

# 1 Samuel Series #11

## “Love Your Enemies” - 1 Sam. 24 & 26

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Pay Back*

1. A little girl return home from school one day with her dressed badly soiled and stained
2. When her mother asked her what happened she held out an apple and said, “Ruthie Jones gave me some apples.”
3. “That’s nice,” her mother said, “but what happened to your dress?”
4. The little girl replied, “Well, I couldn’t catch all the apples Ruthie want to give me, but it’s okay Mom because I caught enough to give some back to her, and her dress is a lot worse than mine.”

#### B. *David’s Story Reveals So Much*

1. Studying the life of David gives us so many great insights into the life of faith
2. David lived his life on a large stage, a grand scale
3. He was a man of intense passions and emotions
4. Seeing how he handled them gives us tremendous insight and encouragement as we seek to walk before the face of God
5. A couple weeks ago we saw how envy & jealousy play such a central part in David’s story
6. Today we’ll be taking a look at that strong desire for pay back, for revenge that so many people have

### II. TEXT

#### A. *Ch. 24*

**{1} Now it happened, when Saul had returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, “Take note! David is in the Wilderness of En Gedi.”**

1. En Gedi overlooks the Dead Sea on the west
2. It is an oasis in the midst of rocky and inaccessible cliffs with numerous caves
3. It would be a perfect hiding place for David and his men

**{2} Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats.**

**{3} So he came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs. (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.)**

4. As Saul and his army of elite troops were combing the area, they could find no trace of David
5. As they were moving through, Saul needed to seek some privacy to attend to his needs
  - a. entered one of the many caves
  - b. what he didn't know was that this cave was much larger than it appeared from the outside
  - c. it went far back; and there in the far recesses of the cave David and his men were hiding
  - d. Saul came in from the blinding light of the Judean desert, unable to see in the utter darkness of the cave
  - e. David and his men were able to see Saul of course because he was framed against the light of the opening of the cave

**{4} Then the men of David said to him, "This is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.' " And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe.**

6. David's men saw this as a perfect chance for David to get rid of his enemy
  - a. to them it was not only a golden opportunity
  - b. it was a divinely appointed one
  - c. they knew God had promised David the throne of Israel
  - d. so they jump to the conclusion that that means Saul needs to be killed
  - e. what better chance would they have than this?
7. David saw things differently
8. He slipped off his sandals so as not to make any noise, and on bare feet moved toward the huddled form of Saul
9. You see, in order for Saul to attend to his needs, he would have to remove the royal robe in which he was arrayed
10. He likely hung it over a rock or laid it on the ground
11. David crept forward and while Saul was distracted, took his knife and cut off a portion of the hem of the royal robe
12. Then, as quietly as before, he crept back to join his men

**{5} Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe.**

**{6} And he said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD."**

**{7} So David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on his way.**

13. I'm sure the men all huddled together to watch as David crept forward toward the lone figure of Saul
14. They waited with excitement to see the deed done
15. Remember, they too were outcasts because of Saul

- a. because they had allied themselves with David, they would be hounded by him
  - b. the removal of Saul and David's placement on the throne would be the end to their hard lives as fugitives, their hardships of living in the wilderness
16. But to their disappointment, David didn't sink his dagger into Saul's back or draw it across his neck
  17. He merely cut a piece of cloth off the robe
  18. When David returned they were all questions and concern
    - a. was David scared? Was he chicken?
    - b. if so, they'd be glad to go forth and slay the king
  19. But David restrains the men
  20. And the emotion of remorse and regret that he shows for merely cutting the robe brings all of them up short
  21. Why, they ask, is David so upset
  22. So David tells them - He realizes that what he has done was shameful because he has defied the honor of the king of Israel
  23. You see, in the ancient world, when a nation was defeated war, the king would be taken captive and paraded before the conquering armies as a trophy
    - a. one of the ways the victors would show their dishonor of the defeated king was by cutting the hem off his royal robe
    - b. the hem of a royal robe was usually very ornate and marked the wearer as royalty
    - c. cutting the hem stripped the king of his dignity
  24. David knew this, and his conscience was troubled as he realized that his act was dishonoring, not only to Saul, but to the office of king in Israel - and so, ultimately, was dishonoring to God

**{8} David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down.**

25. David attempted to compensate for the honor he had taken from Saul by bowing himself in humbleness before him

**{9} And David said to Saul: "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm'?"**

**{10} "Look, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed.'**

**{11} "Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it.**

26. As is true of every person who is in a position of power, there were people who had attached themselves to Saul
  - a. cronies who wanted only to increase their own position
  - b. these guys had been feeding Saul's paranoia
  - c. and telling him all kinds of wild stories of how David was plotting to kill him
27. David refutes their lies and confronts Saul with the stark reality that David meant him no harm
28. Truly, if he did, then Saul would now be lying dead in the cave
29. As proof, David holds up his hand, and in it is the hem of Saul's robe
30. Saul quickly checks the robe and sees a piece missing, and realizes his life had just been forfeit
31. But David didn't kill him - He was innocent of Saul's fear and hatred; there was no conspiracy to take the throne!
32. Now, let's stop right here for a moment
  - a. let's remember that both Saul and David *knew* that Saul had been rejected from being king and that David was the rightful king of Israel
  - b. in fact, in v. 20, Saul *admits* his knowledge that the throne belonged to David
  - c. on the surface, it does seem that God has delivered Saul into David's hand
  - d. why didn't David kill Saul?
  - e. what did David know that his men didn't and that may elude many of us?
  - f. we find out in v. 12 . . .

**{12} "Let the LORD judge between you and me, and let the LORD avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you.**

**{13} "As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.' But my hand shall not be against you.**

33. Very simply, while killing Saul may have been what the wisdom of the world dictates, it would have been an act of evil
34. The world's wisdom says that if you have the opportunity to destroy your enemy, take it
  - a. if someone hurts you, hurt them back
  - b. if they attack, counterattack
  - c. if they insult or abuse you, give them equal payback
35. But David lived by a different principle
  - a. he knew that it was not for him to take Saul's life
  - b. God is the one who sets kings up, and takes kings down
  - c. that is not for man to do
  - d. David was content to wait for God
  - e. he knew that Lev. 19:18 says, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD."
  - d. he also knew the words of God in Deut 32: "Vengeance is MINE, I

will repay,' says the LORD”

36. David was willing to wait for God to make things right in his own time and his own way

**{14} “After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea?”**

**{15} “Therefore let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand.”**

**{16} So it was, when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, “Is this your voice, my son David?” And Saul lifted up his voice and wept.**

**{17} Then he said to David: “You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil.**

**{18} “And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the LORD delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me.**

**{19} “For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely?”**

37. Saul knows the conventional wisdom said that David should have killed him when he had the chance

38. That David hadn't was proof of David's innocence, and more than that, of his love

**Therefore may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day.**

**{20} “And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand.**

### ***B. Ch. 26 - Another Time***

1. We would expect that after this Saul would come to his senses and leave David alone
2. After all, he makes an apparent confession of his sin here and seems to repent
3. But in Ch. 26 we read that it isn't long before Saul is once again at the head of his elite troops out trying to track David down to kill him
4. And this time, while the camp of Saul is asleep at night, David and one of his men sneak past the guards, right into the heart of the camp
5. David made his way to Saul's side as he lay asleep
6. David's lieutenant tried to get David to kill Saul, even offering to do it himself if David was squeamish
7. But David would have none of it
8. This time he took Saul's spear and his water jug and snuck back out of the camp
9. When they were far enough way to avoid being caught, David called out for Saul to arise

10. Then he held up the spear and water jug as proof that once again Saul's life had been in peril from his hand but David spared his life again
11. All because it was never David's desire to harm Saul in any way
12. And once again, as before, Saul admits his sin in pursuing David and declares David righteous in all he has done

### **C. Much To Learn**

1. The desire for revenge is one of the strongest motivations of the human heart
2. And it's one of those things we don't need to learn - it comes naturally
3. Watch small children at play: two kids want one toy, one will take it away from another, the first kid will go over and push him down, and then he will follow suit
4. As kids get older, payback becomes more intense and ingrained
5. If you insult me, expect me to insult you
6. In the immortal words of that great theologian and philosopher, John Belushi, "Don't get mad—Get even!"
7. The Three Stooges are a classic example of people who live by revenge!
8. But God wants to set us free from a life lived in bondage to revenge, from a narrow life that adds up all its accounts with others and makes sure everyone has gotten what they deserve
9. God wants us to entrust our lives completely to Him
  - a. He wants us to let go of our hurts and the injustices that have been done to us
  - b. He wants us to give them to Him and let Him deal with them in His time, His way
  - c. which is always *perfect!*
  - d. like David, He wants us to wait for Him
10. Think friends of how much different things would have been *if* David had killed Saul:
  - a. First: all those marvelous Psalms about waiting on God and trusting in Him to defend His people would never have been written
    - 1) Psalm 57

**{1} Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, Until these calamities have passed by.**

**{2} I will cry out to God Most High, To God who performs all things for me.**

**{3} He shall send from heaven and save me; He reproaches the one who would swallow me up.**

- 2) think of the countless numbers of God's people who have been comforted and counselled to victory in life through these Psalms of David
- 3) what of them if David had taken Saul's life?
- b. Second: David would have been left with a gnawing conscience that he

had taken matters into his own hands and killed Saul when he had no right to

- c. Third: David would have lost the trust and admiration of his men
  - 1) by the loyalty he showed to Saul here, even when Saul was completely unworthy of it,
  - 2) David inspired a fierce loyalty among those men who followed him
- d. all of this and more would have been forfeit if David had taken revenge on Saul

#### **D. Love, Not Revenge**

- 1. As I said earlier, the wisdom of the world demands an swift and immediate payback for the wrongs done us
- 2. It says that if you have an opportunity to destroy your enemy, you take it
- 3. But this is not the way of the Kingdom of God
- 4. In Luke 6 Jesus said,

**{27} “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,**

**{28} “bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.**

**{29} “To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.”**

- 5. In Romans 12, Paul writes . . .

**{19} Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.**

**{20} Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”**

**{21} Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

- a. we do not overcome the evils done to us by paying them back in like kind
- b. the only way to defeat evil is to overcome it with good
- c. you do not dispel the darkness with more dark - you light a lamp
- 5. During the American Revolution there was Baptist pastor named Peter Miller who enjoyed a close friendship with George Washington
  - a. in the town where Pastor Miller lived was an evil man named Michael Wittman who did everything he could to make life difficult for Miller
  - b. he delighted in making fun of and humiliating him
  - c. Miller just quietly bore it over the years
  - d. but after the War, Wittman was arrested for treason and taken to Philadelphia
  - e. when Miller found out, he walked the 70 miles from his hometown to Philadelphia to attend the trial

- f. Wittman thought the pastor was there to testify against him
  - g. but when the guilty verdict was read, Miller stood up and asked his friend, General Washington if Wittman's life could be spared
  - h. Washington said, "I cannot grant you the life of your friends."
  - i. Miller replied, "My Friends! He's the worst enemy I have."
  - j. "What?" Washington cried, "You've walked 70 miles to save the life of an enemy? Well, that puts the matter in a different light. I'll grant your pardon."
  - k. Peter Miller and Michael Wittman returned to their homes, no longer enemies but friends
6. As Paul says in v. 20, when we do good to our enemies, it heaps conviction on them
    - a. the pettiness of their hate is revealed in the light of our love
    - b. and as Christians, what do we want to see flourish,
      - 1) hatred, or love?
      - 2) evil, or good?
      - 3) sorrow, or joy?
  7. Look at Saul's response to both times David showed him love rather than revenge
  8. Saul admitted his error, he confessed his sin, and came to his senses once again
  9. If we would see others won to Christ, we must follow David's lead
  10. It is God's love working in us and through us that will melt the stony, cold hearts of the lost

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. Honecker**

1. During the years when Communism dominated Eastern Europe, Eric Honecker, the Premier of Eastern Germany was one of the world's most ruthless and brutal dictators
2. Uwe Holmer tried 8 separate times to get each of his 8 children into the University of East Berlin
3. But each time, he was rejected by the Minister of Education - who just happened to be Honecker's wife Margot
4. Holmer's children were rejected for one reason and one reason alone - he was a Lutheran pastor and Margot Honecker was a devoted atheist
5. But then Communism was swept away and the Honeckers lost everything
6. They were evicted from their lavish palace, and shunned by everyone
7. Uwe Holmer heard of the Honeckers need and remembered the words of Jesus to love one's enemies and to do good to those who abuse you
8. He invited the Honeckers to stay with him and his family in the parsonage of their church
9. To this day, Pastor Holmer has not reported that the Honeckers have renounced their atheism and confessed faith in Christ
10. But at least they fold their hands and bow their heads when the family prays together

11. This story is not over - it's end is yet to be seen > who knows but that the man who was once so responsible for the destruction of hundreds of churches might find himself worshipping in one!