this.

And it says in verse 2, and I want you to notice this, this is very important. *"Therefore..."* What did David do? Mounted his horse and said, come on guys, we're going to go save Keilah. Well, not yet.

It says in verse 2, *"Therefore David inquired of the LORD, 'Shall I go and attack these Philistines?' And the LORD said to David, 'Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah.'"*

But I want to stop there for a moment and just make sure that we all understand. This is David's m.o. And how do I put this? If you're not going to probably talk to the Lord in the good times, you may struggle in the bad times, or in the times that are less easygoing, and so forth.

David has shown an attitude, goes to the Lord, that seeks and inquires of the Lord before he takes his action. Lord, what would you have me to do? Where would you have me to go? He doesn't just presume.

Now, this is a bad thing when a town is attacked by a Philistine raiding party and all of their hard work is literally going down the tubes. That's a terrible thing. And emotionally you just want to say, yeah, I'm going to do something about this. But David says, no, I'm going to go to the Lord. Lord, would you have me go up against the Philistines at Keilah. The Lord responds and says, go and attack them.

But look what it says. But sometimes even when you feel like you know the direction of the Lord, there's opposition. It says in verse 3, *"But David's men said to him, 'Behold, we are afraid here in Judah;...'"*

Do you guys remember, David had gone outside of the borders of Judah to get away from king Saul. And for a while he went over to even among the Philistines for a period of time until they found out who he was. Then he had to fake like he was out of his mind just to get away from them.

So the Lord said, no, you go back to Judah. I want you to go back and I want you... And he doesn't know why when the Lord told him. Now he knows why the Lord wants him to come against the Philistines at Keilah and save the town.

But yet some of his men are saying, you know what, ever since we came back to Judah, we're looking over our shoulder constantly. I mean, we're back in Saul's territory and I question you bringing us back here in the first place. But now you want us to go up to the town of Keilah and mount an attack against the

Philistines. Basically what you're asking of us, David, is to come out into the open. We're in Judah, but at least we're hiding.

Now we're going to come out of hiding. And we're going to literally come out into the open and say, hey, we're here and we're going to help save Keilah. And this is going to be a process that's going to take a while. And this is going to expose us. And this is going to put us in a dangerous place. So the men are saying to David, what are you doing? You're putting us in harm's way.

And so they're saying, *"how much more..."* We've been afraid just being in hiding here in Judah. So *"how much more ...if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?"* We're going to be totally exposed then, so and so forth. So how is David going to respond to this thing?

How do you respond when you feel like you have a direction from the Lord and someone questions it? Have you ever had that happen? Happens quite a bit actually. And some, and people often are very well meaning aren't they about giving their opinion? Have you ever noticed people are very free with their opinions and that doesn't mean they've prayed about it. Doesn't mean they've heard from God, but they're willing to give you opinions anyway. It's like, well, let me tell you my opinion.

And you want to say to them, have you prayed about that? I mean, I really pray... Because David went and inquired of the Lord. He didn't just say, you know what? I think we ought to go up against the Philistines at Keilah. I think that'd be a good thing to do. That'd be one thing to, and then have his men, question it.

But he has heard from the Lord. Okay. But now his men come to him and say, okay. I don't think this is a good idea, David, because we're going to completely expose ourselves by doing this.

Verse 4 tells you how humble David was. It says, *"Then David inquired of the LORD again. And the LORD answered him, 'Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand.'"*

Guys, can I just tell you? I like this. I like this. I think this is good stuff. I think this is good for you and I. We have to be careful not to be presumptuous. And even when we feel like we have a direction from the Lord, when somebody in our life that we're close to, comes up to us and has a problem, or a concern about that direction from the Lord, I think that's a good reason to go back and get a confirmation.

You can respond different ways when somebody questions your direction. And you can get all emotional, and all defensive, and that sort of thing and say, well, listen, are you questioning my ability to hear from God? Is that what you're doing?

But David was a humble man who recognized, you know what? I'm not perfect. I don't have the ability to perfectly hear from God all the time. I can make a mistake. Have you ever heard that saying, I reserve the right to be a 100% wrong? I think that's a really good philosophy to take into life.

You say something and somebody comes back and says, are you sure about that? And I usually go, no because often we're not. Right? I love David's attitude. You know what, we're going to go— because listen. If it's God's will, He can confirm it for you. And sometimes I think we, we get questioned, and we're afraid to go back for fear of the— well, maybe the Lord might go back on us here. And then I'm going to look like an idiot because I said, this is the will of the Lord and then, it turned out not to be.

But David is not concerned about that. He wants God's will. And so he says, you know what, I'm going to, hey guys, I appreciate your objections. Listen, I'll go back.

And what do you think that did for David's men? To have David not respond out of anger or defensiveness? But just to go back and say, okay, let's check again. What did that do for his men? Didn't that create a better confidence in their heart?

And wouldn't that be the same case in your family and the people that you love for you to go back and get that confirming word from the Lord and say, okay, we've prayed about it again. And the Lord has confirmed again. Yeah, this is the direction.

And then your family members can say, okay. I may still have some concerns. I may even have some misgivings, but you know what? At least I don't believe that you're over the top of me with this thing. And just assuming that you know best and you can always hear from God and you're not unwilling to at least come back and say, listen, let's check that again. Let's make sure we get that confirmation from the Lord.

And so it says in verse 5, *“And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their livestock and struck them with a great blow. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.”* That's, this is good stuff.

The Lord then brings further confirmation that this is, in fact, was, in fact, His will by bringing them success, right? Where God guides, God provides. He said, I'm guiding you to Keilah to fight against the Philistines, and then He provided the victory. Great. Wonderful. All right.

Well, it tells us in verse 6, and this is an important statement, it says, "*When Abiathar the son of Ahimelech had fled to David to Keilah, he had come down with an ephod in his hand.*" Now why is that comment put in there and what is an ephod?

The ephod is really an apron that the high priest would wear. The business of being a high priest was a fairly bloody business. They did a lot of handling blood with the sacrificial offerings that came to them. And so he would wear an apron over the top of his garment to protect it. And because there's a lot of sprinkling of blood and splattering of blood going on.

And in that apron was a pocket area where he kept two stones that were called the Urim and the Thummim. I know, sounds weird, huh? Well, the high priest would use those stones to determine the will of the Lord. And we don't know much about them at all. We, in fact, we know very little about them. And I'm really glad that we know very little about them.

In fact, God never anywhere in the Scripture really describes the Urim and the Thummim, other than the fact that, to say that it was used to determine the will of the Lord. And as I said, I'm glad for that, because if He described it really carefully, you could probably find Urim and Thummim in your local Christian bookstore. And people would be, like, it's like, whoa, we're going to find the will of the Lord or something like that.

First of all, you and I have something that blows the Urim out of the water. We have the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit, number one. We have the glorious codified Word of God number two, and you put that together and our ability to discern the will of the Lord is far superior to the rolling of stones or whatever they would do with these things. We're not even sure what they did with them. That's how limited our understanding of these things are.

The reason this statement is made, however, in the text of this chapter, is to remind you that David is going along with God prescribed avenues of determining the will of the Lord. That's why that statement is being made to you there. All right.

Verse 7. *“Now it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah.”* So exactly what his men feared took place. They came out in the open, word spread, and word got back to the king, hey, David and his guys are there.

“And Saul, ...” Says ah ha ha! And look what he says, *“God has given him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars.”* And Saul says, he has nowhere to run now. I've got him.

“⁸ And Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.” Stop there. Notice what it said he was going to do. It says he was going to *“besiege David and his men.”* Do you understand what besiege means? It means to build siege ramps to literally lock him into this town and to wait out the ending of their food, water, and supplies to the point where they either give up, or they die of starvation.

And Saul is willing to take this whole town to get David. Do you understand that? He already said, oh, I got him now. He's going to go into that town. He's going to get in there. So all I got to do is come with my men and surround the town. And of course, they'll see the armies, and they'll close the doors because they see us in attack mode. And then as soon as they close the doors, we got them. We got them like a trapped animal.

And they're going to do one of two things. They're going to die of starvation or they'll send, they'll hand David over to me in order to spare their city. Either way, I've got him. If they like David, I'll kill them all. If they don't like David, they'll just hand him over to me. He figures he's got this thing dialed in either way.

“⁹ David knew that Saul was plotting harm against him. And he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod here.” ¹⁰ Then David said, “O LORD, the God of Israel, your servant has surely heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account. ¹¹ Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O LORD, the God of Israel, please tell your servant.” And the LORD said, “He will come down.” (and) ¹² Then David said, “Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?” And the LORD said, “They will surrender you.” ¹³ Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, (he's gained a couple of hundred men from the last time a number has been given us, went wherever they could go) ... wherever they could go. (and then it says) When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition.”

So it came to nothing, even though Saul said, God has given David into my hand. Well, God didn't give David into his hand. He didn't give David. Word got to David, and he got away before Saul and his men reached the city limits.

Verse 14 tells us, *“And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand.”*

¹⁵ *David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh.”*

I want to show you a map of this area and what I'm going to show you here. Actually, this is actually a satellite image of the area of Israel today. This is a modern image, but some of the main cities are still there.



The top red box that I made for you there, that's the city of Jerusalem. I don't know if you can read the words there. And then south of that, and slightly toward the Mediterranean is Hebron. And then that dark blue area in the middle there, what the red arrow points to, is the Dead Sea, all right?

Now, that red arrow points to the region where David is hiding out. This is a good place to hide, too, because there's lots of caves. It's a wilderness area, but lots of caves to hide in along that area. The Dead Sea is of course where they eventually found the Dead Sea Scrolls, you'll remember in the 1940s.

But that the Dead Sea scroll area of Qumran is way up to the north of the Dead Sea region, on the Israel side. But David is now down along that south— and area. So I want you just to have this picture in your mind.



He's going to name here in this section, several places that David hid from Saul in these two chapters we're covering tonight, but they're all in this southern Israeli side of the Dead Sea.

So that's essentially where David was hiding during this time. And right now it's called the Wilderness of Ziph. So what do you suppose the people are called who live in the Wilderness of Ziph? They're called the Ziphites, right? Well, we'll read about them in a bit.

But first it says, look with me in verse 16. It says, *“And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God.”* Stop there for a moment, please.

You already know the relationship between David and Jonathan. These are two warriors who love one another as only godly men can and who have made a covenant one with another to protect each other and their families. And Jonathan is coming at great risk to himself, to come to David and meet him here. And this is the last time they will meet face to face before Jonathan dies in battle.

But I love what it says the reason Jonathan came. Did you see that? He came to strengthen David? He came to strengthen David's hand in God. He comes to strengthen him. That's what good friends do when you've got someone in your life who's going through a hard time.

You go and you strengthen them. You can do it all kinds of different ways. It might just be a phone call. It might be a letter, might be a an encouragement when you see him at church, or out at the store, or something like that. It might

be coming over with a plate of cookies or something simple like that, but it's just strengthening someone in the Lord. Can I pray with you?

And encouraging that person too. You don't have to have the gift of encouragement to be an encouragement to someone. Those of you who have that gift, you should be doing it more and more.

But for the rest of us who may not have the gift of encouragement, we can still encourage people and we can tell him, hey, trust in the Lord. God will take care of you. God will not fall down on His promises, right? And that's something that you and I can say to people because when people are going through a hard time, they naturally begin to question the promises of God. They begin to wonder if maybe God has somehow forgotten them. Or if maybe somehow one of His promises fell to the ground as it relates to them and their circumstances.

And you come to them and say, listen, God knows what you're going through. God has seen all of your tears. God knows exactly what's happening in your life. This has not taken Him by surprise and this is not too big for Him. And He will see you through this time. He will walk you through this season of your life. And you will gain information, you will gain depth, you will gain maturity from it.

I know you don't want to go through this. I know this is very painful. But God loves you, and He will never leave you nor forsake you. And you are to assume that this is training. That's what the Bible says. We're to consider it training, training in righteousness. Sometimes you don't really want to hear those words, but they can be a real encouragement to you.

And giving somebody a Scripture reference that could be used is just, it can be a real, encouragement to someone. Sometimes you don't even know you're being an encouragement to someone.

Two Sundays ago, for those of you that were here, it was on December 28th. I prepared for Acts chapter 13. Studied, all day Saturday, like I typically do. And then, just before worship got over, I decided to go use the restroom real quick.

And so somehow God talks to me in the bathroom. Don't ask me why, it's just the spot. And I'm in the restroom and I can hear the music, of course, through the ceiling speakers there. I'm worshipping along and stuff like that.

And the Lord just spoke very simply to my heart and said this is the time of year when the world is all concerned about dropping their weight. And they begin to

make their New Year's resolutions. And then the Lord said, but my people do not know how to let go of the weight of their burdens. They don't know how. And that's all He said. And it was like, just, and it was like, cool.

So I came out here and sat and we finished worship. And I came up and I thought, I'm going to just share that. So I started to, I was getting ready to tell everybody, where to turn in their Bibles. And I just started sharing, hey, the Lord just laid something on my heart. Let me share it with you. And I just said it.

And then I started expounding on it. And pretty soon I'm about 5 minutes into it and I realized the Lord wants me to keep going. So I kept going and up talking like 40 minutes on this thing. And about 5 minutes into it, I realized, I'm probably not going to do, get what I prepared. So I said to everybody, if you were here, you might remember. I said, this isn't what I prepared to say today. And then I just kept talking and just kept encouraging people.

I got an email from a gal in the fellowship. I'm not going to tell you who, but I got an email a couple of days ago. And I actually read this to the staff on Tuesday. But she wrote me a note and she said, I just need to tell you what happened that Sunday morning, December 28th. I was, she said it was a morning, just like any other Sunday morning, except we happened to have a house full, still had some guests from Christmas.

And she said, I was in the front of the mirror getting ready and the Lord spoke to my heart. This is her speaking now. And the Lord said, I want you to pay attention because Paul's going to say something today that is a message for you. And by the way, I happen to believe it was for a lot of people. But the Lord spoke to her and said, and here's how you're going to know it's for you. He's going to say, this isn't what I meant to bring to you today but.

So the Lord even told her, what I was going to say along those lines. I didn't know what I was going to say. It was all, brand new to me. And I just thought, well, I'm just sharing. And I got done sharing and I thought, well, that's interesting, I didn't even get to my notes. But that was what the Lord wanted to say for that Sunday.

And I had more people come up to me after that message. I mean, I'm telling you, if I had a dollar for every person that said, that was for me I could have taken the family out for lunch. But sometimes we're just, we're unaware. Sometimes we're just unaware.

I started off just sharing what God told me in the bathroom. And it ended up being an encouragement to so many people. And I'm so thankful for God to be able to use us from time to time, to be an encouragement to people. To be like Jonathan was to David, to go to somebody and just encourage them.

And you may not have a word from the Lord, that's okay, but you have the Word of the Lord. And you can go to them and you can know some Scriptures and have them in your heart that will encourage people in whatever they're going through.

Say, here's a scripture that the Lord's really used to encourage my heart, and I just want to share this with you because I just want to encourage you that God loves you, and He's going to see you through this time. God's going to take care of you. God's not going to drop you on your head and leave you and abandon you. Don't worry. S

It's just it's delightful to be used by the Lord, and more of us need to experience that. You know what I mean? More of us need to experience what it's like to be used by the Lord. But what it takes is stepping out and getting out of your comfort zone. It's not really part of my comfort zone to share for 40 minutes on a Sunday morning without notes from a 10 second Word of the Lord in the bathroom. That's really out of my comfort area too. But sometimes you've got to just step out and just say, okay, Lord, let's see where this goes. But not for you, for other people.

I love how Jonathan goes to David at risk of his own life. I am convinced Saul would have thought nothing of killing his own son. He already threw a spear at him once. Jealousy knows no bounds, no boundaries of morality, or anything else.

So David receives this beautiful visit from Jonathan. And look at what Jonathan says in verse 17. *“And he said to him, “Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this.””*

Of all these wonderful things that Jonathan is saying to David, only one of them isn't true. And that is that Jonathan never did live long enough to be second to David. And I remember the first time I read 1 Samuel, I was rooting for Jonathan. I was like, oh, I, something in me just loves it when this sort of a thing happens. Where a guy like Jonathan humbly, stands against evil and I thought, yeah, Jonathan is going to get to be, with David. He's going to get to

see the kingdom really come into its own and be a place of righteousness and, oh, yes.

And I remember the first time, the very first time I ever read through 1 Samuel and I found out that Jonathan died in battle as a relatively young man. I was heart sick. I mean, how many hundreds and years was it since that happened? But I remember reading it and just going no! No! Oh, God had a plan. God works all things together according to the perfection of His will.

And Jonathan was a man who was willing to sacrifice and risk his own life to go to David and say, I'm one with you, man. Don't worry. Don't worry. My father is not going to find you and you will be king of Israel. David, I just want to remind you about that time when Samuel called your whole family together, remember? And all of your brothers were paraded in front of him one by one. And as each one came in front of him, Samuel said, no, that's not the one. That's not the one. That's not the one. That's not the one. And finally, it's like, this is it? Well, there's the youngest one out watching the sheep but that's just David. Go get him. Go get him.

David comes in, smell like the sheep and he's still got his shepherd clothes on. He hadn't had time to clean up or anything. That's the one. That's the next king of Israel. Do you remember that, David? Do you remember when Samuel took that flask of oil and in front of all your brothers and your dad, he popped it open, and he poured it over your head, and he pronounced a blessing over you? Do you remember that, David?

God hasn't forgotten. God will take care of you. God's going to see it through. You will come to the throne. Don't you worry, my brother. It will happen just the way God said. That's the encouragement David needed.

And it says in verse 18 that, “...*the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.*”

And when “¹⁹...*the Ziphites* (those are the people that live in the wilderness area of Ziph) *went up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, “Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is south of Jeshimon?”* So what's going on here?

The Ziphites, what are they doing? They're ratting on David. Do you know what's sad about this? Yeah, the Ziphites are named that because they live in the region of Ziph; the wilderness of Ziph, but they're Israelites. And to make matters worse, they're descendants of Caleb.

Do you remember Caleb? When the nation of Israel first came to the promised land and they sent spies into the land, you remember that? And the spies came back and they said, oh, the land is everything God said it was. It's full of great bounty and fruit and we brought some back. It's a wonderful land flowing with milk and honey. But, the people are too strong. There's no way we could possibly go up against these people and win.

And it says all of the men who went out to spy out the land turned the people away from the Lord, except two guys: Joshua and Caleb. Caleb was a man of faith. Do you know, Joshua and Caleb are the only two men who survived the 38 following years in the wilderness, and then got to go into the promised land. Moses didn't even survive it. He died right before they went into the land.

Caleb, at the age of 80 years old, went in a man of faith, a man of valor, and he opened up the land for his people. He was an incredible guy. These are his descendants. And that's sad, because Caleb was a very cool guy. And now they are doing something that is very uncool. Ratting out David, basically trying to turn him over to the king.

And it says in verse 20, *“Now come down, O king, according to all your heart's desire to come down, and our part shall be to surrender him into the king's hand.”* ²¹ *And Saul said, “May you be blessed by the LORD, for you have had compassion on me.”* ²² *Go, make yet more sure. Know and see the place where his foot is, and who has seen him there, for it is told me that he is very cunning.* ²³ *See therefore and take note of all the lurking places where he hides, and come back to me with sure information. Then I will go with you. And if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah.”*

What Saul is saying is, go back and bring me more information. He's basically telling them to go and do reconnaissance in the land and bring him back information before he actually does it himself; goes after David. ²⁴ *And they arose and went to Ziph ahead of Saul.”*

Now David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon. (still that same region I showed you on the map earlier) ²⁵ *And Saul and his men went to seek him. And David was told, so he went down to the rock and lived in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon.* ²⁶ *Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. And David was hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them,”* Oh dear, can you see this?

If you had an aerial view of this and you saw from like a hot air balloon, you'd see a mountain and you'd see David's men going this way to get away and you'd see Saul's men either coming around this way or catching up this way. We're not exactly sure. Probably coming around this way and it looks like he's going to be caught.

But *“a messenger (verse 27) came to Saul, saying, ‘Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid against the land.’”*²⁸ *So Saul returned from pursuing after David and went against the Philistines. Therefore that place was called the Rock of Escape.*²⁹ *And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of Engedi.”* Again, the strongholds of Engedi, still in that same region of that southern part of the area of the Dead Sea.

So he gets away, he gets away. God doesn't give David into the hand of Saul. God is looking out for Saul, or for David rather. God is protecting him from the hand of Saul. Are we surprised? No, we're not surprised. David's a good guy. God made all kinds of promises to David. Are we surprised when God takes care of us? Yeah, usually we are. That we didn't expect.

Chapter 24 is really, just runs into the same thing. It says, *“When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, ‘Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi.’”*² *Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Wildgoats' Rocks.”* Or the Rocks of the Wild goats, that's what it was called.

“³ And he came to the sheepfolds by the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to relieve himself.” That means he went in to go to the bathroom. I suppose they didn't have a 7-Eleven in every corner, and you had to do your business somewhere. So Saul goes into a cave to, literally go to the bathroom.

But we're told in the following part of that verse that David and his men were in that same cave. They were just farther back in the cave. They were hiding in the deep recesses of the cave, and Saul goes in to use it as a restroom. Oh, this is weird and even a little bit embarrassing. And even a little bit creepy.

So what's going to happen here? It says, *“⁴ And the men of David said to him, ‘Here is the day of which the LORD said to you, ‘Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you.’”* Then *David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe.”*

But *“...afterward (we're told, verse 5) David's heart struck him, because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe.”* He was conscience stricken for cutting off his

robe. Just a little corner of his robe and, which is amazing. We're thinking, you should have done a whole lot more than that, buddy.

“⁶ He said to his men, (hey listen guys) “The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the LORD's anointed.”” Okay. Stop there for just a moment. There's a lot going on here. There's some things I want to talk to you about.

First of all, David's incredibly soft heart, but when you're being encouraged and somebody is putting it in the language, this is the day the Lord's, this is it. Remember the Lord promised you he was going to give your enemies into your hand. This is it.

So they're interpreting what the Lord has apparently said to David in the past. They're interpreting it. Have you ever noticed people are pretty free with their interpretations too? And they're interpreting it saying this is it. This is it, David.

And David is emboldened to go up to where Saul has laid his garment, his robe, and he cuts off with his knife just a portion of that robe. And then he and—but he's conscience stricken about actually doing something against Saul. He goes back to his men and says, guys, it's not what I'm going to do. It's not what the Lord would have me to do.

You ever had that happen where you started to do something and then you just realize this just isn't right? And you've got that, I don't know whether it's a still small voice, or it's a rotten feeling in your gut or whatever it is. You just know that you know, that you know, this isn't right. I shouldn't be doing this. Listen to that voice and stop what you're doing. And that's what David did.

He listened and he had the guts to go back to his men and say, guys, this isn't the way. Now that's their way, but he's saying, this is not the way of the Lord. I am not going to do this.

I want you to notice the reason that he cites for not killing Saul. He could have killed him right there. Why? Why? Look what he says. Verse 6 again. *“The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the LORD's anointed.”*

David's primary reason for not killing Saul was, get this, the Lord anointed Saul king, that's his reason. Listen, David had his eyes open, he knew the kind of guy Saul was. He knew it. He knew that he had practically gone mad. David was the one who used to sit and try to sing songs to cool him down.

And even then, David was the recipient of a death attempt against him. On two different occasions, he threw, a spear at him. Actually three spears, two different occasions. Two times, one time, one time another time, before David made good his escape.

But David knows what a guy this is and this guy is hunting him, forcing him to live in caves. He can't go home. He can't be with his wife. He can't be with his family. He had to take his family, remember, and take them to a foreign country nearby so they'd be safe. And he had to ask the king, hey, can my family stay here for a while? Would you protect them? Yeah, sure. Okay. Sorry, guys. You just, you got to do this. So look at everything that has been just thrown topsy turvy because of the way Saul is treating him.

Now, this is his chance to end it all, but he's not willing to do that. And why? Because Saul is the Lord's servant. I want you to think about something. David is showing respect for Saul because what God had done for Saul, anointing him king.

This is a foreign idea to us today, because living in the United States of America, we give respect to those who have earned it, don't we? And we don't respect those who haven't earned respect.

What's interesting about this, and I'm going to talk specifically to you ladies, although this applies to men too. But ladies, do you know that it's the same principle that you are given in the Word for respecting your husbands? Let me show you this really quickly on the screen. This is from Ephesians 5, beginning of verse 22. It says,

Ephesians 5:22-23 (ESV)

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

“*Wives, submit to your own husbands, ...*” and that is respect cause at the end of the chapter, Paul repeats it, and he says, and wives need to respect their husbands.

Wives, (respect or) submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. (then he gives the reasons why ladies) For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

Do you know what Paul did there? He explained to women, first of all, here's your calling, you're to respect your husband. Now, here's why. Because God made him the head, made him your head. When you came together in marriage, God, he was ordained that day as your head. The husband is the head of the wife as, or in the same way that Christ is the head of the church. You know what he's saying to the ladies? Respect your husbands because Christ ordained him to this position.

I remember years ago, sitting down in my office, with a couple, I was doing marriage counseling with them, and we were talking about all the things that they needed to get right as it related to just being obedient to the Word of God.

And I was talking to the man about, love your wife, even when she's not lovable. And I said and you and I looked at her, and I said, and you are called by God to respect your husband. She goes, well, whoa, hold the phone. She said, that's a problem. Why is that a problem? She said, well, I don't respect him. She said, he's never done anything that I felt was worthy of my respect so I don't respect him. So God's Word to me is ridiculous. Husband or wives respect your husbands.

The passage doesn't say, we read it a moment ago here on the screen. It doesn't say wives respect your husbands if he's respectable. David didn't honor Saul because he was worthy of honor. He didn't respect him because he was worthy of respect. He was a madman. He was hunting his life.

David respected him because he was the anointed of the Lord. He was respecting him out of respect for the Lord. And wives, that is exactly what you're called to do as it relates to your husbands.

It says husbands, or wives, respect or submit to your husbands as to the Lord. Here's why. Because the husband is the head of the wife, in the same way, Christ is the head of the church. Wives, do you know that your husband didn't ask to be the head of the home or the or the head over you? He didn't ask for that role. He didn't ask for that privilege, nor that responsibility. He didn't ask for it. He got it.

In fact, if you guys got married before you even knew the Lord, he didn't even know it at the time. And then you got saved and he started studying the Word, probably found out just like me. I found out after the fact.

Sue and I didn't go to church for 5 years after we got married. We didn't go to church at all. And then finally we got saved, started going to church and I

started realizing, whoa, I got myself into some deep stuff here as the husband. What's this headship stuff. I didn't ask for that. And so I was reading it and it was saying, Paul, you are the head of your wife as Christ is the head of the church. You're kidding. Well, what's that mean? And of course that's a whole other message.

But the point of this whole thing is that we respect out of respect, right? You see a police officer. You may know that police officer personally. You may even know that as an individual, he's not worthy of respect as a person. But when that police officer turns on his lights behind you and your car, you're going to pull over because right now, regardless of the fact that you don't maybe necessarily think he's respectable, he has the badge, and you're going to respect that. And you're going to respect the authority that goes behind that badge. You see.

You're respecting something greater. That's what David did. He said, God forbid that I should do this to Saul because God anointed him. I didn't. Man didn't. God did. And if I strike out my hand against Saul, I am striking my hand against God. Do you understand?

Do you understand when Paul talks about obeying the governing authorities in Romans chapter 13? He says, obey the governing authorities for he who disobeys the governing authorities, disobeys God because God put those governing authorities in place. You see respect for respect.

So respect in a marriage; a wife toward her husband has nothing to do with whether she deems him respectable. She respects him out of courtesy and respect for the Lord who placed him in that position. Just in the same way that a husband is called to love his wife and lay down his life for her, even if she's not presenting a very good love target right today.

He's still supposed to love her anyway and be willing to sacrifice himself on her behalf. Not because he feels like it, but because God has commanded him to do so. In the same way the woman responds out of respect because she's respecting Jesus.

That's why you guys, and this is just a little freebie. That's why when two people, when a married couple gets strong in the Lord, they get strong in marriage. When they start deciding to be obedient to God, and he decides to be obedient, to love his wife, regardless of the way she might treat him. He's going to love her sacrificially. And she decides to respect her husband, regardless of how she's being treated, to respect the position that God gave him. Things begin to come together in ways they couldn't have any other way.

See, we hold it over people. I'll love you. If you're lovable, I'll respect you if you're respectable, that's the world's way of doing things. It's not God's way of doing things. And David teaches us a very important lesson in this passage.

Verse 7 says, *“So David persuaded his men with these words and did not permit them to attack Saul. And Saul rose up and left the cave and went on his way.*

⁸ Afterward David also arose and went out of the cave, and called after Saul, “My lord the king!” And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth and paid homage. ⁹ And David said to Saul, “Why do you listen to the words of men who say, ‘Behold, David seeks your harm’? ¹⁰ Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the LORD gave you today into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, ‘I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed.’ ¹¹ See, my father, see the corner of your robe in my hand. For by the fact that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, you may know and see that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you hunt my life to take it. ¹² May the LORD judge between me and you, may the LORD avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you. ¹³ As the proverb of the ancients says, ‘Out of the wicked comes wickedness.’ But my hand shall not be against you. ¹⁴ After whom has the king of Israel come out? After whom do you pursue? After a dead dog! After a flea! ¹⁵ May the LORD therefore be judge and give sentence between me and you, and see to it and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand.”

¹⁶ As soon as David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, “Is this your voice, my son David?” And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. ¹⁷ He said to David, “You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. ¹⁸ And you have declared this day how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the LORD put me into your hands. ¹⁹ For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safe? (Saul is obviously saying, you obviously don't consider me your enemy since you let me go) So may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. ²⁰ And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. ²¹ Swear to me therefore by the LORD that you will not cut off my offspring after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house.” ²² And David swore this to Saul. Then Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.” Stop there.

That's a confusing statement. Sounds like to me they just made up, doesn't it to you? I mean, David proved to him that he, he proved to him, I don't want to kill

you. Look, here's a piece of your robe. You were that close to me. And I obviously had a knife to cut this off, I could have killed you in a second.

Obviously, I don't want to kill you. And Saul then starts weeping when he sees David and hears all this. And he gives this rather beautiful a response. I'm sorry, and you've treated me well, and I've treated you terrible. And I know you're going to be king one day so promise me you won't harm me or my family. David says, I swear it and Saul goes home.

But David doesn't go home. It says David goes up to the stronghold. See this is that thing I was talking about at the very beginning about forgiveness. This is where a lot of Christians get confused.

You see, I'm not going to forgive you when you do wrong against me, because if I forgive you, that means I have to invite you back into my life. I have to trust you. I have to go home. And all the abuse and all the damage that occurred is liable to occur again. And I'm just not ready for that to happen. So you see, I'm going to then withhold forgiveness so that I don't have to go home. Do you understand?

Listen, forgiveness has nothing to do with going home, or opening yourself up to all that same abuse. Listen, David knew and understood that Saul wasn't going to change his stripes. He knew it, and Saul didn't. He's not done hunting David. He'll come out again to hunt him again. This big, long, flowery speech is going to come to naught. And David knows it. And because he knows it, he stays in the stronghold.

But do you think David withheld forgiveness? Do you think he held on to bitterness? Of course not. He knew better, right? He forgave. He forgave Saul every time, but he was smart enough to say, but I choose not to go back.

Listen, people, you can forgive somebody. If there's been somebody in your life with a track record of just leaving a trail of blood, and we've all had people like that in our lives. And there is a place where sometimes you need to forgive and go back and try again.

But I'm saying to you in a situation remember with Saul, he's already thrown three spears at David. He's been hunting him down for a long time. This time of running goes on for remember, we told you like between 10 and 13 years. That's a long time to run for your life.

So maybe you've had a situation that has gone on and on and on. And this person repeatedly hurts you, or your family members, or whatever the case might be. And it's just, there's no sign of it coming to an end. And they come to you from time to time and they say to you, why won't you forgive me? And what they're saying to use you is this, why won't you let me back in your life?

And what Christians do is they say, I can't forgive you because I can't open myself up to that hurt anymore. People that is wrong. You and I are commanded to forgive. There's no ifs, ands, or buts about it. You and I cannot withhold forgiveness. We don't have that right. We must forgive, but you can forgive without going back into the fray just like David did here.

If you know that this is not changing and you have not seen any real life change in this person's life, other than just the crocodile tears. And that's what Saul's doing here. He's weeping. He's weeping. Some people would just totally give into that. And sometimes you do, you give into that weeping, and you go back and you find out that it wasn't genuine. And then you're just more embittered about the whole thing. Right? Like, I thought this guy had really changed.

Listen, people, don't be naive. It takes people a long time to change and, you need to be smart. If somebody has hurt you repeatedly, you need to hold back before you go back and bring abuse to your family members or whatever.

Sometimes you need to just say, I'm just going to watch this situation and wait and see the fruit of real repentance. Because repentance bears fruit. Real, genuine repentance bears fruit and it's not tears. It's not tears. That can be worldly sorrow. People can cry you a river and be completely unchanged. You're looking for the fruit of change.

And sometimes when people's lives hang in the balance, you have to say, you have to be smart enough to say, I forgive you. I forgive you. But this relationship here is on hold. Okay.

Now, I know that if we're talking to marriage situation, there's a dynamic that comes into it. That's different. Okay. And you probably need to get some good godly counsel about that. I'm more referring to like friendships, even some family relationships where there has been ongoing, consistent abuse. And it shows no signs of abating. But listen, don't think for a minute that you and I can't forgive because we can, and we should right away, like as in now.

It's better for you to forgive. It's better for your relationship to the Lord. Listen, you cannot hold bitterness in your heart against somebody and have a carefree

relationship with God. You cannot do it. It will be a hindrance to your walk with God. You cannot withhold forgiveness and be completely unhindered in your walk with Jesus Christ.

And so if there's bitterness or if there's unforgiveness in your heart, get it taken care of now, tonight. You don't have to talk to anybody else except God to get that taken care of between you and the Lord. You just release that person. And if you don't think you can ask God for His strength to do it, He'll give you the strength to release that person. And I mean, release them.

And then do what He told you to do and start praying for them. We're supposed to pray for those who hurt us and who abuse us. That's how we get set free. It's, God doesn't tell you to pray for people just because it's a very fine sounding thing. Oh, and pray for those who hurt you. It sets you free, people.

It sets you free to pray for those people who've hurt you in your life and you and you need to be free. The last thing you want to do is experience pain at the hand of somebody, and then you're the one in prison. And often that's what happens. I see it happen all the time. Christians are in literally in a prison of their own making. And the bars have bitterness, right, written across them.

Somebody did something to really mess them over, and they decided to get angry instead of become forgiving, and to give it to the Lord, and now they're in jail. And they're wondering why their walk with God isn't what it should be, and their relationships with other people aren't what they should be.

And it will affect your relationships to other people, too. Why? Because bitterness is a root, as the Bible says. We were told in the Word not to let a bitter root grow up among us because it defiles many. (Hebrews 12:15) It literally spreads its poison. Okay. That's what bitterness does.

So somebody hurts you, you carry that bitterness and that bitterness affects your relationships with other people. And you're way down the road from this person who hurt you way back there. But now it's affecting all the people here in your life, because you haven't given it to God.

You haven't surrendered it to the Lord said, Jesus, I need to be set free from this. Give me the grace. Give me the power. Give me the heart to truly forgive and to release this person from what they've done and all the hurt that they've caused me.

And you might say, Well, pastor Paul, you don't know what somebody did to me. You're right. I don't. But I know God's power, and I know He can enable you to forgive, no matter what.

Listen, David was being hunted, and he forgave. He was being hunted. And he still chose to forgive and you can too in the power and grace of God.

But like I said, David also decided to stay in the stronghold. Sometimes you have to stay in the stronghold. Sometimes you have to keep your distance. Like I said, if it involves a marriage situation, come talk to me because there's always some difficult dynamics with that. But sometimes there is great wisdom in what we see here in the Scripture.

But like I said before, don't ever connect forgiveness with replacing yourself back into a place of abuse. Don't ever withhold forgiveness for those reasons. We'll stop there.