

Revenge

Opener: What's your favorite movie or book about someone settling a score?

Scripture: After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the Desert of En Gedi."² So Saul took three thousand able young men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats.³ He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave.⁴ The men said, "This is the day the Lord spoke of when he said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.'" Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

⁵ Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe.⁶ He said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the Lord."⁷ With these words David sharply rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.

⁸ Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.⁹ He said to Saul, "Why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you?'"¹⁰ This day you have seen with your own eyes how the Lord delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, 'I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the Lord's anointed.'¹¹ See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. See that there is nothing in my hand to indicate that I am guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life.¹² May the Lord judge between you and me. And may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you.¹³ As the old saying goes, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' so my hand will not touch you.¹⁴ "Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Who are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea?"¹⁵ May the Lord be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand."

¹⁶ When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" And he wept aloud.¹⁷ "You are more righteous than I," he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly."¹⁸ You have just now told me about the good you did to me; the Lord delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me.¹⁹ When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the Lord reward you well for the way you treated me today.²⁰ I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands.²¹ Now swear to me by the Lord that you will not kill off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's family."²² So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold. I Samuel 24:1-22

Discussion Questions

Last week we focused on dealing with enemies. This week we'll take a deeper look at what God says about seeking revenge against our enemies.

1. David had done nothing but good for Israel, and yet Saul felt threatened because he knew David was God's choice to be the next king. So David was threatened by Saul and Saul was threatened by David. Describe the differences in their attitudes and actions in response to those threats. I Samuel 24:1-22
2. David had the perfect opportunity to get revenge against Saul. And after all, what's the problem with getting revenge? Isn't it helping God bring justice on earth? Why would David chose not to harm Saul, even though Saul had been doing everything he could to destroy him? I Sam. 24:4
3. David knew God's will was for him to be king, but the how was less clear. Here David is being tempted to take the short cut to becoming king. How are we sometimes tested or tempted to take the short cut to bring about God's will?
4. The pain we feel when attacked or hurt by an enemy is real. The question is, what should we do with that pain? How do we defend ourselves in a way that honors the Lord? How do we know when we should defend ourselves or when we should just let it go?
5. How would you describe God's master plan for our lives and for the church? How does retaliating or seeking revenge affect that plan?
6. What's your impression of others who commonly retaliate? What does a desire to retaliate reveal about us? About our relationship with God? What's helped you most to keep from retaliating or trying to get even?
7. When have you or someone you know had the opportunity to seek revenge but chose forgiveness or kindness instead? What happened?

Wrap Up

We often believe that exacting revenge will help us feel better or give us closure. But in fact, it actually prolongs the pain and creates a cycle of retaliation. Scripture consistently tells us not to seek revenge, and here's why—retaliating or seeking revenge multiplies pain and dishonors the God we serve. When we do it we're broadcasting that we don't trust Him and rejecting



Anyway, this is truly an amazing story. Who would have thought that Saul answering “nature’s call” where David and his men “just happened” to be hiding would result in such a perfect illustration of how to leave vengeance to the Lord?