

Our lesson briefly covers two instances when David had the opportunity to kill Saul but he chose to spare Saul's life. Even though Saul was out to kill him, David had the utmost respect for the one whom the LORD had anointed as king and would not retaliate against Saul. David trusted that the LORD would take care of him and make him king in due time.

1 Samuel 21-23: David tries to make himself hard to find, first trying to find refuge in Gath, a Philistine city under the rule of king Achish. Leaving Gath, he goes to the cave of Adullam in the foothills of Judah. His family joins him there and then men suffering adverse conditions under Saul began gathering themselves under David, until he had around 400 men under his command. Saul discovers where David is and comes with a force of men to capture him, but the LORD protected David as he stayed a step ahead as Saul chased David throughout the region.

1 Samuel 24

1 And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of En-gedi. 2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

Saul is returning from his latest battle with the Philistines when he hears a report that David is in the wilderness of E-gedi. Saul immediately chooses 3,000 of his best men to go with him in search of David and his men.

4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

Saul goes into a cave to "cover his feet" (relieve himself) but he happened to choose the very cave where David and his men were hiding (v. 3). Apparently Saul is near the mouth of the cave while David and his men are hiding in the darkness deeper inside the cave. As Saul is taking care of his business, David's men suggest that the LORD has provided an opportunity for him to kill Saul and urge him to take advantage of the situation. However, David does not kill him, but instead sneaks up and cuts off a piece of Saul's robe.

5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

Even though he had not physically harmed Saul, David's conscience bothered him because of the disrespect that he had shown the king by cutting off a portion of his garment.

6 And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.

David's words indicate how deeply he respected the fact that the LORD had anointed Saul as king. The LORD had chosen Saul to be king and had sent Samuel to anoint him. David's love for the LORD caused him to have an aversion to showing any disrespect to the man that the LORD had chosen to be king. Despite Saul's unjust pursuit and attempts to kill him, David would not retaliate against him because he was the man that the LORD had anointed as king.

7 So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way. 8 David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

"So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul" – Since David chose not to act against Saul, apparently some of David's men still wanted to do so, believing that they would be acting in David's behalf. However, David would not allow them to do so and perhaps his words caused them to respect the LORD's anointed as well.

"But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way" – Saul leaves the cave, totally unaware of how close he was to death.

"David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king" – David waits until Saul is a safe distance away and then follows him out of the cave to reveal himself. He calls out to Saul in order to get his attention.

"And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself" – When Saul turns to see who was calling out to him, he sees David standing at the mouth of the cave. No doubt Saul realized that David had been hiding in the cave the whole time that he was inside. David humbly bows in respect to the king as a sign that he bears no ill will toward Saul.

9 And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? 10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed.

"And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?" – David asks why Saul has listened to those who have said that David wanted to harm the king, since such words are obviously untrue.

"Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave" – As evidence, David points out that if he wanted to kill Saul, the LORD had provided an ample opportunity for him to do so mere minutes before.

"and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee" – Not only did David resist the temptation to kill Saul provided by the opportunity in the cave, he also resisted additional temptation coming from his men who urged him to do so.

"and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed" – David expresses his reverence for Saul as the man that the LORD anointed to be king. Whatever kind of man that Saul may be (good or bad), he is still the anointed of the LORD and so David will respect him for that reason.

Verses 11-22: David shows Saul the piece of the royal robe that he had cut off, proving that he had been close enough to Saul in the cave that he easily could have killed him if he so desired. He appeals to the LORD to judge who is in the right: Saul, who is unjustly chasing David or David, who has done nothing against Saul. Saul weeps and admits that David is a more righteous man than he is, and that now he knows for sure that the LORD will establish the kingdom of David. He asks David to swear that he will not destroy the descendants of Saul and thus end Saul's family line, to which David agrees. Saul goes home but apparently David still does not trust Saul and goes to find another place to hide instead of returning home.

1 Samuel 25: Samuel dies and all Israel laments his death. Meanwhile, David moves to the wilderness of Paran. While there, David sends messengers to Nabal, a wealthy man in the nearby region, asking for food and supplies for him and his men. Nabal refuses, angering David, who assembles his men to raid Nabal's property and kill Nabal and all his male servants. However, Nabal's wife, Abigail, hears of the messengers request and realizes how much Nabal has offended David, so she loads up several donkeys with food and supplies and takes them to David to appease him. David accepts the gift and changes his mind about raiding Nabal's property. When Nabal hears what almost happened because he had offended David, he has a heart attack or stroke and dies 10 days later. When David hears of Nabal's death, he takes Abigail as his wife.

1 Samuel 26

2 Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.

The inhabitants of Ziph approach Saul and inform him that David was hiding nearby (v. 1), so Saul leads 3,000 of his best men in the search for David in the wilderness of Ziph. Apparently Saul's show of repentance recorded in 1 Sam. 24:16-20 was emotionally driven and temporary.

3 And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness.

Saul picked a strategic location as his base of operations from which to search the wilderness of Ziph. However, David, who was in the wilderness, saw Saul and his 3,000 men make their camp in the distance, although he apparently didn't know for sure that it was Saul's camp.

Verses 4-6: David sends spies to determine that this was indeed Saul's camp and then goes to personally see for himself. He then asks for a volunteer to sneak down to Saul's camp that night with him.

7 So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him. 8 Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time.

David goes to Saul's camp with his volunteer at night and they find Saul sleeping with his spear stuck in the ground by his "bolster" (head). Saul is surrounded by Abner, the captain of the army, and the rest of the people (no doubt to protect the king), and all of them were asleep. Abishai points out that God has once again placed Saul at his mercy and then asks for permission to kill Saul. David denies his request and states that no one can harm someone anointed by the LORD without becoming guilty (v. 9).

10 David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish. 11 The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

"David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth" – The statement David is about to make is as certain as the fact that the LORD was alive.

"the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish" – David states that Saul will die, either 1) as punishment by the hand of the LORD; 2) from natural causes; or 3) as the result of a battle. The point is that it was not up to David to decide when or how Saul would die – that was in the hands of the LORD. We see David's trust that the LORD was in control and would take care of him.

"The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed" – David again refuses to harm Saul, the man whom the LORD had anointed to be king.

"but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go" – However, David commands Abishai to take Saul's spear and water jug in order to prove to Saul that he has again spared the king's life.

Verses 12-25: David then climbs a hill some distance away and cries aloud to Abner to awake him and the rest of Saul's men. David asks why Abner has failed at his job of protecting the king since someone was able to come into the camp and could have killed Saul. He shows Saul's spear and water jug to prove his point. When Saul calls out to him, David asks what he has done wrong to cause Saul to chase after him. He declares that the LORD had provided another opportunity for him to kill Saul but that he declined to do so because Saul's life was precious in his sight. Saul again confesses that he is in the wrong and invites David to return home. He promises that he will no longer seek to harm David and that he has been foolish to have been trying to do so. Apparently David still doubts Saul's sincerity and does not accept the invitation to return home (**1 Sam. 27:1** *"And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand"*).