

1 Samuel 24 – God’s Ways vs. Man’s Ways

Introduction

Saul and David are contrasts of a person whose spiritual walk is declining versus one on the incline.

Saul’s Life To Date

- From 1 Samuel 10:27 we know that not everyone was with Saul from the start. Both as a spiritual and political leader Saul was more divisive and fragmenting than unifying.
- In 1 Samuel 13 we learn that Saul begins to lose Samuel, his closest advisor and “pastor”, if you will.
- In 1 Samuel 15 we see Saul’s personal rebellion against the Lord.
- And finally, in 1 Samuel 16, the Spirit of the Lord leaves Saul and enters David.
- The overall picture is of a person spiraling further and further downward.

David’s Life To Date

- From 1 Samuel 16 we learn that not everyone **KNOWS** that David is anointed king and has received the Spirit of the Lord from the start. He does not immediately claim or assume the throne but allows God to control all of the timing and events that will do so.
- 1 Samuel 16:21-22 indicates that David gains favor with Saul himself as well as royal court.
- In 1 Samuel 17 we see that David gains favor with the military.
- In 1 Samuel 17:45-47 David establishes his faith before non-believers.
- In 1 Samuel 18 David gains the favor of the people.
- In 1 Samuel 18-20 David gains the favor of Saul’s family (Michal and Jonathan).
- In 1 Samuel 21 David gains the favor of the priesthood.
- Whereas Saul never fully gained the “favor” or support of everyone even in the authoritarian role of God’s appointed king over Israel, David – allowing God to work in His own time and way – gains the support and unification of everyone **BEFORE** actually taking the throne.

There is the example of Saul – someone doing things in his own way believing that the titles and authority God gave Him were tacit approval that anything he did was “God’s way” and “right” – and David, who never assumed that God’s appointments were the “end” of needing to rely completely on God for everything in every way.

¹Now when Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, saying, “Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi.” ²Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. ³He came to the sheepfolds on the way, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself.

Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave.

[Read 1-3]

Q: First Saul pursues the “real” enemy – the Philistines – and then David, a fellow countryman and “enemy” only in the mind of Saul. What does this say about Saul’s spiritual condition?

A: Saul can’t tell the difference between his enemies and his supporters; he sees everyone the same, commonly united against him and him alone. Saul has set himself as the center of all things displacing God’s authority in his life.

Q: This is subtle, but how might we tell from these verses – and other interactions between David and Saul – that this is NOT an opportunity provided by God for David to assume the throne for which he was anointed many years previous?

A: When enemies are delivered into someone’s hands by God, Scripture generally states so specifically. There’s nothing indicating that Saul has been given “by the hand of God” to David as is documented in many other places in Scripture.

⁴The men of David said to him, “Behold, this is the day of which the Lord said to you, ‘Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.’” Then David arose and cut off the edge of Saul’s robe secretly.

⁵It came about afterward that David’s conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul’s robe. ⁶So he said to his men, “Far be it from me because of the Lord that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the Lord’s anointed.” ⁷David persuaded his men with these words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul. And Saul arose, left the cave, and went on his way.

[Read 4-7]

Q: Old Testament trivia for \$1,000, Alex: What Scripture is being quoted by David’s men, “...Behold, this is the day of which the Lord said to you, ‘Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.’”?

A: There is no such Scripture.

Q: What explanation is there for this?

A: One possibility is that it may not have been captured in the books that make up the Old Testament canon but was nonetheless uttered by an authority of the day. For instance, a prophet such as Samuel may have been used by God to make this statement but the statement itself was not written down for posterity. It’s highly unlikely that these are **NOT** the words of God since such misrepresentations are annotated as being false.

Q: Taken that these are the exact words of God to David, what is the obvious mistake the men are making regarding this promise?

A: They are assuming there’s only **ONE** proper interpretation to “...and you shall do to him as it seems good to you...”, that this means David should kill Saul. David demonstrates a superior interpretation, that in David’s hand an opportunity to preach God’s Word, love and opportunity for repentance will result – not death as final judgment.

Q: What direct evidence in v.5 validates the inferences made in the previous points?

A: “...David’s conscience bothered him...” He didn’t fully subscribe to his men’s interpretation of God’s Word – and therefore only cut off a piece of Saul’s robe rather than take Saul’s life – but he didn’t completely refute them either by setting them straight.

Q: Therefore, what is the significance of David’s statement in v.6?

A: It’s the correct interpretation of events in relation to God’s Word. David recognizes that the circumstances are **NOT** the fulfillment of God’s Word as quoted by others and that God has not yet changed the order of things.

Point #1: Are we to simply accept a course of action because someone qualifies it by quoting Scripture? Do we test these things even when provided by those closest to us who have our best intentions at heart?

Point #2: Consider the possible applications of this example in your own life. Have you ever **ASSUMED** that because of circumstances that “this must be from God”? Do you “inquire of the Lord” or check in with Him to discern if this is what **HE** wants and how **HE** wants to do it, even when all conditions seem to be primed? Is there a danger to **ONLY** inquiring of God when things look “bad” instead of inquiring **regardless** of the situation?

⁸Now afterward David arose and went out of the cave and called after Saul, saying, “My lord the king!” And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself. ⁹David said to Saul, “Why do you listen to the words of men, saying, ‘Behold, David seeks to harm you’?” ¹⁰Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but my eye had pity on you; and I said, ‘I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord’s anointed.’ ¹¹Now, my father, see! Indeed, see the edge of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the edge of your robe and did not kill you, know and perceive that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands, and I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait for my life to take it. ¹²May the Lord judge between you and me, and may the Lord avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you. ¹³As the proverb of the ancients says, ‘Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness’; but my hand shall not be against you. ¹⁴After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog, a single flea? ¹⁵The Lord therefore be judge and decide between you and me; and may He see and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand.”

¹⁶When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, “Is this your voice, my son David?” Then Saul lifted up his voice and wept. ¹⁷He said to David, “You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you. ¹⁸You have declared today that you have done good to me, that the Lord delivered me into your hand and yet you did not kill me. ¹⁹For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safely? May the Lord therefore reward you with good in return for what you have done to me this day.”

[Read 8-15]

Q: What is indicated in v.8 that shows David is speaking sincerely?

A: “...David bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself.” David did not act like someone who had Saul in the palm of his hand and is now lording it over him.

Q: What is slightly ironic in David’s point in v.9, “...Why do you listen to the words of men...”?

A: David has just had this struggle with his own men. Just as David’s own self-examination has brought him back to the Lord, so he encourages Saul to do the same, to first seek God’s counsel at the expense of his men’s and even his own.

Q: Summarize David’s case to Saul.

A: Men’s words don’t match my actions.

Q: What are the 3 things according to v.11 that David believes he is being falsely accused of?

A: Evil, rebellion, sin.

Q: What do these roughly correspond to and what kind of portrait do they attempt to paint?

A: Corruption of the heart, mind, and soul. They attempt to portray someone that is not merely “unfriendly” or “argumentative” but completely obsessed in being one’s mortal enemy.

Q: What is David’s example in v.12 and 15?

A: He will allow God to be sovereign over all things. Even though David has been anointed the next king of Israel and everyone sees God working at every turn in David’s life, David will not **ASSUME** to take any action on his own **EVEN** when he’s 100% in the right. Judgment is always in God’s hands to be carried out in His time and way.

Point: David’s example to Saul, Saul’s men, and David’s own men is a far more powerful tool for God’s kingdom than summary execution at what seems to be the opportune time. Have we considered that allowing God to bring all things to finality provides the opportunity for our enemies to repent, to be informed as to spiritual consequences?

[Read 16-19]

Q: What is the result of David’s example?

A: Saul’s repentance and admission of God’s sovereignty to himself and to all that are present who had also misinterpreted God’s Word and the circumstances.

²⁰“Now, behold, I know that you will surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hand. ²¹So now swear to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me and that you will not destroy my name from my father’s household.” ²²David swore to Saul.

And Saul went to his home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

[Read 20-22]

Q: What is similar in Saul’s statement to David’s actions and statements overall in this encounter?

A: Saul acknowledges that God’s will and power are at work not only in the current situation but in the ultimate goal of being replaced by David. Essentially, just as David has been an example to men on both sides that the time and place of David’s ascension to the throne is not now and still yet to come, so Saul is an example of the same to all men present on both sides.

Summary

Q: Ever heard the saying, “If it looks like a duck, and it acts like a duck, and it walks like a duck, and it quacks like a duck, it MUST be a duck?” How does that apply here?

A: Never assume a conclusion based on your own perception without first inquiring of the Lord to allow Him to confirm, “It’s a duck” or not.

Q: What might be more important than “final judgment” or obtaining justice for personal wrongs?

A: The opportunity to provide sinners another chance to turn to God, even if it’s less than satisfactory for ourselves personally.

As mentioned at the outset of this study, although David was anointed by God through Samuel to become the next king, David was not immediately given the throne. He allowed God to control the timing and degree of all circumstances so that David matured from a shepherd boy that had no following, to a mighty man of God that steadily gained the support and recognition of everyone he was to rule:

- Received the Spirit of the Lord
- Gained the favor of the court
- Gained the favor of the people
- Gained the favor of the military
- Gained the favor of Saul’s family
- Proclaimed the Lord to Israel’s enemies
- Proclaimed the Lord to his personal enemies
- A witness for the Lord, not himself
- Comes to power through God’s hand, not his own

Q: How do we accomplish all the great things we’re called in Christ to do?

A: Obey Him personally, let our witness of Him to others be more of a concern than His promises fulfilled in us personally, seek His will regardless of the circumstances, all Him to accomplish everything in His time and way.