

Sunday Morning Message

April 7, 2024

Avenge Not Yourselves – Let God Take Care of It

Text for Today's Message – 1 Samuel 24

Congregational Reading – 1 Samuel 24:1 - 6

Introduction

We have been reading through 1st Samuel in our daily devotions this week and we have been observing that King Saul, Israel's first king, was gradually unravelling mentally. He started out well as king; he initially was humbly doing things God's way, but eventually he became filled with pride and was more concerned about public opinion than he was with God's. He has a particular problem with David, who at the time was a man in the kingdom, the youngest son of Jesse. David kept making good decisions and it became evident to everyone, including Saul that God's hand was upon David. God was blessing him and protecting him and using him in a mighty way to defeat Israel's enemies; and King Saul became very jealous of David and very insecure regarding him, and his insecurity gradually developed into full blown insanity.

On two occasions, Saul became enraged at David and attempted to kill him with a javelin (1 Samuel 18:10 – 11; 19:9 – 10). Saul even had all the priests of God who lived in a city called Nob slaughtered because he mistakenly thought that they had conspired against him and had tried to help David.

David, on the other hand, was doing everything right. He was faithfully serving the king and his kingdom. He was the only one who was brave enough to face the Philistine giant, Goliath whom he killed with a sling and a stone (1 Samuel 17). He continued to fight many battles for Israel and had killed many thousands of her enemies, but the more success that David had, the more Saul despised him.

In chapter twenty-three, Saul has David surrounded and almost captures him in the Wilderness of Maon (see map) but is called off because he heard that the Philistines had launched an invasion into Israel, which he had to defend against. Saul was as close as he could be to finishing off his enemy David, but the Philistines were a far greater threat to Israel, and he had to leave David and go and deal with them.

Practical Point – David almost got caught but was protected from capture at the last minute. This was not an accident. God was in it. If you are in the will of God, doing His will

for your life, God will protect you. Nothing can happen to you unless God allows it to happen.

David later reminded his son Solomon of this marvelous truth.

"And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD." (1 Chronicles 28:20)

In chapter twenty-four, Saul presumably had finished taking care of the Philistine threat. We assume that the army of Israel chased them back into the land of the Philistines, but we simply do not know exactly what took place in that battle, but in verse one we learn that Saul was back, insanely pursuing after David, this time in the wilderness of Engedi (see map).

I. David is Sought by Saul at Engedi (vs. 1 – 3)

Notice that "it was told [Saul]" that David was at Engedi. Apparently, Saul had spies everywhere. There are plenty of evil people out there who are watching what you are doing. Remember from the last chapter that even the people of Keilah whom David help save from the Philistines were willing to turn him in to Saul. People are people. They are sometimes going to stab you in the back if they feel it will somehow benefit themselves.

David was reported to be in Engedi, which means "fountain of the kid" and is located on the Dead Sea, approximately 35 miles southeast of Jerusalem (See Images). Engedi is in the middle of a very rugged and remote area with many caves, but it also an oasis. "Engedi contained a hot-water spring coming from the side of a limestone cliff, producing semitropical vegetation. The area became known for its palms, vineyards (Song of Solomon 1:14), and balsam."¹ Engedi is located on the western shore of the Dead Sea. Someday God will bring life to this sea and Engedi will a place for fishing (see Ezekiel 47:1 - 10). Later in the Bible, Engedi is called Hazazontamar (1 Chronicles 20:2).

Saul chose three thousand of his best men who would be able to climb up into this rugged terrain – way up where the wild goats were - and hunt David out of the caves.

¹ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "En-Gedi," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 701.

He got to a place where there was a sheep enclosure (sheepcote), where there was also a cave, and he entered the cave where there would be privacy to “cover his feet”. Most expositors believe that this was an expression, which meant “to relieve himself.” The Bible gave strict sanitation rules to the people of Israel when they travelled in remote areas:

"Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee: For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee." (Deuteronomy 23:12-14)

Some also believe that it could refer to sleeping. Saul obviously did not expect David to be in the cave. He was headed up to the higher elevations where the wild goats were. Saul's men remained “in the sides of the cave,” which meant that they were close by but not within view. David's men were further back in the cave, possibly somewhere deeper in the cave than Saul was.

II. David Spares Saul in the Cave (vs. 4 – 7)

David's men saw this as an opportunity and a fulfillment of many statements made by Samuel and Jonathan regarding David becoming the king (See 1 Samuel 15:26 – 29; 16:11 – 14; 20:15; 23:17). The exact prophecy is mentioned nowhere in Scripture, but this is obviously how David's men interpreted the prophetic future of David. Remember, the Bible is not making this statement, the men are making it, and the Bible is merely telling us what these men said.

David snuck up behind Saul and cut off a piece of His robe without him or his men knowing it (“privily” means “secretly” or “softly”).

David immediately is convicted because of what he did. This is not quite the same as Holy Spirit conviction, though the Spirit of God was often “on” David. This was a guilty conscience, which was developed beyond the mere moral law, which is written upon every man's heart. This was a conscience built upon a thorough knowledge of the Word of God as well as an intimate relationship with God.

David knew that God would be the one who would deal with Saul. This is a good lesson for us today:

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Romans 12:19)

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:43-48)

"But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." (Luke 6:27-36)

David called Saul, "the anointed of the Lord." David uses this phrase many times again in chapter 26 regarding Saul (1 Samuel 26:9, 11, 16, & 23). David also has an Amalekite put to death because he claimed to have killed Saul after he was mortally wounded (see 2 Samuel 1:14 – 16). Keep in mind, David was also anointed by the Lord to be king over Israel (1 Samuel 16:13).

Saul is apparently oblivious to what is taking place behind him and he leaves the cave with his men.

III. David Supplicates with Saul (vs. 8 – 15)

David follows Saul out of the cave, seemingly at a safe distance, and humbly pleads with him to listen to reason. David makes two arguments:

1. Saul is listening to men who are lying to him about David (v. 9). Just as there were evil men who were more than glad to give Saul David's location, there were also men who knew that David was not a threat to Saul, yet played on Saul's mental state and fed him with these lies.

Practical Note – We need to be careful who we listen to. Some people want to keep putting wood on the fire to worsen the strife that is within people.

"Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." (Proverbs 26:20)

2. David's second argument has to do with the fact that he had the opportunity to kill Saul in the cave yet did not do it.

David quotes from a well-known, non-biblical proverb from his day (v. 13), which means that wicked people will do what they do, but I am not going to do what they do.

IV. David Swears to Saul (vs. 16 – 22)

David took a chance on exposing himself as he did. He had only six-hundred men with him, and Saul had three thousand. Saul is moved by the words of David, just as he was when David played his harp. Saul agrees with David's men that the Lord had delivered him into David's hands. Saul also states here for the first time that he recognizes that David will be the next king over Israel, and he makes David promise not to take vengeance on Saul's family, which David promises to do. He already made a similar promise to Jonathan.

Unfortunately, Saul will quickly forget about this promise to David, and will hunt him again in chapter twenty-six. Saul is a very conflicted guy. I believe that here in this chapter he genuinely wants to do the right thing by David, but he has mental issues probably caused from past bad decisions and unconfessed sin, which are then multiplied and worsened by the many bad counselors in his life.

Conclusion

This chapter shows the sharp contrast that existed between David and Saul:

1. David was willing to wait on the Lord.
2. David was willing to be merciful to his enemies.
3. David did not allow his men to dictate to him what to do.
4. David did not avenge himself but trusted the Lord to do what's right.
5. Saul was not willing to come clean with the Lord for any of his actions. He always blamed somebody else. As a result, he suffered mentally.
6. Saul surrounded himself with ungodly men who told him things that would feed his ego and his hatred, instead of telling him what was right.
7. Saul seemed to only be concerned about his reputation, whereas David was far more concerned about God's reputation.

David's refusing to take vengeance against Saul in chapter twenty-four is not an isolated event in his life. We briefly examined from chapter twenty-six that David again had the opportunity to do away with this constant threat against his life and the lives of his men but chooses to not do so. He places the situation and the fate of Saul in the hands of God. Note – David's men had to have a lot of respect for him to follow David's leadership in this. Remember, they were on the run also. I am sure they all wanted to get home to their families and a normal life, and the sooner King Saul was dead, the sooner they could do so.

I will briefly point out two other examples:

In chapter twenty-five there was a wealthy man, named Nabal, whose shepherds and sheep were grazing in the same place that David and his men were hiding out in the wilderness of Judaea. David's men had protected this man's servants and sheep from robbers. When David asked the man for a little food for his men, the man refused. David could have killed the man and even wanted to do so, but God and the man's wife were able to convince David to once again allow God to take care of the situation.

"32 And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: 33 And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand. 34 For in

very deed, as the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall." (1 Samuel 25:32-34)

And God did take care of Nabal. The man died a few days later of natural causes and his beautiful wife, Abigail, became David's wife.

In 2 Samuel 26, David spares a man's life, named Shimei, who was cursing David and even throwing stones and casting dirt at David and his men. Abishai, one of David's men, wanted to kill him but David said: "11 ... *let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.*" (2 Samuel 16:11b). Once again, David could have taken matter into his own hands, but instead he let God take care of it.

This is great advice for us today. You and I do not have to react in the flesh to people who are attacking us. Like David, we can let God take care of our enemies.

The Apostle Paul said:

"18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:18-21)

DAVID'S FLIGHT FROM SAUL

- City
- Ⓝ Numbered movements of David
- ➔ Route of David from Saul (as far as Mizpah of Moab #5)
- ➔ Route of David from Saul (as far as Keilah #8)
- ➔ Route of David from Saul (as far as Wilderness of Maon #13)
- ➔ Route of David from Saul (as far as Ziklag #15)
- ➔ David's offensive actions (#16-19)
- ➔ David becomes king at Hebron (#20)
- ★ Battle scene







