

Session 17 David Tested with the Power of Revenge

INTRODUCTION

This is Session 17, talking about David being tested with the power of revenge. This is one of the most powerful tests that God ever gives a believer, and He only gives that test a few times in a lifetime, though I believe everyone as a rule has an opportunity to be in a position where they can release and manifest the revenge that's in their heart to some degree. They get at least little measures of this. There is a very graphic display of this opportunity in David's life on two occasions: 1 Samuel 24, which we will cover tonight. Then again in 1 Samuel 26. We will skip 1 Samuel 25 and go right to 1 Samuel 26. It happens twice in a row at this very critical time.

David had a divine appointment. This divine appointment is very different than any other divine appointment he had, because in these two appointments he was in the position to do evil and to get away with it in the arena of man. Yet what he would do with these two opportunities would manifest and reveal where his source was in a different manner than all the other types of testings. David, again, has the unique position in the Word of God. He has more danger, more divine interventions, literally more than anyone in Scriptures besides the Lord Jesus Himself. He has more dangerous situations, and they're so diverse. He has every manner of testing; every conceivable mood, from the depths of depression to the heights of utter ecstasy and joy in the presence of the Lord, and the Lord has given David to us as an example of a weak man in every single possible opportunity of life. This is one of the stranger ones.

EACH ONE OF US AT SOME APPOINTMENT HAS A DIVINE APPOINTMENT WITH REVENGE

Again, though I'm sure there are exceptions, I'm sure that everyone doesn't do this, but as a rule, most of us on one or two occasions in our life, are brought through divinely-orchestrated events to a position where we have the power to act out vengeance or revenge. The problem is that so often we don't know that it's a divine appointment. It's a test determining our future. We think of it as, "Finally, pay day has come!"

The Lord says, "No, it's still seminary; this is yet one more test." It's very essential that we operate in these tests in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. Let's jump right into it.

THE SUDDEN REVERSAL OF FAVOR IN SAUL'S BLOODY PURSUIT

1 Samuel 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.'" Now David had just been following the Philistines, because you remember in 1 Samuel 23 from our last session that David was trapped and surrounded by Saul. He had been betrayed at Keilah and betrayed at the wilderness of Ziph by the inhabitants of those two areas. Saul now has 3,000 soldiers surrounding David. The Philistines break out in war against Israel and Saul has to retreat in order to protect some of the territory that was obviously dear to him. Obviously Saul didn't always care when the Philistines attacked, but in this occasion he did so he had to back away. He had to let David go free. 1 Samuel 24 is exactly the opposite of 1 Samuel 23. In 1 Samuel 23, Saul is surrounding David; in 1 Samuel 24, David is surrounding Saul. In a moment's time, in a very, very short span of time, the tables have turned 180 degrees. I've been around the kingdom enough to see that happen on a number of occasions. I've had the opportunity to watch tremendous arenas of conflict, and even sometimes in a short period of time it's exactly the opposite, and the person in the "position of power" is in the exact opposite place than they were previously. The Lord has those sudden turns of events. Then again, it's important to understand that these are divine tests. It

was never the will of God that David would act these things out as though he had the authority. Rather, under this particular opportunity he needed to submit himself to God. It was unique temptation. Rather than an abundance of money or an abundance of honor or favor, he was in a position of abundance of power to remove his adversaries. It's a temptation of a different flavor.

SAUL WINDS UP SLEEPING IN THE CAVE WHERE DAVID HIDES

So David is so in the wilderness of Engedi. "Saul took 3,000 chosen men from all Israel" (1 Sam. 24:2). This was the standard group. The specially assigned assassins had one object. They could be relieved from the duties of war; they had one specific mandate, to kill David. David now had 600 men that had gathered to him, so it's 3000 verses 600, but David's men were not really loyal at this point, so it could have been 3,000 to 1 at any given time. "Saul took 3,000 chosen men of Israel and went to go seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats. He came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there was a cave, and Saul went into it to attend to his needs" (1 Sam.24:2-3). Saul actually went and slept in that cave when it was all said and done. David was hiding in that cave, unbeknownst to him, in the caves of Engedi. In southern Israel some of the caves are very vast and hundreds of people could be resident in those caves. So David is back deep in that cave; it was not at the entrance. Saul comes and ends up sleeping in that very cave in which David is hiding. I mean, what are the chances of that? This is the one place that Saul had been assured by the reports of his scouts was safe. He ascertained the whole situation. "This is the one safe place." I tell you, when the Lord is ruling, reigning, and orchestrating events, you never know what's going to happen. Of course again, this is a divine appointment for David, not really for Saul. It's for Saul because it gives Saul an opportunity to repent. It's really a divine appointment for David; not an opportunity to take revenge, but a divine appointment, a time of testing.

DAVID'S MEN USE PROPHECY TO HASTEN DAVID IN PURSUIT OF WICKEDNESS

"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 secretly and cut off the corner of Saul's robe" (1 Sam. 24:4). Now there are several different views of this verse, that there had been a prophetic word circulating around David's camp, at the least, that there would come a time in which the Lord would deliver David's enemy into his hand and David could do with him what he wanted. Now it's very possible that was a true prophetic word, but these men in their carnality misinterpreted the word to mean it was OK for David to do evil. While the prophetic word might have been a real word, and certainly the rumor was that it was so—my guess is it was. The word had a different intention than their interpretation. They were saying, "Now your enemy is before you; do what you want!" This is the opportunity to do evil and be blessed in it; to call evil good.

GOD ALONE WOULD PUT DAVID IN DAVID'S PURPOSE IN GOD

David interprets it as being the true word of the Lord. "He's standing before me in order that I might be tested by his presence before me, that it might be revealed who is my source"—because on most occasions men would look to Saul as their source. Some felt that to gain Saul's favor would be to enter into the purpose of God, and others felt that to remove Saul would be to move into the purpose of God and David knew neither of those was true. He didn't need Saul's favor, nor did he need to remove Saul to enter into the purpose of God. For God alone would put David in David's purpose in God. This is a very, very important test, because it's so desperately easy for us to begin to take the promise of God and view human beings as the primary source.

Now, the Lord will use human beings in a secondary way. The problem comes when we begin to have confidence in the human agency that God uses as part of the circumstance and the provision, but that human

agency is never meant to be viewed as the primary source. The group that's going to give money, power, and honor is never the real issue in God's economy. They're always a secondary issue. Again, the Lord lets David stand right before Saul and the Lord says to David's heart, "David, is Saul your source? If Saul is your source, you'd better take care of him now. If I'm your source, you don't have to put your hand upon him."

THE POWERS THAT BE ARE ORDAINED OF GOD

Now David's men interpreted that prophetic word very differently than David. They said, "Wait a second, this man is an evil man. He's demonized. He slaughtered a whole city of priests; he's a murderer. He's destroying the nation of Israel." There are many, many good reasons to get rid of Saul.

There's only one problem; Saul was the anointed of the Lord until the Lord removed him. David would argue and reason with them. He said, "You guys don't understand, this isn't just a bad man causing me trouble, this is the king in this uniquely anointed office, enthroned by God Himself. I can't touch the anointing of the Lord, but rather I give that into God's hand to touch. It would be different if he didn't represent God's authority but he does represent God's authority."

SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY IS DELEGATED AUTHORITY THAT BELONGS TO GOD

By the way, God's authorities are represented in many levels of society. The government represents God's authority. There are different ways to make godly appeals to the government. Romans 13 tells us that they're delegated authorities from heaven. Sometimes I look at the way our nation and the Body of Christ responds to the "king" of this nation, the president. We don't want to touch the president in an evil way; we want to make godly appeals. We want to use rightful means of legislation, etc., etc. We don't want to transgress, because it's the common way of this nation to do that. We don't want to violate spiritual authority. There's spiritual authority in the home. There's spiritual authority in the job. There's spiritual authority in the church. There's spiritual authority in the government. There are four arenas of spiritual authority, and they're all limited authority, but they do have marks of God's authority because spiritual authority is delegated authority that belongs to God.

Again, we make appeals and we don't let those spiritual authorities have an authority beyond what God has ordained. At the same time, we honor spiritual authority. It was one of the great hallmarks of David's maturity. David didn't see Saul, David saw the hand of God, the authority of God on Saul. It wasn't Saul that David feared; it was the authority of heaven that made him tremble. He looked at Saul and said, "I have no problem with you. You're no match for me, Saul. You're a cowardly man. The problem is the office that you stand in; I must let God take care of you."

DAVID REACHES OUT AND CUTS OFF THE CORNER OF SAUL'S ROBE

Again, I've seen people have an inappropriate respect for spiritual authority, and they give too much ground to spiritual authority. Then all kinds of abuses take place. There are biblical grounds for honoring authority and that's what's going on. David in 1 Samuel 24:4 arose secretly and cut off the corner of Saul's robe. "Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe" (1 Sam. 24:5). The reason David is troubled by that is not for the sake of Saul's garment, as though he had ruined one of his shirts. That's not what he's talking about. Saul's robe represented the kingly office; Saul's robe represented his divine authority. That's what David was touching. It was the robe, it was the royal garment that he put his hand against.

Again, this is a very critical time in David's life. David doesn't know at this time that he's being tested; that's how these tests work. Afterwards he would understand. In this particular moment, David isn't exactly sure the integrity of his heart is just, whether it's right there beaming within him or absent. That's the problem with tests. They come, life is in such a pace, and the moment and the emotion is so intense. It's difficult to disconnect and say, "Wait a second, this is just a test." The reality of David's honor of God's authority was present at that hour. It was something that was deeply a part of him, deeply a part of his spiritual foundation.

OK, the robe was a sign of Saul's office; it was a sign of God's authority upon David's life, yea, of God's authority over the nation that David would honor.

“THE LORD FORBID THAT I SHOULD DO THIS THING TO... THE LORD'S ANOINTED”

David said to his 600 men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed" (1 Sam. 24:6). There's the point. He was the Lord's anointed. He wasn't just Saul; he wasn't just king of a nation. He was anointed and put there deliberately by God. "God forbid that I would touch the Lord's anointed in an illegal way." David could pray that righteousness would abound. David could pray that God would stop iniquity, and that's how David dealt with Saul. David kicked into spiritual warfare to stop Saul. David never used his own position, his own power, words, finance, he never used his "clout" in order to stop Saul at any time. He could have on a number of occasions. The issue is here in 1 Samuel 24:6: Saul was the Lord's anointed. David said, "I can't stretch out my hand against him, whether in my finances, my speech, I can't orchestrate that, I can't, because he's the Lord's anointed." He says it twice in 1 Samuel 24:6. Again, it's a divine appointment testing David.

“AN INHERITANCE GOTTEN HASTILY SHALL NOT BE BLESSED”

"So David restrained his servants with these words" (v. 7). I mean, there were 600 men here who were really tired of being out in the wilderness. David said, "No, you guys, if we gain the position without the blessing of God, we'll end up like Saul. We don't want the position, the inheritance, without God's blessing." It says in the book of Proverbs that an inheritance gained speedily is not blessed in the end (Prov. 20:21). An inheritance gained out of God's timing isn't blessed in the end. Someone who gains too much, too quickly, before the Lord has prepared the larger context, ends up getting overwhelmed by the pressure that inheritance creates. Typically it destroys the person, though it's the nature of every man and woman to get the inheritance as quick as we can. The Lord understands that, so the Lord restrains us in ways where we have no control. It's a very important principle, an inheritance gained in a hurry. The young person called to ministry wants to get the crowd so badly and have authority so desperately, they'll do anything to speed the process up, only to discover that even in God's timing the pressures are far different than they imagined.

THE GREATER THE SPHERE OF YOUR INFLUENCE, THE GREATER YOUR REPROACH

As a side note, one of the number one problems in ministry for those of you who are called into "full-time ministry," besides the spiritual dynamics of warfare, is the issue of criticism. No one can stand in a position of public authority in the Spirit or in the natural without bearing criticism, and lots of it. When I talk to people who are looking to increase the sphere of their ministry, I try to make it clear to them. I say, "What you're talking about is in a very real way increasing the sphere of criticism, rejection, and abuse against you."

They say, "Well..."

I say, “No, you really don’t understand what I’m saying. You can’t increase in authority without increasing in personal attacks against you.” The Lord knows that and He knows that if you aren’t ready for that position, it will be destructive. I’ve seen people having no public prominence at all suddenly increase their sphere to fifty and 100 people, and after a year or two, they say, “I’m so burnt out, I can’t believe the amount of conflict.”

I said, “Five hundred is just ten times as much conflict, it really is, and 5,000 is ten times as much as that.”

One of the things that I remember being really jolted by in a learning way was my time of traveling with John Wimber. I traveled with him for three years and he had a platform that touched over a million people. John would talk very openly with a number of people, not just with me, about the amount of people who stood against him and friends that now despised him. He has had thousands of people in the Body of Christ who completely despised him. He said, “Mike, you’ll never know the amount of pain that I walk in because of the authority that I have.” He said, “I don’t know any man in my sphere that doesn’t have this amount of pain coming at them.” He said, “Don’t ever have a bigger sphere than God makes you have, because you’re only confused about it if you don’t understand that it means more attack and the possibility of more pain.”

He talked quite at length about that on a number of occasions. I said, “Wow, that’s really true.” That’s what the Lord is doing with David. We don’t want our inheritance in the public domain quicker than God wants to give it to us, because always along with it come all kinds of attacks, but the one sure thing is criticism from people whom you care about. That will always take place. As a matter of fact, it’s typically proportionate to the size of platform that you have publicly. Then there’s the spiritual dimensions, jealousy dimensions, and all kinds of other dimensions when you stand in front of people. There’s no question that the most hated man in the earth is the president of the United States, because he stands in the position to give more favor. More human beings hate the most powerful man on the earth than anyone else; the only Person more hated than the president is God. God is the most hated Person in the whole world because people imagine that He could do more for them and they despise Him. Authority always brings that kind of conflict.

“WE DON’T WANT A POSITION OF AUTHORITY WITHOUT THE FAVOR OF GOD”

“David restrained his servants” (1 Sam. 24:7). I believe he restrained them with wisdom, saying, “Guys, we don’t want a position of authority before God’s timing. We don’t want a position of authority without the favor of God. If we get it without God putting us in it, then we have to direct it instead of the Lord prophetically directing it. We have to provide for it instead of the Lord supernaturally providing, and we have to protect it.” If you finagle, if you manipulate yourself into a situation, you have to protect it, you have to provide for it, and you have to give guidance for it. You have to fight off the enemies, because the Lord isn’t committed to fighting off the enemies of a position to which He never called you. In the end, it’s just a total waste of time. I’ve seen men put a tremendous amount of energy, on a scale of one to ten, to get from three to four to five, and they prop it up with every means possible, and a few months later they’re back down to three. Water always reaches its level. We only have the sphere we have in God. John the Baptist said it most clearly: A person can only receive what they’ve received from heaven (Jn. 3:27, paraphrased).

I believe that’s the wisdom David had. He said, “Men, we don’t want something like this because there’s something inherently good for us in that position. We want it because we have been called to it by God, and when God calls us and when He releases us, He protects us. He provides for us and He directs it.”

Can you imagine directing a ministry, providing for it financially and spiritually and protecting it from enemies, and God isn't with you? Any position that we work our selves into that's not called of God, we have to provide for it, protect it, and direct it. That sounds like a major hassle to me. Then you have the criticism coming. What we want to find out is the God-ordained position and then walk in it. We don't want to increase it or decrease it. We want to walk in it according to the season God has called us. I believe that's part of the way David is restraining his men. He's giving them the wisdom that being king isn't in itself isn't the issue. Walking in the sphere of God is the issue. David restrained his servants; he didn't allow them to rise up against Saul. Saul got up from the cave, went out on his way, and he didn't even know what had happened.

DAVID EMERGES FROM THE CAVE AND CONFRONTS HIS KING

I just have a lot of feeling about 1 Samuel 24:7. David restrained them; he had to talk them out of it. There must have been ten or fifteen men saying, "David, the prophetic word, this is the hour, this man is an evil man, he's leading the nation away from God, kill him!"

David said, "God will kill him when it's time for Saul to die." First Chronicles 11 says that God killed Saul. God killed Saul at the right time.

"David... arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, 'My lord the king!'" (1 Sam. 24:8). I imagine Saul down in the valley and David up on the hill at a good distance, perhaps with a little creek in between. "My lord the king!" Saul looked behind him. "David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down" (ibid). This was genuine; he was honoring Saul's authority in the Lord. Not the person Saul; he didn't trust Saul's character, but he did honor the position Saul was in.

IF YOU'RE THE FAVORITE OF THE ONE IN AUTHORITY, YOU WILL HAVE TROUBLE

David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm?'" (1 Sam. 24:10). See, this is part of David's problem. In Saul's court there were jealous men who were slandering David. Saul already had a jealous spirit and lots of demons harassing him in depression, and he had his own problems with David complicating the issue because David went so quickly up the ladder of prominence that it caused a tremendous disruption in the social dynamics in Saul's court. So a number of men had been telling Saul very elaborate stories and scenarios that reinforced Saul's fear and jealousy of David. Saul had proof. Saul had documented evidence that David is a bad man. I remember reading once the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50; those thirteen chapters or so tell the story of Joseph. Joseph was the favorite. If you're the favorite of the one in authority, you're in trouble. Seriously, you're in trouble in social dynamics. There's no way you can be the favorite without being in big trouble with other people. Joseph was the favorite. He got these dreams from the Lord that said, "I'm really going to do it." Joseph told his brothers this, and I wrote, "Bad!"

GOD IS GIVING YOU THE LEAST AMOUNT OF TROUBLE WITH THE GREATEST BLESSING

Now you might ask, "How do you know that's bad? I've told a few things in my day that were just stupid. Well, I wanted to speed things up a little..."

The Lord says, "You don't want to do that. I'm going as fast as I can without shipwrecking your life. I'm giving you the least amount of trouble and the most amount of blessing without disrupting the equilibrium of your life in a way that would destroy you." I truly believe this from the Scriptures: God is giving you the least amount of trouble in the most amount of blessing without completely disorienting your life. Remember, God is looking; He knows the seeds in our hearts that we can't discern. All of us think that we're all a little different from the

average man. We would do better than them in the same circumstances. If we won the lottery, we would be noble about it. We wouldn't be like the other eighty-five in a row that messed their life up with it. We would be different if we won it. We all imagine that, but we have seeds in the garden, so to speak, that God sees crystal clearly. He says, "No, there are dynamics five, ten fifteen years down the road that you can't see. I really care about this—about you especially. I will give you the least amount of trouble and the most amount of promotion that I can give you without disrupting who you are in the next forty to fifty years; and that carries on into the age to come." See the Lord is operating on a real big picture.

THE REAL TROUBLE WITH JESUS AND JOHN WAS THAT THE PEOPLE LOVED THEM

So David in 1 Samuel 24:9 is pin pointing the slander that these jealous men in Saul's court had brought forth, the fruit of David's favor with Saul. It's very, very difficult to have favor without disrupting things. That was Jesus' problem: The people liked Him too much. It wasn't just that He preached righteousness and He convicted the scribes and the Pharisees. That was a problem for sure, but the real problem was that the people liked Him. The real problem with John the Baptist was that the people liked him. That creates tremendous social dynamics when the people like you. It doesn't matter if it's ten people in a friendship group and all of a sudden the Lord puts His hand on one in a special way. A few of those other ten start getting fidgety and start coming up with little theories as to why you aren't so hot. It doesn't matter what level it is; it happens everywhere in life. It happens on the playground, it happens in the Oval Office, it happens in corporate America. It happens in every level of life. That's what's happening in David's life in 1 Samuel 24:9.

"THE LORD DELIVERED YOU INTO MY HAND IN THE CAVE"

David is well aware of it. He says, "Saul, I didn't do all those things."

Saul says, "I have fifteen verified stories; they heard you say it with their own ears."

David says, "I didn't say it; I don't care, Saul, it's not true." He says, "Look, this day your own eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you" (1 Sam. 24:10). It's interesting that this is the same language used back in 1 Samuel 23 when Saul says, "The Lord has delivered David into my hand!" (1 Sam. 23:7, paraphrased). This must have been the key phrase of the day, you know. The difference is, this time David is interpreting it in an accurate way. He said, "The Lord put you here. The Lord did this. He orchestrated it. It was not an accident." He said, "And some would even urge me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord.' Why? Because you have the authority of God on you. You're the Lord's anointed." He says, "I won't touch the authority of the Lord. The Lord will touch you; I won't touch you. I'll pray. I'll make my appeals to you, but I won't lift my voice against you; I won't use my power to stop you." David says, "Can you not see I fear the Lord, Saul?"

"THERE IS NEITHER EVIL NOR REBELLION IN MY HAND... YET YOU HUNT MY LIFE"

Now in 1 Samuel 24:11 he goes beyond honor to affection. He calls him "my father." Saul is his father, because he married Saul's daughter. He's his father-in-law. First he bows before him as king, and now he calls him *father*, an endearing term. He says, "Moreover, my father, see! You 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, you 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" (1 Sam. 24:11). He essentially says, "You're driven by these lies." Of course David understood that the Lord Himself was the one training David through this scenarios. That was one of David's great abilities, was to see God in the midst of these situations.

“LET THE LORD JUDGE BETWEEN YOU AND ME, AND LET THE LORD AVENGE”

Now we read one of the great statements of David. “Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you” (1 Sam. 24:12). David says, “I won’t judge you. I’ll never use my words or my deeds to stop you, but I’ll invoke God’s supernatural intervention to stop you.” He says, “That’s the only weapon I’ll use on you is prayer. I will ask God to judge what’s wrong. That’s the only thing I’ll do. If you’re wrong, then He will judge you. If you aren’t wrong, then don’t worry about it.” What a powerful resolve! “The Lord judge between you and me.” He says the same thing in 1 Samuel 26:9-11. We’ll look at it in a minute; it’s nearly the same story. He uses it a number of times in his life; it’s one of David’s hallmark phrases. You find it in 2 Samuel 2:1-4, 2 Sam. 15:25, and 2 Samuel 16:4-14, which is a whole story in itself. There are a number of times when David backs away and says, “I’ll let the Lord intervene; if the Lord doesn’t intervene, then you’re free.”

This drove David’s men crazy. They said, “How can you do this?”

David said, “I’m telling you, the God of heaven is far more powerful than either you or I.”

“WHOM DO YOU PURSUE? A DEAD DOG? A FLEA?”

“Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you, but my hand shall not be against you” (1 Sam. 24:12). He says, “Saul, if you’re innocent, don’t worry; the Lord will give you mercy”—because the Lord won’t judge you for mistakes, He will judge you for deliberate persistent rebellion, deliberate evil. “Saul, if you’ve made mistakes, the Lord will cover you like He has covered me.” If we could learn to live in the reality described right there in 1 Samuel 24:12, it’s one of the great Davidic lifestyle values that he lived in throughout his life, the idea of invoking God’s intervention when there was conflict, not using his words or his power, his finances, his position, and so on.

David goes on in 1 Samuel 24:13 and tells Saul, “As the proverb of the ancients says, ‘Wickedness proceeds from the wicked’” (1 Sam. 24:13). He says, “If I’m a wicked man, I would have done wickedness to you just then; I would have killed you up there, and no one would have stopped me.”

Now in the next verse he puts himself down a little. He says, “After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea?” (1 Sam. 24:14). He says, “Here you are in this noble, dignified position; whom do you pursue? I’m a dead dog. I’m a flea. I’m nothing.” He says, “I’m no threat to you; I’m no problem to you. I’m just a wandering dog, I’m a flea skipping around; I’m insignificant to a man of your stature and your dignity.” He says, “And if you defeat me, well, you killed a dead dog, so what? I’m already dead; I’m of no threat to you. I have no power; I have nothing with which to threaten you. If you defeat me, so what? It’s 3,000 to one.”

AT THE END OF THE DAY, GOD’S CALL IS OUR FAVOR, HIS TRAINING OUR TROUBLE

Then he says his prayer again. “Therefore let the Lord be judge”—or, “Let the Lord decide,” is how one of the other versions says it. “Let the Lord... judge between you and me, and see and plead my case” (v. 15). I like that: “Let God plead my case; let God deliver me; let Him decide or judge. Let Him see, let Him plea, let Him deliver.” That’s how David entered into promotion and favor, and that’s how he dealt with revenge in his enemies. He said, “Let the Lord write it in His book and it will take place in the arena of man.” I tell you, to whatever degree that any of us connect into that principle espoused in 1 Samuel 24:12-15, our life begins to enter into a whole new peace because we don’t see men in position as the source of favor or the source of

trouble at the end of the day. At the end of the day God's call is the source of favor and God training us is our source of trouble. The Lord is training us to operate in new realms of authority. The Lord will train us as easily as possible so that He can give us the most authority that He can give us without hurting our lives. Every now and then He will let someone become an example for a nation, and He will let them have their inheritance beyond where their character is. Then that person will enter into a big scandal, and the whole nation will tremble then. They'll look at the man and say, "Oh my goodness." The Lord every now and then will allow someone to outrun their character and His training. He gives them a release that's greater than what they are on the inside to cause others to not lust after more in a wrong way.

SAUL'S BENEVOLENCE IS SINCERE, BUT SHALLOW AND SHORT-LIVED

So when David had finished these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is that your voice, my son David?" (1 Sam. 24:16). Saul is being sincere; he doesn't have the capacity to be sincere and stay sincere, but he's sincere right here. I call that "sweet rebellion." It's like Saul is really impacted on an emotional level. This isn't fake; this isn't political. He means it, he just doesn't mean it for very long. He doesn't have the capacity to mean it in a way that matters, but he means it right here. I've been pastoring now for right at twenty-two years and I've seen plenty of cases of sweet rebellion. I've seen that one before, and it's just trouble, trouble, trouble. That's what Saul is doing right here. Sweet rebellion: "Oh my son, my son..." And he wept (v. 17). Men like Saul have the power to weep when their sins are discovered right in front of them. Weeping in itself isn't the measure.

Then he said to David, "You are more righteous than I, for you have rewarded me with good when I have rewarded you with evil" (1 Sam. 24:17). I mean, here is painstaking honesty, honesty and weeping.

"Wow, it's done now!"

No, it's not done; this man has a serious case of sweet rebellion.

"No, no, you don't understand, he wept and said in front of everyone that I did good and he did bad. Hey, we're reconciled; praise God that's behind us."

Then in the next verse, Saul continues, "You have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for... the Lord delivered me into your hand" (1 Sam. 24:19). Now Saul is operating in spiritual discernment. This is totally opposite from 1 Samuel 23 when Saul said, "God delivered David into my hands!" Saul has completely reversed his position. He prays a blessing here: "May the Lord reward you..." He's prophesying: "You shall surely be king" (v. 20). He makes a covenant with him; I mean we're talking about tears; we're talking about the acknowledgment of evil. We're talking about blessing him, calling him good and honest. We're talking about prophesying, you'll be king. We're talking about making a covenant, and it's all real in terms of Saul feeling the power of it, but none of it stays when pressure comes on.

"THEREFORE BE WISE AS SERPENTS AND HARMLESS AS DOVES"

I remember the first few times I ran into this kind of thing. It threw me for a loop. I thought, "Well then, blessing, prophesy, open confession, covenant, hey, we've got that one behind us." Well, no, it doesn't exactly work that way. Turn to 1 Samuel 26. I'm not trying to make you all cynics but it's good to be wise. One of the great realities in David's life we covered in the very first sessions. David knew what it meant to be wise as a serpent but as innocent as a dove. The first few years of my ministry, I was so focused on trying to walk in sincere motives. I wanted to be innocent like a dove; I didn't really put a lot of stock into being wise as a

serpent. There's divine diplomacy that David operated in. It's not enough just to be innocent. You need to be wise if you're going to be in a position of public authority, regardless of whether it's in the secular arena or in the church world. If you're operating in divine authority in either one of those spheres, because there's divine authority in both, it's not enough just to be innocent; it's not enough to have good motives. Because good motives without wisdom will cause great trouble for you and for the people who are under you. You need to be wise as a serpent. It's unusual to me that Jesus would choose the serpent, of all beasts, as the creature to which he would liken wisdom (Mt. 10:16). He commanded us to have craftiness like a serpent. He said, "I want you disciples, you holy apostles, to be like the serpent."

"Like the serpent? Well Jesus, couldn't you have said 'wise as an owl' or something, are owls not wise or something?"

"No, I want you having divine diplomacy; I want you understanding human dynamics," is what He's saying. "Don't be naïve about human dynamics." That's all that I believe Jesus was saying: "Don't be naïve about human dynamics, because in the position of leadership you'll cause great trouble for many people if you're naïve about human dynamics." Again I caused trouble for this church and even before here by stressing sincerity without understanding wisdom or divine diplomacy, or just plain sanctified cynicism, if you will. It really is discernment at the end of the day. It's the ability to see the human tendencies and when repentance is real and when it's not.

THERE GO THOSE CRAZY ZIPHITES AGAIN...

"Now the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah saying, 'Is not David with us?'" (1 Sam. 26:1, paraphrased). Wait a second, this happened back in 1 Samuel 23:19. Here are these Ziphites again. David is down in their area and they send a delegation up to Gibeah, up to the capital, and again they say, "Saul we got him!" just like back in 1 Samuel 23:19. Of course, now the Ziphites have a little different story going on. The first time, they were afraid because the people of the city of Nob were destroyed. They were terrified and they wanted the reward. Now they have a third motive: If David becomes king from their point of view, they're in big trouble. They had initially thought it was a sure deal that David would be caught and killed. Now David looks like he might defeat Saul, and the men from Ziph think, "This is bad news. If he becomes king, he might pay us a visit. We really have to get rid of this kid before he gets into the position it looks like he's about to attain."

ALL ISRAEL IS BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT DAVID IS CHOSEN TO BE KING

I mean, after all, Saul has now prophesied, "You will be king of Israel, David." Saul has now agreed with Jonathan. If you remember, back in 1 Samuel 23:17, Jonathan, Saul's son, said, "You will be king." So Samuel prophesied it, Jonathan prophesied it, Saul has now prophesied it, and Abner in 2 Samuel 3 says, "We all knew you were the anointed." That was Saul's five-star general. He says, "All along we all knew the prophesies that you were the king anointed." Everyone knew it, and the Ziphites said, "Hey, this is trouble man. This fellow keeps getting out of trouble. We've really got to get him this time."

WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT WEEPING, COVENANT-MAKING, SELF-DISCLOSING SAUL?

So they send a delegation up in verse one, and "Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having 3,000 chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David" (1 Sam. 26:2). What happened to that weeping, covenant-making, self-disclosing Saul back in 1 Samuel 24? He's in a different mood; he wants to kill David again. Saul camped in this particular hill country and David stayed in the wilderness, and David saw that Saul had come after him; David sent spies out and understood that Saul had come (v. 4). David dispatched these spies, always

searching any group of men that approached in these large clusters. That was one of Saul's disadvantages, that he always traveled *en masse*, and it was a lot easier to spot these men when they were coming.

“DAVID AROSE AND CAME TO THE PLACE WHERE SAUL ENCAMPED”

“So David arose and came to the place where Saul was encamped” (1 Sam. 26:5). He saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner, the commander. “Now Saul lay within the camp” (ibid)—because he would be in the center of the camp to protect himself, and they would all make concentric circles around him, all the way out, all 3,000 of them, and Saul would be at the very center.

“Then David answered, and said to Ahimelech... and to Abishai... ‘Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?’” (1 Sam. 26:6). And they basically said, “Say what? You want to greet Saul?”

“I mean go to the camp!” And Abishai is a real warrior type; he says, “I will go down with you” (1 Sam. 24:6). I love that. Of course his profile throughout the whole life of David is that he's always that man; he's on the edge, he's looking for a fight all the time. He says, “Hey, I'll go.” He's Joab's little brother; he and Joab were always looking for trouble. Ahimelech says, “No, no, I sense the Lord wants me up here.” It's interesting that he's just gone now.

“So David and Abishai came to the people by night; and there Saul lay sleeping within the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. And Abner and the people lay all around him” (1 Sam. 26:7).

Here it is, the same old line again. Abishai said to David, “God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day... Strike him at once!” (1 Sam. 26:8). He says, “Better yet, let me strike him. See, you're innocent, you didn't do it, I did it. It all turns out well.”

David says, “No. No, I'm not trying to create a good story where I'm technically innocent. No, God is watching. Abishai, I don't want to strike him. Abishai, listen, there's a throne that rules the whole earth, and He's watching us right now.”

“I know, David, that's what you said back in 1 Samuel 24. Come on; I mean, how long is this going to go on?”

“No, no, Abishai, you don't understand yet.” He says, “We don't want to speed the process up.”

Now this is serious. He has got a man willing to take the responsibility before God and the responsibility before men, and David says, “No, I'm not trying to pull it off. It's real. I don't want to speed it up. It's real; I really don't want to be king until God makes me king. For real I don't.”

Of course one of the great chapters that we won't get to in this course is 2 Samuel 2. It's one of the classic stories, and it gives the same principle. I'll just quote it to you. In 2 Samuel 2:1, Saul has now been killed by the Lord and there's no competition, there's nothing in the path, and there stand the twelve tribes of Israel. David says, “Well, now that all the obstacles are removed...” and he goes into his prayer closet. His men never liked it when he went into the prayer closet, because they said, “No, don't ask God; just become king of Israel. Just make it simple! You've been prophesied, for seven years you've been chased in the wilderness, just be king. David, make it simple.”

David says, “No, I will pray first.”

Word gets to the camp and they say, “What’s going on?”

“He’s praying, he’s going to ask God for confirmation. He can’t just take a gift. David you need to learn how to receive.”

David prays and the Lord answers him, “Yes, I want you to go up and be king, but only over one tribe, only over one-twelfth of Israel.”

David returns to the men; they say, “What did you hear?”

He says, “Well, I’m only going to be king over Judah in Hebron, over one-twelfth of Israel.”

They say, “One-twelfth? What about the other eleven tribes?”

David says, “The Lord said, ‘No, not yet.’”

“David, what are you, you’re thirty years old, you’re anointed of the Lord, Saul is dead, you’ve been in the wilderness seven years.”

David says, “You guys don’t understand. I don’t really want to be king. You guys want me to be king so I can give you some good salaries. I don’t want to be king; I want to do the will of God. If I’m king out of the will of God, it’s going to cause trouble for all of us.”

So David takes one tribe, and it drives them crazy. They say, “Why don’t you just do what a normal man would do?”

David says, “I’m not a normal man; I really already have my reward working in my heart from heaven. This isn’t my reward to be in a place of power on the earth.” For seven years, from age thirty to thirty-seven, he reigned in Hebron over one of the twelve tribes. It was a partial promotion. He wouldn’t take the twelve tribes until he was thirty-seven, and the Lord then gave him the eleven other tribes, and then he had it all the way. The Lord directed him, protected him, and provided for him each step of the way. What a great lesson! David won’t take it. He has a good alibi here, but he won’t take the position. He says, “No, don’t do it for me.”

“Hey, I’ll kill him for you! Even if the word gets out, they’ll all know that you were blameless.”

“No, Abishai, you don’t understand: I don’t want the position outside of the will of God.” He couldn’t understand that.

David said to Abishai, “Let me go through the lesson that I told you back in the cave of Engedi, back in 1 Samuel 24. You don’t touch God’s authority” (1 Sam. 26:9, paraphrased). “You don’t touch it with out getting in trouble with God. You don’t touch divine authority in a wrong way.”

Again I've seen people abuse that doctrine, whether it was spiritual authority in the church or in other positions of life, and they use it wrongly, so I'm suspicious of how people use that doctrine. I've seen a lot of pastors beat down people with this kind of thing and it's very, very inappropriate.

“David said furthermore” (1 Sam. 24:10)—it's like he was saying, “Let me give you another message, Abishai. Not only do I respect spiritual authority, but God will strike him. His day shall come to die. He will go out to battle, there's a day that God has appointed; God will take care of him, Abishai. Do you understand it?”

Boy, David... I think he's really going for it here in 1 Samuel 24:11. “The Lord forbid that I should touch him.” He says, “I won't even touch him like I did last time.” He says, “This is what I'll do. I'll take the spear and the jug of water.” So David took the spear and the jug of water.

A DEEP SLEEP FROM THE LORD HAD FALLEN ON ALL THE KING'S MEN

Look at the end of 1 Samuel 24:12: “For they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen on them.” What a bizarre coincidence here. Again, it's another divine appointment; however, it's not so David could get rid of him, but so he could be tested. This is so interesting. Now my question is, “How did David know that the spirit of the Lord was going to cause a deep sleep on them?” I think somehow he had some understanding from the Lord that the Lord was going to intervene in this way. I don't think David was reckless. I think Abishai would have said, “Hey, let's do it, man, let's go for it,” but I think David was operating under the wisdom of God when he went down there. I don't think this was reckless. There's no way to prove it, but I think he did. David went up the hill and called out to the people (1 Sam. 24:13). “Abner, hey head of the army! Do you not answer, Abner?” (v. 14, paraphrased). They're waking up.

Abner says, “Who are you anyway, calling out to the king like this?” (ibid).

David said to Abner, “Are you not a man? And who is like you in Israel?” (1 Sam. 26:15). “Who has power like you have? You're the main man in the whole nation. Why do you not guard the king? The king could have been killed.” I'm paraphrasing. “The thing that you've done isn't good. You should be killed because you've fallen asleep on the job. You aren't guarding the anointed of the Lord.”

He says, “What are you talking about?”

Saul basically says, “Abner, be quiet, that's David.”

He says, “Oh man, the Lord is really with him; he did it to us again.” Here we go again, round two, 3,000 men saying, “Hey Saul, why don't you just give in, we like this man. Little by little we're starting to believe that the Lord is really with him.”

Saul says, “Is that your voice, my son David?” (1 Sam. 24:17).

David says, “It is my voice, my lord, O king.” Then he says, “Why does my lord thus pursue his servant? For what have I done, or what evil is in your hand?” (1 Sam. 24:18). “Why are you so afraid of me?” he asks. “Now therefore, please, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the Lord has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering” (v. 19). He says, “if I've done wrong, let me repent, let me give the animal sacrifice and let's get this thing behind us. If it's the children of men that have stirred you up, if it's the men in your court

who are jealous of me, let them be cursed before the Lord. For they have driven me out from the presence, from my inheritance in the Lord” (v. 20, paraphrased). He’s talking about his ability to participate in the tabernacle worship, the sacrifice system with the priesthood. He says, “I have been driven out of the presence of the Lord in that legal sense. These men have lied. Why are you letting this happen?”

Then he adds, “Do not let my blood fall to the earth before the face of the Lord. For the king of Israel has come out to seek a flea, as when one hunts a partridge in the mountains” (1 Sam. 24:20). “I’m no one!” he says.

DAVID HONORS THE OFFICE, BUT NO LONGER TRUSTS THE MAN

And Saul, here he goes again with sweet rebellion. “I have sinned. Return, my son David. For I will harm you no more” (1 Sam. 24:21).

David says, “Oh, I’ve heard that one before.” This is literally the fourth or fifth time that Saul has said this and meant it. Saul said it and meant it for seventy-two hours.

He said, “I’ve been a fool. I’ve erred exceedingly.” I mean, what repentance, what vulnerability, what confession and omission, in front of 3,000 people. None of it sticks. David honors the office, but doesn’t trust the man. He forgives the man, honors the office, but doesn’t trust his integrity.

David answers in 1 Samuel 24:22, “Here is the king’s spear; let one of the young men come over and get it. May the Lord repay every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness.” There’s that prayer again: “Let the Lord decide; let the Lord intervene and repay now, for the Lord delivered you into my hands” (v. 23, paraphrased). This is the second time; really, probably over the seventh time he has repeated this phrase, but he says, “It’s the Lord’s anointed. It’s the authority of God on you. I won’t touch it, I won’t do it. The Lord will take care of you, not me.” David says, “That’s one of my big principles.”

“And indeed, as your life was valued much this day in my eyes, so let my life be valued much in the eyes of the Lord, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation” (1 Sam. 24:24).

THE LAST WORDS OF SAUL TO DAVID

Saul said to David, “May you be blessed, my son David! You shall both do great things, and also still prevail” (1 Sam. 24:25). So he prophesies and blesses him again. “You’ll defeat me and you’ll do great things for God.” The spirit of prophecy came on Saul again, and David went on his way and Saul returned to his place. Those were the last words that Saul said to David, the very, very last words he spoke to him; he blessed him as the anointed of the Lord. He said, “You will prevail over me and you’ll do great things for God.” We know that Saul is still in a bad way because he goes to consult a witch before a great battle against the Philistines in 1 Samuel 28, and he dies in 1 Samuel 31. Saul is right at the end; David doesn’t know that Saul is at the end. He’s about a year and a half away from dying. He blesses him and that’s the last time that they’re together. It’s interesting that in 1 Samuel 24 Saul comes to David, and it’s passive. When David goes to Saul in 1 Samuel 26 it’s active; David goes to Saul. So the first one is very different; God brings Saul to David and David is thinking, “Boy, this is a coincidence.” The other time, David was being active. It wasn’t just something that appeared; David, I assume by the leading of the Lord, knew that the sleep was going to fall.

I know this is going. It was not just something that David did for an image. It was not something he did so he could tell a story. David saw God as his source not king Saul.

Amen. Let's stand.

MINISTRY TIME

Father, we thank you for this story, this powerful story. This very, very powerful story. Lord, we ask that in those very few times in the course of our entire life when we have a divine appointment, when we're tested with the power of revenge; during those few times in our life, Lord, we want to see you as our source, and not the villain. Whether it's getting rid of him or getting his favor, we see You as our source. We see that You're the one who promotes and demotes. We don't want to settle; Lord we don't want a promotion out of the will of God. We don't want to be king at any season, at any time of our life, except for the time that you call for us to have the place of authority in the sphere to which you've called us. We thank You in Jesus' name. Amen and Amen.

David went to Saul. Something prompted David to do that. So in both situations, God has tested David with the power of revenge and David doesn't take it, but yet he sees the divine test, he sees the divine appointment. He says, "No, I'm not going there, I know where this is going."