

I & II Samuel
“David Spars Saul Twice”
I Samuel 24 & 26

Well. Good evening. Would you take your Bibles? Turn with me, please, to the book of First Samuel. We're going to be looking tonight at two different chapters 24 & 26. You know, if you ever had twins or if you ever can at least identify with those who have had twins, maybe even before the day of ultrasound. You can probably understand how shocking would be to be told you're going to have more than one. Well, tonight we've got more than one. We'll be living and working away completely through each of these chapters. So if you just keep your Bible open, we're going to dive right in.

Last week in chapter 23, we saw how God protects his people. For nearly ten years, David and his men have been on the run and Saul has been pursuing them, wanting to kill David. Last week, however, as he was about to capture David, God sent a distraction, a divine distraction to the king. The Philistines invaded the land and dust and pulled Saul away from his pursuit of David. And David was spared. So tonight chapter 24 opens. We begin by seeing when Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, behold, David is in the wilderness of En Gedi. Then Saul took 3000 chosen men out of all Israel, and he went to see David and his men in front of the wild goats rocks. And he came to the sheepfold, by the way, where there was a cave. And Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave. Well, now we have the setting for the first time that David is going to spare Saul's life. David and his men have been on the run for quite some time. Frequently they've found themselves hiding in caves over coming to this region and in particularly the valley of En Gedi, which runs southwest from the Dead Sea, was a perfect place to hide. It was lush and vegetation. It also had water so they could sustain themselves, but it had rocky crags on all sides and it's called the Wild Goats Rocks. We can almost visualize the ibex, can't we? The wild goats there's still inhabit the area today, as they was be able to clamber up these rocks, find a way to protect themselves from predators, and to keep a good eye on what was going on around them. This area also gave them to David and to David's men. That sort of a vantage point they were provided for. They were protected and they could see what was going on throughout the region. If there was an enemy approaching. Well, it wasn't hard then for David and his scouts to see this. Saul was approaching with his royal Army guard, we're told this.

Saul approaches with his elite cadre of 3000 men. These are like the Royal Guard. This Royal Guard are the ones that go with the king into battle. Their number one priority, their number one task is to fight for and protect the King. Well, David and his band seeing this group coming, his 600 men very outnumbered. Hide in one of the caves. And as they're hidden as it would

happen, so to speak, as Saul approached the very cave in which they're hiding, they're hiding nature called. Saul had to use the bathroom. And that's what sets this up to be almost an interesting way that God is at work. You know, sometimes I think God is got almost a sense of humor.

And what he does in our lives here are Saul, his band of 3000. He's well protected. But in going to the bathroom, no bodyguards going to go with him. No one would do that even with the king. So he goes in, he's alone. He's unprotected. He's vulnerable. Since no one would have been there with him, and the men realize we finally have our opportunity.

David, this is the moment you've been waiting for. So David's men were told, urge him to act, saying, here is the day of which the Lord said to you, behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him, as it shall seem good to you. David's men just thought this was a setup almost too good to be true.

Finally, David could avenge himself of his enemy. Finally they too would be avenged of their enemy. Because remember, all of these men that have assimilated to David, they've been on the run as much as he has for ten years. They've been on the lam, running from Saul. But I love that. Here's where we begin to see something about God developing David's character.

Throughout both of these chapters, we'll be seeing God develop David's character. God mature David and raised him into the leader that he needed to be in order to become King of Israel. So verse four continues and tells us. Then David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe, and afterwards David's heart struck him, because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

A couple of brief observations may help us get into the context with this. Saul, when he would have gone in to relieve himself, would have removed the royal robe to set it out of the way so as not to spoil it while he's using the bathroom. So therefore the robe was away from the king. But then David, even while his men are watching, and I can almost sense they're there, anticipation.

They see David going up. This man of valor, this one, who with his bare hands, has killed both lions and bears. This one who has been a warrior who is sung about while Saul killed his thousands. David killed his ten thousands. They are just waiting as he takes out his sword, and they're expecting him to do what they want him to do, only to see David reach and get the robe and cut the corner off from it.

Well, again, we see immediately something of who David is, because even in doing this, as he silently then goes away and back to his men, we're told his heart struck him. He was smitten. He was. He was deeply perplexed about what he had just done, because by his action, his conscience now is plagued by his action. He has just symbolically taken a piece of the kingdom from Saul and claimed it for himself.

So he's deeply moved by what he has done. He understood the significance of the robe. It was a symbol of Saul's authority, and by his action he now has claim part of the kingdom for himself. So David in verse six makes a solemn oath, committing himself to regard the one that God has anointed as Israel's king with the highest of regard.

Look at verse six. He said to his men, the Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my Lord, the Lord's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the Lord's anointed, and then demonstrating capable leadership. We're told David persuaded his men with these words and did not permit them to attack Saul. So David realized God's plan far exceeded his men's desires.

And we're told at the end of the verse, us all rose up, and he went on his way. Well, just a short distance from the cave then was Saul's not too far removed? David then goes out of the cave as well, and he calls out to the king, and we're told he actually bows down. He prostrated himself before the king.

Now, this might have been a very vulnerable position for David, because Saul would have had his spear with him at all times, and if he'd have been within throwing distance, it might have been an opportune moment for Saul to yet attack David. But he trusted that God was bringing him along this path, and this is what he should do.

So David takes this moment as a great opportunity to begin defending his innocence. David humbly states his case before God and before all of his men to hear. Beginning in verse nine, David said to Saul. Why do you listen to the words of men who say, behold, David seeks your harm. Behold this day. Your eyes have seen how the Lord gave you today into my hand in the cave.

And some told me to kill you, but I spared you. And by the way, the actual translation of that I spared you from Hebrew would be a better, better rendered. But my eye took pity on you. So David said, I will not put out my hand against my Lord, for he is the Lord's anointed. Well, for following David's reasoning here, he has just vindicated himself from the slander and the libel, the false charges of other men about him.

The only reason he's still on the run is Saul's jealousy. And men who wanted to support a king in a false notion that David somehow who had been the warrior who is defending and most loyal to Saul, was now somehow opposing Saul and wanting to dethrone him from the throne taken from the throne. So David has just vindicated himself from false charges, and Saul now should be able to see how David, far from wanting to take his life, had taken pity on him instead. But just in case he missed it, we're told next to David produces evidence to back up the words that he's spoken in verse 11 he declares, see my father, see the corner of your robe in my hand. For by the fact that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, you may know and see that there is no wrong or treason in my hands.

I have not sinned against you, though you hunt my life to take it. Throughout his defense, David has spoken humbly, and he has spoken familiarly. Saul is his father in law, and he speaks from that family dynamic, that family relationship, calling Saul his father, but also as a term of respect for the authority in Israel itself over all of the land.

So he gives King Saul the highest degree of respect, even as he speaks with clarity and with compelling logic, with hopes that God might take what he said to change the heart of the King. So as David now lifts high the corner of Saul's robe where Saul can see it, I don't even believe Saul at that moment until David says this.

I don't believe he even understood what had happened. He didn't know a thing, that he had been in a cave with 600 men who were blood thirsty men wanting to take his life, nor did he know that David himself had crept up to him and taken a corner of the robe. Until this second. But David holds up the corner the peace that he had gotten, and he shows Saul just how close he had come to dying.

And I believe this was a poignant reminder to Saul of that moment back in first Samuel 15, where Saul, in desperation, wanting Samuel to come back with him and bless him, grab Samuel's robe and a piece of it off from Samuel. And then Samuel looked at him and said, the Lord, this day has torn the kingdom of Israel from you, and has given it to a neighbor of yours who is better than you was Saul.

Now, if he's thinking at all, knows David is that neighbor better than him here? He had proof positive that he could have killed King Saul. But there's also proof positive that Saul, still living, knows he chose not to. Though Saul had been pursuing David throughout his life, throughout these last ten years, without just cause, David did nothing in the way of avenging himself, even when an opportune moment was handed to him.

So, having finished stating his case, David reveals the one true king, before whom he humbly vows by making his appeal to God the righteous judge. Notice verse 12th May the Lord judge between me and you. May the Lord avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, out of the wicked comes wickedness.

But my hand shall not be against you to day. But there is one judge, and but only one who rules justly in all the affairs of men. Yahweh, the eternal and unchangeable I am, is on the throne, and he is watching over the affairs of men. David was able to trust that whenever God would choose to avenge David against Saul, the God indeed would do that perfectly.

We see this take place in a couple of weeks when Saul is finally killed in battle. But in this moment, David realized, taking matters into his own hands would have been wickedness on his part. I just want to pause here because there's so much practical application throughout these

chapters. But it is so easy for us, isn't it, that when we see something going wrong in our lives and when someone has done us a severe wrong, our natural instinct is to strike back.

And if God had given us something of a similar golden opportunity to be able to avenge ourselves with our neighbor, it's likely we would have just said, thank you, Lord, let's do it now. But David revered God. He feared God more than he desired his own revenge. And fearing the Lord, David refuses to do what would have been wickedness on his part.

And that's why he continues and quotes this ancient proverb out of the wicked comes wickedness. And yet by adding, but my hand shall not be against you, David completes the swing of his double edged verbal sword. Saul, who has been pursuing David wickedly, has proven to everyone who he is. And David, having responded mercifully to this wicked king, likewise has demonstrated that the fear of the Lord rules every action of his life.

But David also refuses to remain silent while he has spared Saul's life. David's fear of the Lord and his respect of Saul's position compels him to confront Saul. Look at verse 14, where David continues to say to Saul, after whom has the king of Israel come out? After whom do you pursue after a dead dog? After a flea?

I think David is just using a bit of great sarcasm and biting wit here, as he calls Saul out for wasting time pursuing him when he's of no account. He's been loyal to Saul, even to a fault. And why would this mighty king now be wasting all of his time and even national resources? With 3000 men traipsing all around the wilderness with only one goal in mind, I'm going to find I'm going to track down.

I'm going to kill David. And David says I'm just as insignificant as a dead dog. A dead dog, not meaning a dead pet that you're about to bury. You know, sometimes people want to, to actually have a cemetery. We had a pet cemetery near where we lived, years ago, and it just blew my mind that people would pay thousands of dollars to do that.

But know this is one of the coyote type wild, mangy things that roam around. And David says I'm no better than a dead dog. I'm of no account to you. Or even worse, I'm a single solitary flea on that dead dog, still trying to suck a little bit of blood out of the carcass. His analogy is, I think, perfect.

Saul, you the king of Israel, all Israel looks to you. Why are you being bothered by me? I'm nothing to you. I think he wanted to. And I think he was successful at making Saul's efforts look absolutely ridiculous again, in hopes that God would change the heart of the King, David reiterates then may the Lord therefore be a judge, and give sentence between me and you, and see to it, and plead my cause, and deliver me from your hand.

David has for now rest of his case. And he says, the Lord is judge, I trust him. I do not trust you sore, but I will rest in the Lord. May the Lord be the one who pronounces judgment between you and me. He knows your heart. He knows your motive. He knows my heart. He knows my motive. And I appeal to the throne of heaven.

And as Saul's turn to begin to speak, would you look with me at the end of verse 16, Saul said, is this your voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. He said to David, you are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. And you have declared this day how you have dealt well with me, and that you did not kill me when the Lord put me into your hands.

And then it's like he's letting this sink in. Verse 19. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safe? It's a very emotional response, a response in which Saul actually appears to be repentant. He acknowledges the truth about David, and he even acknowledges some of the truth about himself. He has acted wickedly. He has done evil toward David on numerous occasions.

Yet David consistently has responded to Saul with good, and Saul now is so moved by David's sparing his life that he lifts his voice up in a weeps, declaring that David certainly is more righteous, more in the right than he was. I think the King has found it utterly inconceivable that as an enemy would ever let another enemy go scot free.

So Saul concludes by saying, so may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. And now, behold, I know you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. Saul acknowledges, whether he wants to or not to God's plan can never be thwarted. God is free to use all men, both righteous and unrighteous alike, to fulfill his perfect plan.

And yet, in verse 21, Saul continues to say to David, swear to me therefore by the Lord, that you will not cut off my offspring after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house. In some ways this makes sense, because it was common in that day for one king to vanquish another king, the way that he would make sure that the vanquished or conquered king would never rise to power again, as he would put to death the king and every one of his sons, so that none of his lineage would ever return to the throne again.

But here's Saul reveals something deep about his own character. While he has at least wept and been overwhelmed by what David has done and what David has said, he also still is consumed with himself. He raises his voice now, and he simply ask that David would make sure that he would not take the life of all of Saul's family, protect my name.

Have you ever noticed that sometimes how we tend to also identify maybe more with Saul than we do with David? How we like to have a name for ourselves. We want people to think highly of

ourselves and we'll do almost anything. What way to try to protect our name, even when it's absurd. But here Saul is only concerned about one thing.

What's my posterity? What will the history books say when I am no longer king and you stand on the throne? David promised me. Well, David had already promised this to Saul, son. Jonathan. Perhaps Saul did not know this. But now Saul is almost demanding it of David. Promise me. Swear to me that you will not take the lives of my family.

That you will not wipe out my name. But David, still true to his upright heart, swore this to Saul. And Saul went home, and David and his men returned to the garrison again. There's a little more than just meets the eye for the words. Saul goes back one way, but David knows not to go near Saul. Jesus himself would not trust himself to men, knowing what was in their hearts.

And David wisely realizes that what appeared to be repentance might have simply been remorse. And remorse can fade as quickly as it comes. So David does not get anywhere near Saul. They return to the stronghold, back to the caves, back to the natural garrisons that they have. Now. We've reached the end of chapter 24, and for tonight we're skipping over chapter 25.

We'll come back to it next week. But as we turn our attention to chapter 26, I can't help but hear the words of Yogi Berra, that famous manager of the New York Yankees. He had a way with words. It's beginning to look like *déjà vu* all over again. As we start looking at chapter 26, we're going to see things that seem quite similar to what we've just seen in chapter 24.

And yet, even in the similarities, we're going to also see some distinct differences. While in chapter 24, David spared Saul's life when an unexpected opportunity was handed to him in chapter 26, David creates an opportunity to learn what God might do before sparing Saul a second time. So look with me at the opening, please, of chapter 26. We're told in this if I came to Saul, it gives a saying.

Is not David hiding himself on the hill of Hakala, which is on the east of Amon? So Sol arose and went down to the wilderness, as if with 3000 chosen men of Israel to seek David in the wilderness, as if verse three. And Saul encamped on the hill of Hakala, which is beside the road on the east, or Jessamine.

But David remained in the wilderness, when he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. Davidson our spies, and learned this Saul had indeed come. Verse five. And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had encamped. And David saw the place where Saul lay with Abner the son of Nur, the commander of his army. Saul was lying within the encampment while the army was encamped around him.

What we have here is a wonderful word picture of how you might protect your King. We have this this beautiful picture of Saul in the middle of these 3000 men. And Saul and Abner, Abner, the commander of the army. His number one task is to protect the king at all cost. Here they are right in the middle, and they're surrounded by 3000 men.

Literally, in the Hebrew, who talks more like about the wagon ruts like that circle the wagons. And there he is, safely in their midst. That's the scenario that David sees. So he's, Saul is safely entrenched on the high ground. He's got the place from where he should have every advantage over David. But David being in the wilderness and David be an experienced man of war.

He heard that Saul was in the region wanting to confirm what he had heard. He sends in his own scouts. He sends his own spies. They go and they search out and they come back. Indeed, it is Saul, and he's got the 3000 men with them again. David's men are vastly outnumbered 5 to 1. But this report also comes back that he's lying secure from external threat.

He seems at rest and at ease. Or at least that's what Saul thought. But David sees the situation differently. And verse six, David said to Abimelech the Hittite and to Joab was brother Abishai the son of zero ire, who will go down with me into the camp to solve? And Abishai said, I will go down with you. So David and Abishai went to the army by night.

And there lay Saul, sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground right at his head, and Abner and the army lay all around him. Then Abishai said to David, God has given your enemy into your hand this day. Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice.

Verse nine. But David said to Abishai, do not destroy him. For who can put out his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless? And David said, as the Lord lives, the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle, and he will perish. Verse 11, the Lord forbid that I should put out my hand against the Lord's anointed.

But take now the spear that is at his head, and a jar of water, and let us go. So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head, and they went away. No man saw it or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them.

That last little phrase is one of the key phrases in all of those verses. A deep sleep from the Lord. David was successful in going in and on this on this exploratory mission. He was successful because God was leading him. We've read elsewhere about God causing a deep sleep to fall upon Adam when he took a rib from Adam and creative Eve was seen.

God also put Abraham into a deep sleep when he cut, the, the covenant with Abraham and kept both sides of the covenant for himself. Now God has put all of Saul's men into this deep sleep,

allowing David to go in and accomplish the mission. We're not told exactly why David chose this was a good thing to do.

I guess I'm just not thinking like a good warrior. It doesn't seem really, like a brave or right thing to do. A bright thing to do. To go into the enemy's camp where you might get slaughtered. Right. To the King himself. But perhaps David had remembered Gideon. Gideon with the Midianites took his own servant, and, not being sure that God was going to give them into Gideon's hand, they crept that night into the enemy's camp, and they heard the very things that they needed to hear to be reaffirmed, that God indeed had given Midian into Israel's hands.

Perhaps David went in with this in mind, just trusting God, compelled by God to go in, and trusting God with what he would reveal and what God might do. So David offered an opportunity to two different men, one a Hittite. He's a mercenary. We hear of him only here and all the scripture. He doesn't go, but Abishai, the son of David.

Sister zero here he is eager to go with David. So as he and David go in, Abishai is start to. It's about to start proving his own character. Abishai. As we continue to watch him, we'll see him many times in David's life as a man of valor. He's a man of action, and when he sees the opportune moment before him, he is ready to act.

He sees this as the God given opportunity. Once again, we've all been told that opportunity never knocks twice, but in this case, it apparently had. Well, having been with David in the cave, Abishai knows David's resolute he will not raise his own hand against the King. So what does Abishai do? He says, David, you don't have to just give me a wink or not.

Just give me a green light and I'll take the very spear that Saul has hurled at you twice and once hurled even at his own son Jonathan, in an attempt to kill both of you. I will take the very spear that he has used as a weapon against you, and I will pin him to the earth and his life will come to an end.

I am so deft at what I do not have to do it twice. That's the temptation. That's now before David. But David remains resolute in his commitment to the Lord. In verse nine, David said to Abishai, do not destroy him. For who can put out his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless? See, David understood, if he'd given permission in any way to Abishai to take the king's life, David also would have been guilty himself.

Yet David was confident in God's perfect plan, and also in God's perfect timing to clear the way for him to finally come to the throne. Maybe bolstered by a lesson he learned from the incident between Nabal and Abigail, which will study next week, David now continues to instruct Abishai in verse ten, saying, as the Lord lives, the Lord will strike, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish.

So David refused to assassinate the one that God had anointed to be king. Instead, he was willing to wait, not knowing how long the waiting would continue. It's been ten years. How much longer would it be? David does not know, but he is still content to trust that God will do what God wanted to do according to God's perfect way and God's perfect timing.

So whether God himself would strike Saul down and kill him, putting an end to his reign, or whether Saul would simply die of old age, or whether the king would go out finding some other battle and be killed in battle, David was content to rest in the Lord. He was content to wait to see what God would do.

He was sure that God would choose the time to place, in a way, to replace Saul with himself as Israel's king. So David has stood firm in his conviction. Situational ethics couldn't sway him or deter him in the least. In verse 11, he actually restates the Lord forbid that I should put out my hand against the Lord's anointed.

But while he wouldn't take Saul's life, he did seize the opportunity to take Saul's weapon of aggression and what symbolically served as Saul's source of sustaining life. He tells Abishai, now take the spear that's at his head and the jar of water, and let us go. And then verse 12 tells us, so David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head, and they went away without any man seeing it or knowing it, because God had put a deep sleep on the entire army again.

David's foray into Saul's camp had been a success because God was at work. This entire mission was from the Lord. But once David and Abishai were safely to the other side and were told deliberately, there's a great space, there's a great buffer, there's a great divide between him. There's a distance over which he's going to call. Now. In verse 14, David calls out to Saul's army and he calls out specific to Abner, the son of nursing, will you not answer Abner?

And then answered that Abner answered, who are you that calls to the king? And David said to Abner, are you not a man who's like you in Israel? Why then have you not kept watch over your lord, the king? For one of the people came in to destroy the king, your lord, this thing that you have done is not good.

As the Lord lives, you deserve to die because you have not kept watch over your Lord. The Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is and the jar of water that was at his head. David finally has a great opportunity to exonerate himself from all the lies and all the slander from Saul's relentless ten year pursuit, and we need to make sure we see what's really happened here.

David is on one side of the ravine and 600 men are behind him. Abner and Saul, or over here on the other side of the ravine, with 3000 men with them. But David boldly, loudly proclaims his own innocence. And God will later use that same declaration, this moment in David's history,

some of those men in that in that 3000 might have even been some of those men with David when he slayed the ten thousands, they might have had a good esteem of David.

And they've been trying to figure out what's this thing between Saul and David all the time. And one day David would reunite all 3600 of these men to be men who serve him as king. So with all of Saul's army and all of David's men listening, bearing witness, he repeatedly calls out to Abner to wake him from a deep sleep.

Abner. Abner! Are you awake? And as Abner stirs, David shames him for being derelict in his duty in protecting the king. It was on Abner to be Saul's personal bodyguard, even if it cost him his life, and he'd failed miserably. And David continues to goad Abner, saying, you call yourself a man. You think you're the greatest in Israel's army.

Then how did you fail so miserably and fulfilling your highest duty? An enemy crept in, intent on killing the king, and you failed to protect him. And your failure is worthy of your death. Once more, David presents the evidence. He's not just talking big. He's walked big, holding up Saul's spear now rather than the corner of his robe.

Saul's spear was the scepter of his rule, the scepter of his reign. It was the instrument of his, of his warring. And he also holds up the jug of water that was again the source of life for Saul when he was on the battlefield. He holds up both of these, which moments earlier had been right at the king's head, and Abner and Saul both know that they've been had.

A King David been disloyal in any way? Saul would be dead. He has now proven his own loyalty to the king, surpassing that of Abner, who is asleep on the job.

And David, out of over writing fear from the Lord, which marked his life, now holds the proof as to why he would not kill the Lord's lords anointed. Look with me now. Verse 17, Saul and David begin speaking to each other, actually yelling across to each other across the ravine. Saul recognized David's voice and said, is this your voice?

My son? David? And David said, it is my voice, my lord, a king. Please note the difference. No mention of my father. He's learned that when the king said, I will no longer pursue you at the end of chapter 24. But now here he is in chapter 26, back to his old ways. This is a man who is not to be trusted.

He will no longer treat him or revere him as his father, but he simply speaks to the King and exposing Saul's guilt even further, David continues, why does my Lord pursue after his servant? For what have I done? What evils on my hands? Verse 19 now therefore let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If it is the Lord who has stirred you up against me, may he accept an offering.

But if it is men, may they be cursed before the Lord. For they have driven me out this day, that I should have no share in the heritage of the Lord, saying, go, serve other gods. Now, therefore let not my blood fall to the earth, away from the presence of the Lord. For the King of Israel has come out to seek a single flea, like one who hunts a partridge in the mountains.

Again, with 3600 soldiers listening, David confronts Saul, but in a way that gives him two easy ways to dissipate this whole situation. The first, he simply says, Saul, if if God has given you an evil spirit, and that's why you are pursuing me and trying to kill me, make an offering. Maybe God will receive the offering. You will humble your heart and all of this will be over.

But then he goes on, he gives another option. He says, but if this is for men, if it is men in your own army who have stirred you up and made you jealous, and it is from them that you are now still pursuing me day after day. All this insane pursuing of a single flea, he says, let them be accursed. No, let them be blotted out of the book of Israel. Their guilt was great, David says, for having driven me away from the presence of the Lord, he longed to be in the house of the Lord David for ten years has not been back in Jerusalem. David has not had the luxury of worshiping God the way he longed to worship God. And he says even to Saul, do not let my blood die on foreign soil.

David understands the severity of what he's up against here. He understands that as long as he's on the run, he is kept from the proper worship of God. That was a common belief in cultures of the day, that God's will were localized, that a God could only rule in a particular area. That was not what David believes here, but yet he plays on that thinking so that the men might understand.

You're keeping me away from the one I love most, the one I fear most, the one I long to be in worship with most. You have prevented me from being with him. Their actions have made me as one that serves other gods. So David then continues, and he wants to illustrate his point. But first Saul replies, beginning in verse 21, this time, though without tears, without weeping, and actually with words that to me sound quite empty and hollow.

Saul said, I have sinned, returned my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes. This day. Behold, I have acted foolishly and have made a great mistake. You know the old saying, fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. David understood this. Saul before had gone back on his word.

And to David these words must have just echoed and disappeared into thin air. So wisely David keeps from addressing. Was Saul just said. David has learned that there's a huge difference between someone who is truly repentant and someone who is only remorseful for the moment. Remorse fades quickly in a heart that has never changed. It can make a person sad about the consequences of their sin.

It might make them even cry over what harm they have caused to someone else. For a moment. But only godly sorrow leads to repentance. Godly sorrow is what causes us to not only confess sin, but to turn from sin and not go back, but to turn and go in another direction. And I think David has realized the only thing the king has is remorse for his behavior.

So David then appeals to God, who is just as he concludes in verse 23, the Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness. For the Lord gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against the Lord's anointed. Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the Lord, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation.

David's trust in the Lord was explicit. He knew he could not trust Saul, but he also knew he could and would trust God who ruled over all. Well, one last time Saul replies word with words, which, while being true, actually are meaningless coming from someone who already proven himself to be far from God and someone whose word could not be trusted.

In verse 25, Saul said to David, blessed be you, my son. David, you will do many things and will succeed in them. And then we're told. So David went his way, and Saul returned to this place. What we're not told is, this is the last time that David and Saul see each other and interact with each other in David's lifetime.

There's so many lessons from a chapters like this, so many practical things that we could take away as we've seen God developing David's character, as we've seen him broadening his impact as a leader, as we've seen David growing in maturity. But for now, just want to give you a few thoughts that God impressed upon me about what's going to be important to me this week.

As I head into it now. First was out of the fear of the Lord. David would not take matters into his own hands. Trusting God to do what God had chosen to do on God's own timetable was more important to David than getting revenge for himself. And for me, I think that's a good challenge. It's a good reminder that when things are not done the way they should be done, if people wrong you, when people do something against you that you know you did not deserve, resist trying to take matters into your own hand.

I think that's one of the hardest lessons we've ever we can ever learn, and I do. I do believe because it is so hard. It is a lesson that we repeatedly learn time after time. Again, I will not avenge myself. God is on his throne. I think another take away, if you want to call it that, is that mercy triumphs over justice.

Whenever we depend on God's grace, this is how we have been forgiven. Had God dispatched only his justice, refusing to give us his mercy and his grace, we never would have found peace with him. So as much as it is humanly possible to extend God's mercy and give God's grace and

place of justice to others with hopes that God will still change their heart and redirect the course of their lives.

Another way for us to maybe apply this is to remember only God can avenge our wrongs perfectly and with absolute justice. Knowing God, as we heard this morning from Pastor Dan so well, knowing that God says, vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, we are wise to leave the wrongs of others that they have done to us. It is best for us just to leave it with him.

Lord, I lay it at your feet and I'm not picking it up again. And I think one last practical application is simply to be reminded God is always at work in our lives, in every situation that we face. Whatever it is that you've gone through last week, the week before, the week before, that, whatever it is that you will face in the days ahead, God is always at work.

He's working in your life. He's actually ordaining the things that you might not want simply because he's trying to chisel away from you. Those things are keeping you from giving God the glory. He is at work in your life. He is a work in my life. He is in work in our lives collectively as a church. And he is perfecting his will.

He is strengthening our convictions. He is developing our character and he is making us more like him.

Father, we would ask that you would continue that work. Oh Lord, I can't ask that without admitting that. I many times chafe when you do. In my humanity, I'd much rather settle the score. But Lord, I pray that you would increase the fear of the Lord in each of us, that we would walk humbly before the Lord our God, and walking humbly before you, that we would live as we ought to live before each other. Let us be quick to forgive. Let us be bold in extending mercy and even grace to those who seem undeserving.

And most of all, Lord, let us remain confident that you are the God who is just. Whenever wrongs are done to us, it is you, O Lord, who makes them right, and it will happen in your perfect time, in your perfect way. So keep us faithful to the end. Then we will have given you all the glory in Jesus name.

Amen.