

King David: How to Respond to Mistreatment (1 Sam. 24;26)

I. ENTRUSTING OURSELVES TO GOD WHEN WE ARE MISTREATED

- A. One important aspect of our spiritual life is how we respond when mistreated or falsely accused. We all will be mistreated many times in our lives. If we respond in the right way, we will grow deeper in God. If we respond in the wrong way, a residue of bitterness will slowly build up in us, causing us to live with a dull spirit.

I want to share a few episodes from David's life, King David, king of Israel. He lived about 3,000 years ago, and his life is recorded in the Old Testament in 1-2 Samuel and of course in a lot of the psalms he wrote. The subject I want to talk about today is how to respond to mistreatment, and that was one of the premiere things that David is known for in the Bible.

I could think of four or five things that David is an outstanding example of, and this would be one of them: how to respond to the Lord in mistreatment. David had a revelation of what happens in the spirit when he responded rightly. What I mean by that is that he committed the issue into God's hands, instead of taking revenge in his own hands. He put it into God's hands. He was invoking the intervention of God into his circumstances to vindicate him and intervene and help him, and David really understood that principle.

Some people read about David and think that, well, he was a nice guy who just backed away a bit passively and let the Lord do what He wanted. It is actually quite different. David was quite aggressive. He just had living understanding of what was happening. He knew that to invoke God's intervention and to put the matter into God's hands was actually an act of spiritual warfare that led to a greater release of the power of God in his circumstances. It was not a passive kind of drawing back, gee whiz, who cares, we will see what happens later. "No," David said, "I get how this works, and I am going to take full advantage of it, and I am going to use it to the optimum measure that I can in my life."

Now the reason we are looking at this subject is that the way we respond to mistreatment is one of the most significant issues of our spiritual life, and it is an issue that we deal with our entire spiritual life. In every season of our life there is somebody who does not like what we are doing, and they verbalize it.

Now most of the mistreatment that people receive is verbal. It is not only verbal, not by any means. There is physical mistreatment, and that is a very severe and very serious issue. There is financial mistreatment. But so much of it is somebody, even a friend or family member, saying words that are hurtful, that are harmful, that are maligning. They give a perspective about you that is not true, and they influence other people to believe in that perspective.

Now if we respond rightly when mistreated, whether it is verbal—verbal is what I am really talking about most right here—where an adversary, somebody intentionally wanting to malign you—that is their point—they are intentionally wanting to block your goals and to stand in the way so you cannot go forward in the vision that you believe the Lord has put in your heart—that is what I mean by an adversary.

An adversary can often be a family member or friend; they are people with whom you have been in the workplace or you have been in ministry context with them. An enemy—the Bible calls them enemies—but they are not just somebody with horns on, who lives in a remote place and who rises up suddenly to attack you with demonic rage. No, an enemy from the biblical point of view many times is talking about an adversary. Often they are close to you relationally and in proximity, and they are intentionally troubled by what you are doing or annoyed by what you are doing. They put you down, and they say things in the way to undermine you.

Now if we respond to this in a right way, we grow deeper in God. One dimension of growing deeper in God is that God intervenes more in our circumstances if we respond rightly. I want to say that again: if we respond rightly, God actually intervenes more. Now He is going to intervene anyway, but He will intervene more. It is a biblical principle that if we respond in the right way, if we do our part in the relationship, He says, “I will do more because it is a relational principle.”

The Lord says, “I want you involved with Me, even in these issues, and I want you responding to Me in the way that is according to who I am, with love, humility and kindness.” Now if we respond in a wrong way, there is a residue of bitterness that slowly grows in our heart.

I believe that many believers have a residue of bitterness. What I mean by residue, it is just a small measure, but it is there, lingering. It bothers their emotions, and it stirs up their anger and kind of awakens pain, just at a surprising moments—pain in unexpected moments.

Most of us assume we do not have bitterness because we typically think of bitterness as something we have when it is at a big measure, when it is chronic, when it is deadly, but often there is a residue of bitterness in a believer’s life. The Lord has shown me that in my life at key times, and I was always surprised because I thought, “I teach against bitterness. I am against bitterness. I am really against that!” But a few times He has shown me that I have got a residue of it in my heart. So occasionally I ask Him to show me if I do, because it creates a dull spirit in our life. It creates a dull heart. It gets in the way of our relationship with the Lord.

Responding wrongly also leads to lost opportunities where God would have intervened. God will intervene less if we respond wrongly. If we take matters in our hands instead of putting them in His hands, He says, “Okay, whosever hands that it is in, that is the one responsible. You want it in your hands? You fix it. You put it in My hands, and you take your hands off, and I will fix it.”

I like to say, “Hey, let’s both do it. I want it in my hands, but You put Your hand on my hand.”

He says, “No, you take it yourself. Or, you release it to My hands, and I will solve this problem of the attack against your reputation, the attack against your position, somebody who seems to be blocking the will of God in your life in the short-term.”

- B. ***Foundational principle:*** Believers no longer have the primary ownership of their lives, because Jesus bought them and owns them (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Therefore, for any who diligently seek to obey His leadership, He takes responsibility to intervene when they are mistreated in ways that affect their reputation, honor, money, possessions, or position of influence and impact, etc.

¹⁹You are not your own...²⁰For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

Now the foundational principle of this whole spiritual reality is Jesus’ ownership over our life. When we see and engage in Jesus’ ownership over our life, it has very practical implications in our everyday life. Paul gives this principle, and I will give the implications in a moment. He says in 1 Corinthians 6:19, “You are not your own.” He says, “You do not belong to yourself; you belong to someone else.” Verse 20, “For you are bought”—you are paid for entirely, completely purchased out of your slavery and out of your darkness and out of your sin, you have been purchased fully owned by another—“Therefore glorify God in your body and glorify God in your spirit or in your inward life because they both belong to God.” They do not belong to you anymore; they belong to God.

This is a revelation that David had, and we need this insight to touch us and grow in us. Now we know Jesus owns us in one sense, but there is a time in our lives when this becomes a very real thing in our life, and it grows over time as well.

*This reality that He owns us is an exhortation for us to obey Him because He owns us. He has the right to direct us. He owns us—that is an exhortation to obey, **but it is also God’s promise to intervene**. He is saying, “Because I own you, I am responsible to intervene on your behalf. You are My property.” So somebody hurts your reputation, and you have put it into God’s hands, and He says, “I am now responsible to fix that injury against your reputation.” Somebody steals your money, or they somehow manipulate your money, but you have given it to the Lord in reality. The Lord says, “That is My money, and it is My responsibility to get it back.”*

The Lord promises to restore everything that is stolen from us. He does it, of course, in His way and His time. His time is not our time, and His way is not our way, but He does it. So what is happening here is that for anybody who will diligently seek to diligently obey the Lord, Jesus takes responsibility to intervene in circumstances for which they have been mistreated or maligned because they have been obedient to Him.

These are situations as I have written here: our reputation, our honor, our money, and our possessions. We yield those to Him, and we transfer to Him our right to them. We transfer it to Him, and the responsibility goes to Him as well. He really does answer. Again all the answer does not always come in the way or the timing we want, but ultimately He does.

Much of the answer actually comes in the age to come. You may say, “Oh, come on!” Well, you might only say that if you do not know how real the age to come is. When that day comes in your life, you will think, “Oh my goodness, there is so much being restored and recovered. I really thought that was gone forever.”

The Lord says, “I promised you I would do it. I own you. I am responsible for the whole thing.” Now of course the Lord restores some of it in this age as well.

- C. King David is a premier example of how to respond rightly to God in mistreatment and adversity. In Psalm 31, we see how David interacted with the Lord when he was being severely mistreated. By trusting God to intervene, and by refusing to retaliate, he brought God into the conflict. This was partly how David engaged in spiritual warfare in personal conflicts.

⁵Into Your hand I commit my spirit...¹⁵My times are in Your hand. (Ps. 31:5, 15)

*David is one of the premiere examples in the Old Testament of how to respond to God when we are mistreated. He is called **the man after God’s own heart** because he responded in a way that pleased God. One of the major passages about this is Psalm 31, where we see the inner workings of David’s dialogue with the Lord. In context it is about a time when he was being mistreated. We see how he acted. He is the man after God’s own heart, so we want to imitate the way he acts because we want the kind of heart David has, and we want the intervention of God in our life in the way David had.*

Look at Psalm 31:5. David said, “Into Your hand I commit my spirit.” Then he went on in verse 15, “My times are in Your hand.” These are two key statements from Psalm 31, and I recommend reading Psalm 31 when you are being challenged by somebody mistreating you. Particularly verbally, but it could be physical, financial, or other ways as well. Now when David committed the mistreatment into God’s hands, he was actually bringing God into the circumstance. He was inviting the Lord’s activity in a way that would not have happened if David kept matters in his own hands.

What does it mean, “Into Your hands I commit my spirit”? Well, when he said, “I commit my spirit,” he means more than “when I die my spirit will be with you.” He means more than that. Just as he is saying, “You are my ultimate place I go when I die,” he is also saying, “everything that is dear to me, that is deeply important”—that is what is embodied by the word or included by the word spirit. I commit my spirit—“the things that are dearest to me I commit to You, Father.”

For David to commit them to Him in the context of being mistreated means “I am entrusting the outcome to You, that You will intervene in the circumstances. I am trusting You. I commit it to you. It is not in my hands. I take my hands off.”

Again, I would like my hands to stay on it and have God’s hands to help me. He says, “No, it is one or the other; either it is your hands or My hands, but the one whose hands are carrying it is the one responsible to answer.”

Not only did David commit the outcome into God’s hands in verse 5, he committed the timing of the answer into God’s hands in verse 15. He says, “My times”—the season in which You answer and break in and change the circumstance. Instead of the word “times,” you could put the phrase “the seasons of my life”—the season in which the breakthrough in this situation comes is in Your hands as well.

Now when David did this, Saul was the jealous king mistreating him. All the time through 1 Samuel, we find the older King Saul who is in his sixties and the younger David who is in his twenties. The young, emerging leader David is being mistreated severely by an older king. Saul is an angry king. He is a jealous king. He is very jealous of David and very angry. He has a lot of unsettled issues in his life, and he has the resource of the army of Israel behind him. He can use the national resources to go attack David. Trying to kill David is what he was trying to do.

When David committed the problem into God’s hands, he was invoking God’s activity. That was actually an act of spiritual warfare. It was not just an act of devotion. “I love You God; therefore I am going to trust You.” He did say that. It was an act of devotion, but it was also an act of spiritual warfare. “I am invoking Your activity”—verse 15—“in the season that You see best.” Again, some of those seasons are in this age, and some of those seasons are in the age to come, and some are a little bit of both.

- D. When David “committed his spirit” into God’s hands, he was committing to God everything that deeply touched his spirit—his reputation, money, possessions, position, and impact, etc. He was **entrusting the outcome** of the most important issues in his life to God’s leadership. To commit “our times” to God is to **trust His timing** in answering us.
- E. When we commit ourselves into God’s hands in times of mistreatment, we make a transaction with God to trust Him to intervene and establish **His will** in our lives, in **His way** and in **His timing**. This involves **transferring our personal rights** into His hands and, thus, transferring responsibility to Him. For example, because all our money has been committed to Him, if someone steals it, they are stealing from Him. He is responsible to intervene to get the money back in His time and His way.

Here is a summary of what I have been saying: when we commit ourselves into God’s hands like David did, we are making an intentional transaction with our heart with God. Here is the transaction—that God, I trust You will intervene to establish Your will in Your way in Your time. I trust You will intervene when I am mistreated; that is the transaction that is being made.

The Lord says, “Yes, I will do it, I will intervene, but again you have to let go. It has got to be out of your hands. You cannot hold on to it **and** ask Me to take it in My hands. It is one or the other.”

This is not a statement about David’s leadership style. Meaning, some people read this and think David had a passive leadership style. No, David was an entrepreneurial leader. David took initiative in the vision of God in his life. He took risks, and he put time and energy into it. This is not about being passive in serving God. This is not about being passive in our vision to do the will of God. This is about specifically, when you are mistreated by somebody accusing you, you not answering the accuser by accusing them back. That is the context.

Here’s the reason that is important to understand. Some young people have read this and said, “I want to be like David, so I am going to sit on the back row of the church, and when somebody taps me on the shoulder and says to serve, then I will serve.”

I said, “No, this is not about a passive spiritual life. It is about drawing back and not retaliating when somebody slanders you.”

They said, “Oh.”

I said, “Do not sit on the back row.” Well, it is okay if you are in the back row; praise God for the back row. It is not about that. That is not what David is doing. He is talking particularly in relationship to being mistreated. That is important to understand that so you do not misapply the principle.

- F. The Lord will provide for and/or vindicate His people in His time and way. We entrust our future and the mistreatment to God by trusting His leadership to answer in His way and in His timing.
- G. By trusting God to intervene in our conflicts, by refusing to retaliate, and committing to do good to our enemies, we bring God and His activity into the situation.

¹⁹Do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to [God’s] wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord...²⁰if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink...²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12:19-21)

Paul the apostle picked up this same principle in Romans 12. He says in verse 19, “Do not avenge yourself.” Do not do the payback; do not pay the enemy back yourself. Let God pay back the person attacking you. Do not pay them back yourself. Then Paul goes on to say, “But rather give place to the wrath of God.” Now that is an interesting concept: give place to God—give room for God to intervene.

Somebody might say, “You mean God does not know how to intervene until I give Him room? What do you mean give Him place, give Him room?”

The Lord could answer and say, “No. I **hold back** until you call Me into the situation by trusting My leadership in it and taking your hands off it.” That is a relational principle that God established in His kingdom. It is not because God cannot intervene without our permission, He says, “I am going to draw back until you engage with Me relationally, trust My leadership, put the issue in My hands, take your hands off, then you have made way for Me to intervene.”

Again we are talking about somebody slandering you. We are not talking about a passive approach to your spiritual life or your leadership style or your service or those kinds of things. Paul goes on to say, “For it is written, ‘vengeance is Mine and I will repay.’” Now that is a pretty strong statement, “vengeance is Mine”—the payback is Mine—I will repay.

Paul is quoting this from Deuteronomy 32:35. God spoke this verse to Moses in Deuteronomy 32. When He gave it to Moses, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” it was about national security in context of Deuteronomy 32. God was saying, “I will intervene against the nations trying to eliminate you and exterminate you.” That is the context. Paul obviously understands that far more intense national context, but he applies it here to personal relationships even within the Body of Christ. He is saying that the principle is true, though the measure of it is far smaller and personal.

So we do not think of vengeance against a friend or family member. We don’t think of God’s vengeance on them. What we think of is God bringing the issue to resolution and Him silencing the attack. That is how we apply this in a domestic way at a far lower level.

This is actually a verse that is an act of spiritual warfare by declaring it, in the sense of that, in the realm of the spirit, it invokes God’s activity to silence the adversary against you. He says, “I will repay.” He promises, “I will repay.” Now there are two dimensions to this. God will repay the adversary by silencing them. Again we are talking about a domestic situation. We are not talking about the national security; that is not how we are applying it, where God kills them. It is not that you have somebody bother you, and so God kills them. No, that is not what we are talking about at all.

He says, “I will repay. I will silence the issue in My timing.”

Sometimes I say, “Lord, would You hurry up Your timing?”

He says, “No, My timing is perfect. I want you to trust My timing.”

The repayment also has a secondary dimension. He repays the believer who is trusting Him, which means He restores things back to that believer. So when God says, “I will repay,” He means, “I will silence the adversary,” and He means, “I will restore the thing that is stolen or damaged or hurt in the life of the believer who is trusting Me.”

Well, it goes beyond just refusing to retaliate, which is what verse 19 says. Do not retaliate. Do not pay them back. Draw back, do not pay them back, and let God do the payback. Paul says, in effect, “Yeah, but that is not the whole story; that is only half.” In verse 20 he goes on, “Let’s go to the proactive side. If your enemy is hungry, feed him.” The guy slandering you, buy him lunch and give him a little extra—buy lunch for his family.

We think, “Like, buy them lunch? What are you talking about?”

Paul says that only refusing to retaliate, only being quiet and not answering back is good, but that is only halfway there. Buy them lunch, help him out, or look for a way to help him.

You think, “Oh my goodness!” Because what happens often is a believer is pretty proud of himself, not in a horrible sense, but thinking, “Hey! The guy is slandering me, and I am saying nothing. When somebody else says how bad he is, I do not say a word. My eyebrows go up. I hint a little bit, but I do not say a word. Legally I said nothing, I went, ‘Hum.’ I did that, but I didn’t say anything.”

Paul says basically, “Okay, yeah, that is good for a start.”

“Well, everybody else is slandering back, so I could too, but I did not say a word.”

Paul says, “You are halfway there, halfway there.”

The exhortation is not just to avoid not answering back. In verse 20, he says to do good, to look for an opportunity to do good for them. Like, “You’re kidding?” Here is the point. The very mindset that looks for the opportunity shifts the whole internal conversation in our heart with God. It shifts the whole internal way we

carry our heart. Just the very searching for a way to bless them will shift our heart. I have done it over the years, certainly not every time and not enough. I do not mean I have actually bought lunch for a lot of enemies. I have done it a few times, but I have searched for a way to “buy them lunch.” The searching of it will change your mindset.

I am saying, “Lord, come on, really?”

“Yes, I want you to do that.”

“Okay, how can I be a blessing?” I do not even want to ask the question. But just keep asking the question, and it will change you. It will shift things on the inside of you.

Then Paul gives the principle here in verse 21. He says, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Beloved, verse 21 is so important! You want to underline or circle that one. Put some arrows pointing to it saying, “Read this!”

He sums the whole thing up right there. He says, “Do not be overcome by evil.” Now, how are we overcome by evil? Here is how. Somebody is maligning you with their words. We will just talk verbal mistreatment right now, because again we could apply it to all the different ways you could be mistreated. Someone is verbally maligning you intentionally. They want to undermine you. You hear it. Paul says, “If you undermine them back, and you answer accusation with accusation, they have overcome you with the spirit of accusation. You have yielded to the spirit of accusation. You are overcome by the evil that attacked you. It has gotten on the inside of your heart.” You fake accusation. You think payback. You talk payback, and it has dominated your life in a certain way. Paul says, “Now you are overcome in just that one area.”

It does not mean you are now going to be addicted to every sin as a reprobate. No, you are overcome by the evil that was attacking you—the fact they were attacking your reputation, and they slandered you, so you had to answer back.

Paul is saying, in effect, “Do not do that! Your heart is too precious to let it go that direction.” So he said, “Go the other way. Overcome evil with good.” That urge to slander back, that urge to pay them back is overcome when we do good, when we do verse 20, when we buy them lunch; when they are thirsty, and we give them water. In doing good, it counteracts that tendency of evil, of slander, that temptation to slander rising up in us. Paul says, “It will not go away on its own. It will go away by you actively doing good.”

So he says in verse 20, you need to do the proactive good. It is not enough just to be silent when they speak bad things. You have to act in the opposite spirit or that temptation to respond badly will stay in you. So go in the opposite spirit.

Now this is not just a principle that we do with strangers who are enemies, who we do not really know. Some people think of an enemy as the guy with horns on, who is demonized, and he is the enemy. No, the enemies, many of our enemies are in our family. They are in our friendship circle. They are in the workplace. You have been in ministry with them over the years, and they turn on you. Something happens, they get offended, and they begin to malign you.

So I would like to use the word **adversary** again instead of the word **enemy** because we can understand the word **adversary**. Paul wants us to be free from yielding to that, and not just to anybody out there. A lot of times this is the way we are to operate in our marriage. A lot of folks think, “Outside the home, I am going to really do this. I mean in the marketplace, in the church world, in the neighborhood, I am really going to do this.” When it comes to their marriage if the wife slanders or accuses the husband, or vice versa. She comes in, he says, “How come you always...?”

She responds, “Yeah, but you always...” and, though they will practice the kingdom principle outside the home because they are sincere, inside the home they do not do it. Beloved, **this passage has its greatest application in your family and your closest friends**, really it does. I want to overcome, and Paul is saying, “You can overcome the temptation and the negative feelings, not in a vacuum, but by doing good.”

H. Jesus entrusted Himself to the Father to be vindicated in the right way and in the right timing.

⁴⁶**He said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” (Lk. 23:46)**

²³**While being reviled, He [Jesus] did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. (1 Pet. 2:23; NASB)**

Let’s look at 1 Peter 2:23. Peter said that when Jesus was reviled, when He was slandered—you could put the word slander in there—He did not slander in return. When Jesus suffered, when the Pharisees were causing Him suffering, He did not threaten the Pharisees or the Romans, but He did something inside of His heart with God. Peter is saying that this is the point. This is what David exemplified. Jesus committed Himself to the Father—1 Peter 2:23—who judges righteously.

Now what does it mean that, “He committed Himself to God the Father to judge righteously?” To judge means to intervene. Jesus said, in effect, “They are slandering Me...they are causing Me physical suffering. I am not going to answer them with My own hand. I have committed My cause into God’s hands. I have committed My spirit to God. God, You will judge Me. You will intervene.” That is what judge in this context means. “You will intervene righteously, at the right time, the right place, and I trust You. Therefore I am not going to intervene to make right the wrong thing that is being done against Me. I am going to wait. You are going to intervene for Me.” That is what is going on there.

So Peter is exhorting us to operate in the same spirit or attitude as Jesus. That when we are slandered, we ask God to answer **when** God determines to answer. Now look at the verse there, Luke 23:46, where Jesus said on the cross, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” Jesus is actually quoting Psalm 31. He is quoting David. The greater David, Jesus, is quoting the lesser David! Jesus is quoting Psalm 31! That is an act of spiritual warfare, not just an act of devotion; it is both.

When Jesus said, “I commit My spirit into Your hands,” He was saying more than “when I die, I am going to Your presence.” He was saying that for sure, but He was saying more. He was saying, “All of My promises—My earthly promises as Messiah—I am committing the whole of it to Your hands. Yes, I am going to You when I die, I commit My spirit to You, but everything You ever promised Me, Father, in My earthly experience for the earth, that every knee would bow, every tongue would confess I am King of kings, I put that whole thing into Your hands. I am willing to go to the death, and I am willing for You to answer it in Your time”—which is in the millennial kingdom in fullness.” Of course it is happening in part now, but it happens in an open display for all the nations at that time.

II. DAVID AND SAUL AT THE WILDERNESS OF EN GEDI (1 SAM. 24)

A. David found King Saul sleeping in a cave and refused to harm him (1 Sam. 24)

²**“Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David...”³So he came to...a cave...David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave. (1 Sam. 24:2-3)**

Let's look just for a moment at two different episodes in David's life. They have the same lesson, but both stories are so interesting; it is making the same point twice. David's life graphically illustrates this truth of submitting the problem into God's hands over and over and over. God gave David many opportunities to do this.

We will start in 1 Samuel 24:2. The angry king Saul is in his sixties. David is in his twenties; he is a young emerging leader. Saul took 3,000 chosen men—we are talking about the Green Berets, the best soldiers in the land—and he went to seek after David. He meant to kill David, not take 3,000 men to negotiate with David. To kill him, that was the point. Saul is using all the resource of the government to kill one man.

Now some people—I say this tongue-in-cheek, I am not really being mean about this but—some people say, “Boy, I am like a David. I mean they are coming after me.”

I say, “Well, not really like David, only a little bit. David had 3,000 men after him. You have 3,000 blogs. It is not the same. The truth is you have only three blogs slandering you, to be truthful, and the real truth is nobody is reading them anyway. I know you kind of feel like David, but it is not exactly the same thing.”

I mean, could you imagine being a young man in your twenties and having 3,000 trained soldiers pursuing you to kill you? He is running from cave to cave, for about six or seven years. It goes on and on and on. I mean, to David, it seemed like it was never going to stop. I am guessing it was about a six- or seven-year period, possibly eight years.

On one of these occasions—again David is in his twenties during this time—Saul comes to a cave. It says in the text that Saul goes to the cave to attend to his needs. The most interesting thing is that by the providence of God—God arranged it ahead of time—David is hiding in the cave that Saul goes to. David does not know this is going to happen. This is going to be a test to see if David would take matters back into his own hands or leave them in God's hands.

So it says that Saul goes into the cave. He takes off his kingly robe, he lays it down, and it says he attends to his needs—you can read between the lines. David and just a few of his men are in the back of the cave. They have swords. They have weapons. Saul does not have his bodyguard with him. He is in the cave, and he does not have any weapons in his hand. He has put his robe down. He put his robe over there, and David is right by the robe. David's men whisper, “We can kill him. Look, he is totally vulnerable. There is nobody to protect him. He does not have a weapon in his hand. We are behind him, and he does not know we are here. Let's kill him. This is the day; this is the hour.”

B. David stopped his men from harming King Saul.

⁴The men of David said, “This is the day of which the LORD said to you, ‘Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand...’”⁶He said to his men, “The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to...the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him...”⁷David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. (1 Sam. 24:4-7)

Look what verse 4 says. The men of David—he has probably got a small group in the cave with him—they cannot believe it. I mean can you imagine it? They are in the cave, just talking and hiding. They do not even know what is about to happen. Here this big man—the scripture says he was the head and shoulders taller than others—comes walking into the cave. They can see the entrance of the cave, and this huge giant of a man approaches. It is Saul, unbelievable! Of all the caves in Israel, he walks into ours! He does not know we are here.

He takes his robe off, puts his weapons down, and there he is, totally vulnerable and exposed. The men said, “This is the day the Lord said to you, ‘I will deliver your enemy to your hands.’” Now there was a well-known prophecy that probably David had quoted to them. They heard David quote it, I am assuming, or possibly a prophecy that the prophet Samuel gave. That is just conjecture. It is something established to them, these three or four guys, five or ten guys.

David, the prophecy! Here it is right in front of you. I tell you the question before David now is, how is David going to apply that prophecy? David has committed Saul into God’s hands, but God has now put him into David’s hands to see what David would do with him. So Saul has been delivered into David’s hands, and David being the man that he is, delivers him back over to God’s hands.

David’s men said, “Oh, come on, David! This is the answer.” They totally misapplied the prophecy.

Beloved, when somebody attacks you or somebody puts you down, there is always a group of people who will find Bible verses and prophecies to give you a cause to attack. Over the years, I have always had well-meaning friends, a few of them here and there. “Hey, how about this verse? How about that verse? I mean God cannot be glorified in what they are doing to you.” There is always somebody who can help you turn and twist the concept so you feel bolstered to attack, but that is not the spirit of the kingdom. It just is not the spirit of the kingdom.

So David says in verse 6-7, “No.” He stops the men. He states, “We are not going to do it, absolutely not.” In verse 7, he restrained them. In essence, David was saying, “No, I have committed this man into God’s hands. I am not answering him myself.” David really believed this truth. This was not a casual truth that David thought about occasionally. He was deeply invested in this truth because it was an act of devotion. Remember it was also an act of spiritual warfare. He knew how God’s activity would increase in his life if he responded in a certain way.

C. David committed his cause into God’s hands.

⁸David arose afterward... called out to Saul, saying...¹⁰“This day your eyes have seen that the LORD delivered you today into my hand in the cave... I said, ‘I will not stretch out my hand against my lord’...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...¹⁵Let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand.” (1 Sam. 24:8-15)

So verse 8, after Saul is finished, he leaves the cave, goes down in the valley, and this is how I am picturing it. David is on the mountain. Here is a little valley. David, in verse 8, shouts, “Saul!” In verse 10, he says, “This very day the Lord delivered you into my hand in the cave...” David knew the prophecy, but he was applying it differently than his team did. He had a very different application than his team had.

He says, “...but I did not stretch out my hand against you.” David knew it was a test. Sometimes God will allow you to be in the position to triumph, and He is saying, “I put you where you could strike with your hands. Are you going to let Me do it or are you going to do it?”

Again we are talking about slander, reviling. We are not talking about somebody breaking in to your house, who is going to harm your family physically, and you quote Bible verses at them. Theologically speaking, you can shoot somebody breaking into your house wanting to kill your family. Theologically, that is permissible to do.

So this is not a theology of how to handle somebody who is about to kill your family or something like that. Some people confuse the passages. This is about being maligned and mistreated in your pursuit of the will of God in your life. There is more to David's story, so I do not want to give all of the qualifiers here.

David says one of the most powerful statements in verse 12. He says, "Saul, look."

Saul is looking up, and he is saying, "What do you mean 'in the cave?'"

"Yeah, I was in the cave."

"What cave?"

David says, "Well, look at the bottom of your robe."

Saul looks down at his kingly, royal robes, and there is a little piece cut off.

*Remember Saul took his robe off to attend to his needs, and David cut the robe. He says, "Saul, I have the corner of your robe. I was in **that** cave."*

Saul thinks, "Oh my goodness!"

David says—and here is the act of devotion to God and again the act of warfare, where the warfare is spiritual, not physical; there is nothing physical about this warfare—he says, "Let the Lord judge between you and me. Let the Lord avenge me on you. My hand will not be against you. Let the Lord judge. Let Him see and plead my case. Let Him deliver me out of your hands." Now when David says, "Let the Lord judge," he means, "Let Him decide, let Him intervene." One translation says, "Let the Lord decide." David says, "It is out of my hands. I have committed you into God's hands."

III. DAVID AND SAUL AT THE WILDERNESS OF ZIPH (1 SAM. 26)

A. Saul continued to seek to kill David and to pursue him with 3,000 soldiers.

²Saul...went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David...⁷There Saul lay sleeping within the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head...⁸Abishai said to David, "God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear." (1 Sam. 26:2-8)

Let's look at the second episode even more briefly because it is a similar story told in a different episode with the same lesson. Some months have passed by, and now we are in 1 Samuel 26:2. Saul went down to the Wilderness of Ziph. He has the same 3,000 men, and they are still trying to kill David. This time, instead of being in a cave, verse 7, Saul is sleeping down in the camp, the king's camp with 3,000 men, with bodyguards and watchmen. I mean everything is in place.

We find out later in verse 12 that God caused a deep sleep from the Lord to come on all 3,000 of the men. Saul falls asleep, his bodyguards fall asleep, all the guards of the camp fall asleep, and everybody falls asleep. Those 3,000 men are all just snoring, and the Lord makes it clear to David somehow that this is a sleep from the Lord.

So David gets one of his teammates, Abishai, here in verse 8, and says to him, "Hey, come along with me." If you read the whole story, David asked two guys, "Hey, who wants to go with me?"

Abishai says, "I will go with you." He is one of David's closest companions. So in verse 8, Abishai says, "David, this is a sleep from God. Come on! wake up! Okay, I was wrong back in the cave. It was good that you

let Saul go, but now God is vindicating you. Look, God put them to sleep. Why did God put them to sleep? So God could wake them up? David, this is for us to kill him. Come on, let me do it.”

Verse 8, “He has delivered your enemy into your hand.” There he is rationalizing again. And in verse 8 he adds the word **please**. He is saying, “David, I know you are a nice guy, but this is affecting our family, our children. We are all being hassled because you are hassled. Answer for us. Come on, get with it!”

B. David refused to harm Saul. God caused a deep sleep to come on Saul to test David’s heart.

⁹David said to Abishai, “Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD’s anointed, and be guiltless?”¹⁰David said, “...the LORD shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish”...¹²They got away...for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen on them [Saul’s camp]. (1 Sam. 26:9-12)

In verse 9 and 10, David says back to him, “The Lord will strike him. I will not.” For, verse 12, they had all fallen asleep from the Lord.

C. David committed his cause into God’s hands again (1 Sam. 26:24). Several years later, Saul died in battle by the hand of the Lord (1 Sam. 31; 1 Chr. 10:13-14).

¹³David...stood on the top of a hill afar off...¹⁸He said, “Why does my lord [Saul] thus pursue his servant?...²³May the LORD repay every man...for the LORD delivered you into my hand today, but I would not stretch out my hand against the LORD’s anointed...²⁴...let my life be valued much in the eyes of the LORD, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation.” (1 Sam. 26:13-24)

So verse 23 David says that same principle, “May the Lord break in and repay. May the Lord do this for you.”

The story goes on, and David again did not answer. His team took the prophecies, and they misapplied them, because God wanted David to have ample opportunity to excel in this spiritual truth. Because the Lord’s logic is: David, you are going to be the king over Israel, I need a king who sees Me as his Lord and his source. I want a king who operates in the same spirit in which My kingdom operates. So He gave David ample opportunity to exercise this reality and to prove this principle so that David would excel in it.

God may give you opportunities or allow the opportunity for you to answer your enemy, but beloved, it is a test to give you opportunity to excel. God has called many of you to be leaders, and He wants leaders who bring blessing to the Body of Christ. Not those who are petty about their emotions, and get offended and get defensive, and they say, “How dare they say that?” and “Well, I will do this.”

The Lord would say, “No, you are part of the eternal kingdom. You are related to the King of kings. You are operating in a different spirit. What are you doing?” Many of you have a call of leadership, and He wants you to excel in this, so He gives you opportunity time and time again to operate in this.

Well, just in conclusion, the last moment or two here, 1 Samuel is about David in his twenties, about ages twenty to thirty. 2 Samuel is David over the age of thirty, from age thirty to age seventy. So 1 Samuel, David is in his twenties, and the angry king against him is in his sixties. In 2 Samuel, it is reversed. Now **he** is in his sixties, and there is a young leader rising up. It is Absalom, his own son, who is now in his twenties, who is an ambitious young leader with a rebellious spirit.

So when David was in his twenties, he had an old angry king who was, by the way, his father-in-law, a family member. Then when David was in his sixties, he faces the same spirit of Saul, but in a young ambitious man who is his own child, his own son. In both situations David acted like David, and he does it a number of other times throughout this because he excelled in this reality of giving the cause to God, invoking God's presence in the situation, trusting God's timing and not operating in a spirit that is contrary to the kingdom of God.

*Now there is a book I want to recommend that is called **The Tale of Three Kings** by Gene Edwards. How many of you have read **The Tale of Three Kings**? Keep your hand up high, high, really high. I want everyone to be jealous of you, okay? Just for a half of second. No, not really. A bunch of you have read it. It was written in about 1980. I was about twenty-five years old. I remember, hot off the press, somebody sent it to me. I thought, "What is this?"*

The three kings are King David, King Saul, King Absalom, and the story is only about fifty pages. I highly recommend it. I read it over and over in my twenties; in those first five or ten years, I read it over and over and over. Every year or two I will just read it again, as it is only about fifty pages. It is quite interesting, fast, fun reading actually. David in his twenties before an older king trusts God and yields to God. David, as the older king being attacked by a younger king, operates the same way every single time because the Lord is saying, "I am raising up leaders in My Body who excel in this reality." Amen and amen.