

From Darkness into Light

Text: I Samuel 24

In this chapter we see David hiding in the cave of Engedi. In the darkness of that cave he had to make what was perhaps the hardest decision he had ever made in his life. As David steps from the darkness of the cave and into the light, he reveals that he is living in the light, even though he was in the dark. What may have been exceptional in the Old Testament becomes an expectation in the New Testament. John 3:21: "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

I Peter 2:9: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

I. SAUL ON THE ROCKS

I Samuel 24:1-3

In these first three verses we see Saul has come to the rocks of Engedi to find David. You might say Saul was "on the rocks," borrowing from the idiom, "on the ropes," referring to a losing boxer who has been beaten back to the ropes, on the verge of being knocked down or knocked out. We might say, while Saul is on the rocks, David is in "the Rock."

Psalm 61:2, 3: "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed:

lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy."

Psalm 31:3: "For thou art my Rock and my Fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me."

Even though the odds favor Saul and his army (Saul with his 3,000 versus David and his 600 men) David has something going for him that Saul does not, i.e., the plan and purpose of God.

Saul has just returned from defeating the Philistines. He did this while he was out of relationship with God and His will. The late Dr. S. Lewis Johnson said, "It illustrates again for us, as we will see when we go through this chapter, that success does not indicate the approbation of God. That's something very useful in Christian circles. Christians tend to look at things very shallowly in many cases. Not all of us but some of us. And so when we see evidences of worldly success, we tend to say God is blessing. Not necessarily."

The cave that David chose to hide in was near the sheepcotes, which is the old word for the sheep pen or shelter. It is no wonder that although God was grooming David for the throne, our hero never loses his roots as a shepherd.

We may be amazed that 600 men could hide in a cave in Engedi. Those familiar with this area have estimated that some of these caves could house as many as 3,000 to 4,000 men. Of all the caves Saul could have chosen to take care of some very personal business, he chose David's cave! He has never been more vulnerable for defeat than this moment. This now brings us to:

II. DAVID'S DILEMMA

I Samuel 24:4-7

A. The voice of well-meaning friends (I Samuel 24:4a).

David's men told him that God has given David the opportunity to take the life of the man who wants to take his life. This is the time that we must claim I John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." The quote the men gave David is not found in Scripture. There are times a voice may sound like God, but it is not.

B. David's decision (I Samuel 24:4b).

David did not listen to the men who encouraged him to take the life of Saul, rather he stealthily slipped to Saul's side and cut off the bottom part of his royal robe. This brings to our mind the time that Saul had crossed the deadline and we observe in I Samuel 15:27: "And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent." This was symbolic that David would one day wear the royal robe as the king while Saul would have that privilege torn from him.

C. The voice of the Lord (I Samuel 24:5-7).

The Bible says that David's heart was smitten because he cut Saul's robe. David was listening carefully to God's voice. His tender heart was wounded because he only did in type what was God's privilege alone to do literally. This is a beautiful reminder that this is indeed a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22).

III. DAVID AND HIS "PETITION OF RIGHT"

I Samuel 24:8-15

In 1628 the British Parliament sent the Petition of Right to King Charles I. The petition sought recognition of four principles: no taxation without the consent of Parliament, no imprisonment without cause, no quartering of soldiers on subjects, and no martial law in peacetime. Afterwards, when the petition was granted, it was tradition that the representative of the crown would respond with, "Let right be done!" George Archer-Shee, a 13-year-old cadet at the Isle of Wight's Osbourne Naval College, was falsely accused of stealing a five-shilling postal note from the locker of a fellow cadet in 1908. His family fought it to the highest courts of the land and won by using the Petition of Right. This was the basis for the play later written, The Winslow Boy. As I meditated on one of the most eloquent and finest speeches in Holy Writ, the plea of David to Saul, in essence David was pleading with Saul, "Let right be done!"

A. David proves himself a man of honor (I Samuel 24:8).

David bows in honor of the king. In the military a subordinate is commanded to salute the rank, not the man. There is nothing in the life of Saul that would deserve this honor, but David salutes the title, and more specifically, the anointing.

Matthew Henry, in his devotional commentary, made this comment. "We have hitherto had Saul seeking an opportunity to destroy David and to his shame, he could never find it. In this chapter, David had a fair opportunity to destroy Saul and to his honor, he did not make use of it. And his sparing Saul's life was as great an instance of God's grace in him as the preserving of his own life was of God's providence over him."

B. David makes a plea for Saul to not be influenced by wrong men (I Samuel 24:9).

I Corinthians 15:33: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." Never underestimate the power of counsel for good or for bad.

C. The merciful heart of David (I Samuel 24:10, 11).

As we read these words we are seeing what Isaiah 55:3 is prophesying, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Prophetically, we see in David the beautiful "Hesed," loving kindness of the greater Son of David, who made covenant with us through His shed blood upon the cross.

D. A request for Saul to search his heart and let God be the Judge (I Samuel 24:12a, 15a).

It is not human nature to reject the temptation to apply vengeance when the opportunity affords itself. In this plea, we see that turning our hurt, misuse and abuse over to God is a principle found in the Sermon of the Mount and Romans 12:19: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

E. The Tearful Unrepentant Prophecy of Saul (I Samuel 24:16-20).

The Bible brings to our attention people who were remorseful, but not truly repentant, such as Judas (Matthew 27:3, 4) and Esau (Hebrews 12:16, 17). Although Saul was not going to abide by his words, he does speak the truth about David's future.

IV. THE NON-RESOLUTE STALEMATE

I Samuel 24:21, 22.

Saul was more interested in his earthly promotion for his family, rather than the advancement of their spiritual welfare.

David wisely goes back to his hideout while Saul goes back to his palace. God in His goodness guides David each step of the way. This is so much more than the protection of David. At this time David has no children, but he carries within him the very DNA God had chosen to bring the Messiah into the world.

CONCLUSION:

Psalm 27:14: "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

Psalm 37:7a: "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself...."

There is a difference in waiting on the Lord and waiting for the Lord. When we wait on the Lord, we pray, we mediate and we apply God's word. When we wait for the Lord, we are expectantly believing that eventually God's plan will come through.

-Pastor Pope-