

**1Samuel 24:1 ¶** And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David *is* in the wilderness of Engedi.

**1Samuel 24:2** Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

**1Samuel 24:3** And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where *was* a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

Continuing the narrative from the previous chapter...

When Saul had returned after addressing the Philistine threat, he was told that David was hiding in the wilderness of Engedi. So he chose 3000 of the best men of Israel to go with him to find David and his men. The area they intended to search was inhabited by the wild mountain goats. On the way they came to some sheep pens by a cave, and Saul stopped to relieve himself in the cave—a cave that just happened to be the one in which David and his men were hiding. It must have been a very big and deep cave for him not to have seen them.

**1Samuel 24:4** And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

**1Samuel 24:5** And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

**1Samuel 24:6** And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD.

**1Samuel 24:7** So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on *his* way.

When David's men saw that it was Saul, they reasoned that the LORD had delivered Saul into David's hand. They quoted the LORD's words back to David—words that promised that He would deliver his enemies into his hands. So David was able to stealthily cut off a portion of Saul's robe without being detected. David immediately regretted what he had done. He told his men that he should not have acted so against the LORD's anointed and prevented them from rising up against Saul.

Saul left the cave to rejoin his troops.

Some commentators posit, and it makes sense to me, that Saul took a nap after attending to physical necessities. That would allow for a more logical explanation of David being able to surreptitiously cut off a piece of Saul's robe.

I liked Clarke's explanation: "However unworthily Saul was now acting, he had been appointed to his high office by God himself, and he could only be removed by the authority which placed him on the throne. Even David, who knew he was

appointed to reign in his stead, and whose life Saul had often sought to destroy, did not conceive that he had any right to take away his life; and he grounds the reasons of his forbearance on this - He is my master, I am his subject. He is the Lord's anointed, and therefore sacred as to his person in the Lord's sight."

I loved Guzik's application: "Sometimes when we have a promise from God we think we are justified in sinning to pursue that promise. This is *always wrong*. God will fulfill His promises, but He will do it *His way*, and do it *righteously*. Instead, we need to be like Abraham, who obeyed God even when it seemed to be at the expense of God's promise, willing to sacrifice the son of promise (Genesis 22). Even more, we need to be like Jesus, who didn't take Satan's offer to "win back the world" at the expense of obedience (Luke 4:5-8)."

The IVP Commentary added this insight: "Divine right to the throne could serve as an extraordinary insurance policy for the king as long as the mystique of being the 'Lord's anointed' was maintained. Thus David's refusal to act demonstrates his loyalty to God's original designation of Saul as king and also provides an argument against future attempts on his own life when he became king."

**1Samuel 24:8** David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

**1Samuel 24:9** ¶ And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

**1Samuel 24:10** Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and *some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed.*

**1Samuel 24:11** Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that *there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.*

After allowing Saul to go far enough to put some reasonable distance between them, David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, respectfully addressing him as "My lord the king" as he bowed with his face to the earth. He asked Saul why he believed the gossip of men who said that David wanted to hurt him. The fact that he had spared his life, even though presented the opportunity when he came into David's cave, should testify to Saul that David meant him no harm. He admitted that some of his men had urged him to kill Saul, but he had told them that he would not harm the LORD's anointed.

David then showed Saul the piece of his robe that he held in his hand as further evidence to the truth of what he said. He reiterated that Saul was seeking to take his life without true cause since he had done no sin against Saul.

**1Samuel 24:12** The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

**1Samuel 24:13** As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth

**from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.**

**1Samuel 24:14 After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.**

**1Samuel 24:15 The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.**

David called for the LORD to judge between himself and Saul. If David was to be avenged of Saul, he would leave it to the LORD; however, he would not personally lift up his hand against Saul.

David then quoted an ancient proverb that basically said that wicked people do wicked things. The implication was clear that David was not wicked and would not do such a wicked thing as kill the LORD's anointed. In fact, David compared himself to a dead dog or a flea—a comparison meant to show the absurdity of thinking that David was a threat to Saul's life.

Again, David called for the LORD to judge between him and Saul. He was confident that the LORD would side with him and protect him from Saul.

**1Samuel 24:16 ¶ And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.**

**1Samuel 24:17 And he said to David, *Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.***

**1Samuel 24:18 And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.**

**1Samuel 24:19 For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.**

When David had finished speaking, Saul responded with what sounds like remorse. He wept and responded to David tearfully. He acknowledged that David was more righteous than he because he had responded to Saul's evil with good even though Saul had responded to his goodness with evil. He admitted that David's true heart toward him had been revealed when he spared Saul's life that day. No rational man would let his enemy escape. He then asked for the LORD to reward David for his graciousness toward Saul that day.

**1Samuel 24:20 And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.**

**1Samuel 24:21 Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.**

**1Samuel 24:22 And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.**

Saul finally admitted before David that he knew that David would one day be king over Israel. He asked David to swear that he would not destroy his

descendants and cut off his name out of his father's house. This would be normal for a king who had not inherited his throne from his father; it would ensure that sedition not originate from some resentful aspiring heir to the throne.

David so promised, and Saul went home. David and his men, however, went back to their stronghold. Why? I think because David had been around Saul long enough to know that his character was unstable. He was not about to let down his guard in spite of Saul's show of humility.