

BECAUSE HE IS THE LORD'S ANOINTED

1 Samuel 24:1-22

Key Verse: 24:6

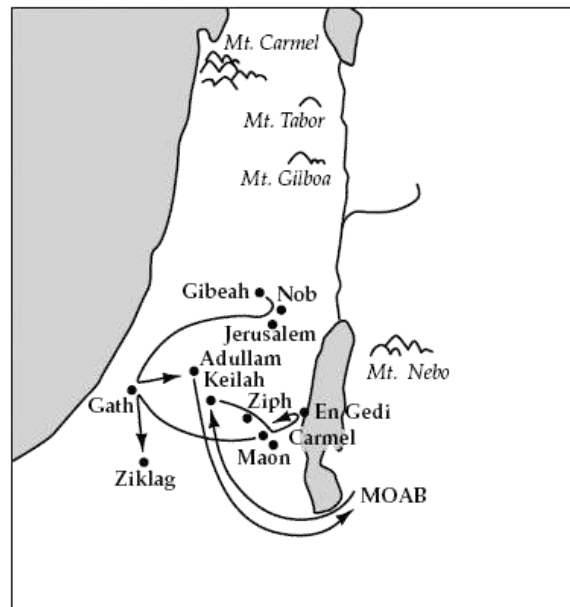
He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD."

In today's passage, David is presented with a God-given opportunity to solve all his problems with a single action, that is, to get rid of the evil king who was obsessed with hunting him down to kill him. But David does not take the king's life, even as his advisors urged him to do so. Instead, he shows his respect towards the king. He does so because of his respect and honor for God. May God help us to learn from David how to honor God in our lives!

I. FOR HE IS THE LORD'S ANOINTED (1-7)

Look at verse 1. *After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the Desert of En Gedi."* We learned from Chapter 23 that Saul and his men almost captured David in the Desert of Maon near the Dead Sea. He was saved by God's intervention in the nick of time. Just as they were closing on David, news came to Saul that the Philistines were raiding the land. He had to deal with the crisis first. He and his men left the Desert of Maon to pursue the Philistines (23:24-29). As soon as he returned from the military campaign, however, he resumed his pursuit of David. His intelligence agents informed him that David was in the Desert of En Gedi. *So Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats (2).*

When King Saul and his special force of 3,000 men arrived in En Gedi, they started their search for David near the Crags of the Wild Goats. En Gedi is an oasis in Israel, located in the western shore of the Dead Sea, near Masada and the caves of Qumran (where the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered). It is a popular destination for those who visit the country. In the Old Testament, En Gedi is referred to as Hazazon-tamar (2Ch 20:2; Ge 14:7). Today it is a national park. During our trip to the Holy Land, we had a chance to visit this rocky place. I was given a chance to read to our group a passage from 1 Samuel which we study today. We saw some wild goats there. We saw many caves. We also saw water falls, many trees and greenery. This was indeed a good place for David and his men to use as their hideout. It had a plenty of water. It



had wild game for their meat supply. Most importantly, it had many caves which they could use their hiding place.

King Saul came to En Gedi searching for David. As he looked around, he came to sheep pens along the way and there was a cave there (4). Right then and there, he had the urge to go (probably #2). So he went into the cave to use it as his royal bathroom. And it happened to be the same cave where David and his men were hiding from him at the moment. Perhaps it was a pure coincidence that he walked into this particular cave among so many caves in En Gedi or perhaps it was God's providence (who was training David). Anyway, the king began to relieve himself in the cave. David's men could see the royal robe he was wearing and a crown on his head. He was a tall man, head and shoulders above the rest. There was no doubt it was the king. And they could smell him. King Saul was caught with his pants down, so to speak.



As they watched the king relieving himself, what did his advisors say to David? *The men said, "This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish'"* (4a). It is not surprising that David's men came to this conclusion. After all, Saul was a bad guy. He disobeyed God's command because of his pride. He even tried to kill his own son Jonathan for being a friend with David. He had 85 servants of God murdered for helping David. This man deserved to be punished. Not only that, the Lord had promised through Samuel that some day he would establish David as king to replace Saul (1Sa 15:28; 16:1). It seemed to them that this was the day the Lord spoke of.

So what did David do? He *crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe* (4b). Indeed, David could have easily killed the king if he wanted to. The man was defenseless. But David did not kill the king. He did not even touch him. Instead, he cut off a corner of his robe which the king had probably taken off while relieving himself.

Look at verse 5. *Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe.* King Saul had brought his elite force of 3,000-men to hunt down David. If he had killed the king in the cave, no one would have blamed him. It would be ruled as self-defense. Indeed, David could have considered it as a God-given opportunity to get rid of his enemy. That's what his men advised him to do. But verse 5 says that David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of the king's robe. Why?

Let us read verse 6 together. *He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD."* When David saw King Saul, he did not just see a man with an intense hatred towards him. He saw him as someone who had been anointed by God.

He called him “my master” because he was the Lord’s anointed. David was conscience-stricken for what he had done. The royal robe was a symbol of the king’s dignity and authority. And he had shown disrespect for the king by cutting a corner of the robe. It wasn’t so much because he failed to show his respect for the man to whom the robe belonged. Saul as the man did not deserve his loyalty and respect. Indeed, Saul was a man obsessed with killing David out of his jealousy and hatred. Yet, despite his human quality, he was still the Lord’s anointed. God had placed his authority on this man for the moment. David mentioned the Lord three times in verse 6. “The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord’s anointed... for he is the anointed of the Lord.” In other words, he was thinking of the Lord when he saw the king. David feared the Lord. His conscience was stricken because of his fear of the Lord.

Humanly speaking, Saul was just a jealous man. But David saw him with the eyes of God. To David, to show disrespect for God’s servant was to show disrespect for the Lord. “... for he is the anointed of the Lord.” *With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way (7).* From the words of David here, we can see a glimpse of why he was called a man after God’s own heart. His attitude towards God’s servants is a sharp contrast to that of King Saul’s. Saul ordered around a priest as if he were his own servant (1Sa 14:18-19). He had all the priests of Nob massacred (1Sa 22:18). He had no respect for God’s servants, because he had no respect for God and his words (1Sa 15:24).

This can happen to us as well. I know a brilliant young man who has had trouble in showing respect for a servant of God. This servant of God is not the most eloquent speaker, even though his life of faith has proved himself to be a great man of faith. Unfortunately the young man’s growth in faith seems to be stagnant when he rejected the leadership of the servant of God. I am also a proud man who often showed disrespect for God’s servants by looking at their human weaknesses. God’s servants are not perfect. We can find plenty of weaknesses in them. David didn’t have to try very hard to find some weaknesses in Saul if he wanted to use them as excuse not to respect the king. But he didn’t. He simply said, “... for he is the Lord’s anointed.” I learn from David that I should show respect for God’s servants, not because who they are humanly, but because who they are as the Lord’s anointed. I must fear the Lord and help others to do so as a leader.



There are other ways we may show disrespect for God. If we show up on time for our job interview or meeting with an important person, but come to worship service late, we show disrespect for God. If we spend hours surfing the internet, but spend little time to prepare for Bible study and try to wing it during our group discussions with common knowledge, what does that say about our respect for God and his words? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Pr 1:7). May God help us to show honor and respect for God and his words!

II. DAVID APPEALS TO KING SAUL (8-22)

Look at verse 8. *Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, “My lord the king!” When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.* David went one step further to show his respect for the Lord’s anointed. He went out of his hiding place. It was a dangerous thing to do. He exposed himself. He called out to the king, “My lord the king!” Then he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.

Then he appealed to the king for his innocence. *He said to Saul, “Why do you listen when men say, ‘David is bent on harming you’? This day you have seen with your own eyes how the LORD delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, ‘I will not lift my hand against my master, because he is the LORD’s anointed.’ See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. Now understand and recognize that I am not guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life (9-11).*



David’s defense for his innocence was powerful. He even gave the king something to save his face by telling him that he was ill-advised by his men. Actually it was the king who was bent on hunting him down to take his life. David explained how he had a God-given opportunity to harm the king in the cave, but he did not, even though some of his men urged him to do just that. He showed the piece of the king’s robe in his hand. He said, “I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you.” Most of all, he told the king the reason why he spared him and why he was still calling him “my father.” He said, “I will not lift my hand against my master, because he is the Lord’s anointed” (10).

In his appeal to Saul, David also expressed his faith in God. He said to Saul: *May the LORD judge between you and me. And may the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you (12).* He also said in verse 15: *May the LORD be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand.* David had no intention of rebelling against the sitting king, because he trusted in God. His conscience was clear. He didn’t want to raise his hand against the king to avenge the wrongs he had done to him. He left that to God. He believed that God would vindicate him.

David understood through the word of God that revenge belongs to the Lord (Ro 12:19). Hebrews 10:30 says, “For we know him who said, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ and again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’” We often hear the expression, “Don’t

get mad; get even!” This is very appealing to our instinct. But this is not biblical. God’s people should not act like that. Romans 12:17 says: “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.”

What was Saul’s response to David’s appeal? He said, “Is that your voice, David my son?” (16). He called David his son. He also wept aloud. I wonder how Saul could change his tune so quickly, calling David a son now, when he had been consumed with hunting him down to kill him. I wonder if his tears were crocodile tears, although I do think that it wasn’t easy for him to weep publicly as king. King Saul also admitted that David had treated him well even though he had treated David badly (17). The fact was undeniable. David had a piece of his royal robe in his hand to prove what he was saying. King Saul even said something that made sense for a change: *When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today* (19).

Saul also told David that he would be king someday and the kingdom of Israel would be established in his hands (20). He then asked David to show mercy to his descendants when that happened (21). With his tearful confession and all, it appears that Saul finally repented his unfounded hatred and paranoia towards David. But we know from previous chapters that Saul repented easily. He used the words, “I have sinned,” casually without really meaning it. One time, he said to Samuel, “I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people” (1Sa 15:30).

True repentance is much more than a momentary feeling of remorse, even if the feeling is genuine. True repentance is shown in action. True repentance may also take time to complete. Apparently, David and his men did not believe Saul was a changed man, despite what he said. They went back up to the stronghold to continue to hide themselves from the king’s force (22).

We learned today from David why we should show respect for God’s servants. He was conscience-stricken after cutting a corner of Saul’s robe. He felt bad because he showed disrespect for God’s anointed servant. He didn’t kill Saul even though he had a perfect opportunity to do so. He had been anointed to be king. But he did not go ahead of God. He deeply respected God and his time table. He was growing to be a man after God’s own heart. May God help us to have the fear of the Lord in our hearts! May God help us to show respect for him, his words and his servants!