



 LifeGroups
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David Spares Saul's Life

David Spares Saul's Life

- David spared Saul's life because Saul was the Lord's anointed
- 1 Samuel 24:1–7, Psalm 13
- At the end of the last chapter, Saul was chasing David.
- The story sped up quickly in that last paragraph – David went here and Saul went after him; David went there and Saul followed (23:24–29).
- Then a messenger came to urge Saul to go quickly to stop the Philistines from raiding the land.

David Spares Saul's Life

- This chapter begins with Saul's finishing his battle and going right back to his pursuit of David (24:1).
- That temporary distraction didn't stop him in the long run. Saul took 3,000 "chosen men" to pursue David (five times as many men as David had).
- "Chosen men" were the best soldiers in an army.
- In Judges, the 700 left-handed "chosen men" were described like this: "Every one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss" (Judges 20:16).

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- Engedi means “spring of the kid goat” and is on the west coast of the Dead Sea.
- It is at the edge of the Judean desert, but Engedi itself is Israel’s largest natural oasis, a “splash of life and color in the midst of an otherwise barren landscape.”
- Much of the water around the Dead Sea is too salty to drink, but the springs of the Engedi oasis are fresh, providing water for animal life and lush vegetation.

David Spares Saul's Life

- The combination of desert, mountains and springs makes it a beautiful area with breathtaking views.
- Even today, you can see beautiful waterfalls and pools, palm trees and mountain goats (ibex).
- The craggy rocks and mountains served as a great hiding place for David.
- Theologically, it's a picture of God's protection, provision and rest in the desert.

Engedi Landscape



Engedi Landscape



Engedi Animals



David Spares Saul's Life

- The “Wildgoat’s Rocks” were steep cliffs in that area, which made for a great hiding place but a precarious place to take 3,000 men.
- It may seem unusual for Saul to enter a cave in the area by himself without any kind of guard, but his men had likely done a sweep of the cave and not seen David’s men because they were “in the innermost parts” (24:3).
- Saul was in the midst of “covering his feet” in the cave. That is why he was not surrounded by his men. This would also explain how David could get close enough to cut off a part of his robe without his noticing.

David Spares Saul's Life

- The hem of Saul's robe would have had distinctive fringe, designs and stitching marking him as the king, so there would have been no denying it when David showed it to him.
- David would have proof that he could have killed Saul if he had chosen to do so.
- But afterward, David's heart "struck him."
- He regretted it, feeling that he shouldn't have done this against the Lord's anointed (24:4–6).

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- The use of the word “heart” reminds us that David is a man after God’s own heart, and that God looks at our inner person rather than our external qualities (16:7).
- David’s men gave him logical advice based on the circumstances, but David’s heart told him otherwise. It would have made sense from a military perspective, and most would think Saul deserved it.
- But David’s heart struck him because his heart was “after God’s own heart.” David trusted in the Lord’s wisdom over human wisdom.

David Spares Saul's Life

- Even though Saul had shown no respect for God's anointed priests by slaughtering an entire city of them and their families, David showed respect for Saul as God's anointed.
- David himself had already been anointed king, yet he still referred to Saul as "the Lord's anointed."
- David was also God's anointed, and at this point the Holy Spirit was with David, not Saul.

David Spares Saul's Life

- Yet David still respected God's anointing on Saul and his status as the current king.
- David knew he would eventually take over the throne, but this wasn't the way he was going to do it
- He would wait and listen for God's voice and timing, another stark contrast with Saul, who continuously tried to take matters into his own hands.

David Spares Saul's Life

- There are times we all could justify sinful actions and even convince ourselves it's what God would want us to do.
- But a heart that knows God and truly seeks His will will be “struck” with the truth when a choice isn't right.
- Psalm 119 tells us that knowing God's Word makes us wiser than our enemies, and that storing His Word “in my heart” and seeking Him “with my whole heart” will help us not sin against Him (Psalm 119:9–11, 98–101).

David Spares Saul's Life

- Many times, David felt frustrated with his situation.
- He told us so in the Psalms: “How long, O Lord? ... How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?” (Psalm 13:1–2).
- David's situation was incredibly unfair; no one would have blamed him for wanting to end Saul's pursuit of him.
- Yet, David chose to wait on the Lord and His timing. Even as David asked God how long, he ended the psalm with trust in God's steadfast love for him (Psalm 13:5).

David Spares Saul's Life

- Other psalms encourage us to wait for the Lord and hope in His Word, for “with the Lord there is steadfast love” (Psalm 130:5, 7).
- As David eventually wrote when he composed songs for Israel's worship, “I waited patiently for the Lord, he inclined to me and heard my cry” (40:1).

David Let God Judge

- David let God judge between him and Saul
- 1 Samuel 24:8–15, Romans 12:17–21
- David showed great respect to Saul in this passage by calling him “my lord the king” and bowing to give homage. He called him “my father,” emphasizing their familial bonds through his marriage to Saul’s daughter and friendship covenant with Saul’s son.
- He showed Saul the piece of his robe to prove that he wasn’t seeking his harm, no matter what his advisors might tell him (24:9–11).

David Let God Judge

- David committed before the Lord not to lay a hand on Saul, no matter what might happen (24:12–13).
- Consider how vulnerable David made himself to Saul in this moment. Saul had chased him all over the country. He had narrowly escaped only by the grace of God.
- Now David had walked right out in front of Saul, even bowing to the ground. David completely trusted that God would be the one to judge between them. If David really were God's anointed and the future king, God would protect him.

David Let God Judge

- David had not given up on convincing Saul to stop chasing him. He still pleaded his innocence (24:9–11; 15).
- He argued that Saul's hunting him was silly, like using all the power of his great army to chase a single flea (24:14; 26:20). "Dead dog" was a common Hebrew idiom used to denote a contemptible, worthless thing.
- David promised he would not put out his hand against Saul. He still thought they could make peace, that he could return to the palace with Michal and Jonathan, working side-by-side under Saul until the time came for David to take over the throne peacefully from him.

David Let God Judge

- But if not, David committed that no violence toward Saul would come from his hand.
- Saul might still choose to strike David, but David would not raise his hand against Saul.
- He would let the Lord judge between them (24:12).
- David trusted in the Lord's will for his life so much that he didn't need to take matters into his own hands.

David Let God Judge

- David was leaving room for God's wrath, choosing to live at peace even with his enemy, and trusting that God would sort it all out (Romans 12:18).
- He was treating Saul with a kindness Saul didn't deserve and choosing to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:20–21).
- David wasn't sure how Saul would respond, but he chose to do what is right, regardless.
- This is what it looks like to live at peace with all people "as far as it depends on you" (Romans 12:18).

Saul's Response

- Saul wept and admitted that David was more righteous than he
- 1 Samuel 24:16–22
- David's speech worked, and Saul was also "struck" in his heart. Not only did he admit his guilt, but his entire demeanor changed.
- He called David "my son" and wept before him.
- Gone was the pride and anger, and in its place was a broken, contrite heart that finally admitted its sin.

Saul's Response

- If the story had ended here, Saul's relationship with David and God would have been redeemed by his repentance. But he would chase David again only two chapters later (26:1–2).
- Saul admitted to David that David was more righteous than he because David repaid his evil for good, the same language Paul used in Romans 12 that we read above.
- Saul also confessed that David would surely be king, something Jonathan had said Saul already knew but wouldn't admit (23:17).

Saul's Response

- Still thinking of himself, Saul asked him to swear not to cut off Saul's offspring when David came to the throne (24:21).
- David made that promise to Saul just as he had to Jonathan earlier (20:14–15).
- But the last line lets us know that even though Saul repented, things did not go back to the way they were before (24:22).
- David did not return to the palace, to his place as general.

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