

# THE LIFE OF SAUL MERCIFULLY SPARED BY DAVID: LESSONS ON HONOURING GOD'S ANOINTED

## 1 SAMUEL 24:01–07

### *Introduction*

Repaying or doing good for evil is not a simple thing to do. For example, how can we love our enemies — those who abuse, assault or commit some act of violence against us, perhaps even attempting to kill us?

Think for a moment: If someone ridicules, mocks or curses us — what does it mean to do good to that person? If a person steals from us, causes financial difficulty or destroys our property — what does it mean to do good to him or her?

To do good for evil does not mean to give license to wickedness nor to indulge evil.

To do good would mean to correct and discipline the wicked or evil person. Correction and discipline are good, helpful and beneficial for the person who lives a life of sinful behaviour. But when we seek to correct and discipline the wicked, we do it with a spirit of care and compassion, not out of a spirit gripped by vindictiveness and revenge. We correct and discipline the wicked and evil of this earth by executing the compassionate, righteous laws of God. These laws are spelled out in God's Holy Word.

David was gripped by the compassionate, righteous laws of God. For this reason, when the opportunity came to take revenge upon his enemy, King Saul, he acted instead in compassion, not in vengeance and retaliation. David rendered good for evil. This is the subject of this captivating passage of Scripture: *The Life of Saul Mercifully Spared by David: Lessons on Honouring God's Anointed*, 1 Samuel 24:1-22.

- I. David's respect for the office of king: a lesson on the need to honour God's *anointed leader* (vv. 1-7).
- II. David's humility and his loyalty to King Saul: a lesson on the need for humility and loyalty (vv. 8-15).
- III. Saul's remorse and confession that David would be king: a lesson on repaying good for evil (vv. 16-22).

### ***1 Samuel 24:01–07 David's Respect for the Office of King: Honouring God's Anointed Leader***

There was David's respect for the office of king, a strong lesson on the need to honour God's anointed leader. Remember, Saul had been right on the verge of capturing David when he received an urgent message that the Philistines had attacked Israel. As a result, he was forced to give up his pursuit, forced to return and defend the nation against the Philistine invaders. After turning back the Philistine aggression, he returned home to Gibeah and reinstated his spy network to find out where David was hiding. Note what happened:

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1. David's hideout was soon discovered by the spies who passed on the information to Saul. David was hiding out in the Wilderness or Desert of En Gedi, which was an oasis with plenty of fresh water and fruitful vineyards. En Gedi was located east of Hebron close by the Dead Sea.

As soon as Saul received this information from his spies, he mobilized a *special force* of 3,000 soldiers who set out in search of David. They marched to the inaccessible Rocks of the Wild Goats where they began their search. As evening approached, they came to a very fertile area where a number of sheep pens had been built and decided to make camp there. As the cloak of darkness began to set in, Saul walked out from the camp looking for a place to relieve himself and noticed off in the distance a large cave to which he headed.

2. Unknown to Saul, David and his men were hiding far back in the very same cave (v. 4).
3. So remarkable was the coincidence that David's men suggested this was of God (v. 4). God had placed David's enemy into his hands: he should therefore seize the moment and kill Saul.
4. But note what David did: quietly tiptoeing, he crept up and cut off only a corner of Saul's robe (v. 4). Obviously Saul had taken off his robe and laid it aside some distance away, which enabled David to creep up unnoticed.
5. Afterward, however, David was stricken in conscience for what he had done (vv. 5-7). And note, he shared the fact with his men. He stated that he had been disrespectful to his master, their ruler and the LORD's anointed. Since Saul was the LORD's anointed, the men's counsel to kill him could not be carried out. To kill the LORD's anointed would be an act of outright rebellion against the LORD, for the LORD commanded His people not to curse their rulers (Exo 22:28). In fact, the hand of God's judgment had fallen in the past when God's people rebelled against their leaders (Num 12:2-15; 16:1-35). (Robert D. Bergen. *1, 2 Samuel*, p. 239).

With this rebuke, David was able to stop his men from killing Saul. As a result, Saul left the cave and returned to his men at the campsite.

**Thought 1.** Civil leaders and religious leaders are to be respected. We are to honour our leaders, not curse or ridicule them, certainly not assault or kill them. Even when a leader is wrong, we are to show respect and honour for the position the person holds. If the leader is wrong, acting in some wicked or evil way, we should do everything in our power to correct the leader. But in correcting, God demands that we still show respect and honour for the leader. If we retaliate in some unkind, lawless or violent way, we stoop to the level of the wicked and corrupt leader. Such disrespectful, dishonouring and lawless behaviour makes us no better than the immoral and unjust leader. God's Holy Word is clear and straightforward: we must honour both our civil and religious leaders.

(1) We must honour our civil leaders.

**Mat 22:21** "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

**Acts 23:5** Paul replied, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'"

**Rom 13:1** Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

**Titus 3:1** Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good.

**1 Pet 2:13-14** Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

**1 Pet 2:17** Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king.

**Exo 22:28** Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people.

**Prov 11:11** Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed.

**Prov 14:34** Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.

**Prov 16:12** Kings detest wrongdoing, for a throne is established through righteousness.

**Eccl 8:2** Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God.

(2) We must honour our religious leaders.

**Phil 2:29** Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour men like him.

**1 Th 5:12-13** Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.

**1 Tim 5:17** The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

**Heb 13:7** Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. ■