

What to Do When You Are Mistreated

1 Samuel 24

October 17th, 2021

1. An opportunity for _____ (24:1-7)
2. An example of trusting in God's _____ (24:8-15)
3. An apparent _____ (24:16-22)
4. The _____ behind David's actions (Psalm 57)
 - a. God is _____. (57:1-2)
 - b. God is _____. (57:3)
 - c. God's _____ is my highest goal. (57:4-5)
5. What should you do when you are mistreated:
 - a. Entrust _____ to the Lord.
 - b. Entrust your _____ and _____ to the Lord.
 - c. Act with _____ before the Lord.
 - d. Don't listen to bad _____.
 - e. Avoid _____ and _____.
 - f. Reach out for _____.

Questions for discussion/reflection on 1 Samuel 24

1. Have you ever been in a situation in which you have been consistently mistreated? How was it similar to David's situation? Can you think of any other common situations of prolonged mistreatment that people experience?
2. Why might his men have concluded that it was God's will to take Saul's life? (v. 4) What was the problem with their conclusion? What lesson can we learn about interpreting God's will based on circumstances?
3. Why was David's conscience bothered by cutting the robe? (v. 5)
4. In what ways does David try to defend himself from Saul with his words in vv. 9-15?
5. Saul's words seem so clearly repentant in vv. 17-21. What explains the lack of change in his actions in the chapters that follows? (see 1 Sam. 26:2) Consider what we observe about Saul in the previous chapters as well.
6. Psalms 57 and 142 were both written while David hid in a cave. What truths about God, life, suffering, etc. do you see in those Psalms that can provide help for someone who is suffering prolonged mistreatment today?
7. Why is it important for a Christian to entrust vengeance to God rather than taking revenge themselves? (see Rom. 12:17-21) What makes that difficult to do in real life?
8. How can we avoid both naivety and cynicism when we have been mistreated by someone over a long period of time? (Matt. 18:21-35; Eph. 4:31-5:2)

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Big idea: How to trust in the Lord, act with integrity, and be patient while being mistreated by others.

Intro

David's life may not be where he expected it to be at this point. When he was young, he may have assumed he would be raising sheep and raising a family like his father before him. After the dramatic events of chapter 16, he may have assumed he would be sitting on a throne and ruling. If not that, then at least after playing soothing music for Saul and then defeating Goliath, he would have an important place in the throne room until his time came. Instead, he's hiding in a cave with a band of rejects from society.

What happened between chapters 17 and 24?

17 David and Goliath

18 David's friendship with Jonathan, Saul's jealousy over David's success

19 Jonathan and Michal help David escape as Saul tried to kill him

20 David wonders what he has done, Jonathan finds out that Saul does intend to kill him and sends a message to David and so David fled

21 David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest, fled to Achish king of Gath, pretended to be insane

22 Fled to cave of Adullam, Saul killed priests of Nob with Ahimelech,

23 David saves the city of Keilah and then fled, Saul pursued him and they fled around different sides of the mountain

In the story of David's life, this chapter would prove to later critics that he did not seize power through underhanded means, as he would be accused of by Shimei in 2 Samuel 16 who says he took power by shedding blood.

But his experience in this passage overlaps with a common experience that you may have had also. He is being mistreated – horribly and unfairly mistreated – and he has an opportunity to take vengeance and justice into his own hands.

Maybe you have a coworker that just hounds you.

Maybe you have a neighbor that takes every opportunity to harass you.

Maybe you have a family member that twists everything you do, slanders you, lies about you.

What should you do when you're being mistreated? There may be specific nuances in your situation – times to involve human resources at work or the police in a neighborhood – but we find here some principles that help you shepherd your soul and guide your response when you are being mistreated.

1. An opportunity for vengeance (24:1-7)

- a. David is in the wilderness of Engedi, a mountainous, dry area on the western edge of the Dead Sea. It was marked with caves and deep ravines that made it an ideal place to hide out.
 - i. *See pic*
- b. Saul's forces greatly outnumber David's.
 - i. He has 3,000 chosen men whereas David's forces are described this way:
 - ii. **1 Samuel 22:2** Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him.
 - iii. By chapter 23 he has 600 men, but it's still a 5 to 1 advantage for Saul.

- c. Saul's men come to a specific spot – a named rock with a sheep pen – and Saul pulls aside into a cave.
 - i. Add this to the list of things we are surprised to find in the bible – awkward and ironic bathroom stories.
- d. In this cave were at least a portion of David's men, although perhaps not all 600.
 - i. His men read God's will into these circumstances – surely this is the day for you to take Saul's life! Look at him, Saul's right here!
 - ii. There is no record of the Lord speaking this promise to David. There is a similar word about God giving the Philistines into his hands in chapter 23, but not Saul.
 - iii. There is danger in interpreting circumstances as revealing God's will because we do not know what they mean. It's especially dangerous when the course of action we think the circumstances justify is sin. Rather, we look to the Word and apply it to circumstances.
 - 1. "I've been praying about a new car and when I opened Facebook, this advertisement for a new car was the first thing I saw! It must be God's will! (granted it costs twice as much as I planned to spend and I'm not quite sure how we'll afford it ...but it's God's will right so he'll provide?)"
 - 2. A single person who desires marriage bumps into an attractive stranger at the grocery store and they hit it off, but he doesn't know Christ. It must be God's will for them to be together though because it was such a providential encounter, right?
- e. David doesn't follow through with their suggestion to take Saul's life, but he does cut off a portion of his robe and then his conscience is bothered. Why? It seems so minor!
 - i. He didn't assault Saul but it might be seen as an assault on Saul's office as king.
 - ii. When Saul disobeyed the Lord in ch 15, Samuel used his own torn cloak to illustrate the way the kingdom would be torn from Saul and given to another.
 - iii. Additionally, there is some historical evidence that robe indicated his kingship, perhaps by the color or the pattern on the tassels that he cut off. Cutting off the corner may be more similar to breaking a piece off of a crown.
 - iv. Either way, his conscience is sensitive "because of the Lord" (v. 6).
 - 1. Oh, how we wish his conscience would have been so sensitive later in life!
 - v. It wasn't pragmatism that stayed his hand or fear of Saul's larger force, it was because of the Lord.
 - 1. Our conscience, our moral compass, must be shaped far ahead of the testing point.
- 2. An example of trusting in God's justice (24:8-15)
 - a. After Saul is a safe distance away, David emerges from the cave and gives a passionate affirmation of loyalty to the king and trust in the Lord's judgment.
 - b. With his words, body language, and evidence he shows that he isn't Saul's enemy.
 - i. "My lord the king" "my father," he bowed with his face to the ground, here's the piece of robe I cut off without you knowing, clearly I could have taken your life but I didn't.
 - c. Twice he says "may the Lord judge between you and me" and twice he affirms that "my hand shall not be against you."
 - i. Notice, he doesn't pretend that it's ok what Saul has been doing. He only affirms that it isn't his job to avenge, it's God's job.

1. Vengeance says, “you have hurt me so I am going to hurt you back.”
 2. Entrusting God to avenge says, “you hurt me, but I’m not going to hurt you back. God may judge or discipline, or God may forgive even as he has forgiven me, but I’m not going to be the one to hurt you back.”
 - ii. Miroslav Volf, a Croatian who is a theologian at Yale, on how it’s only a belief in God’s perfect vengeance that holds back the cycle of human violence. From 1991 to 1995 his homeland of Croatia was involved in a civil war and a war to establish their international borders. More than 20,000 people were killed, many of them civilians. The economy was devastated. War crime tribunals would last until at least 2015. He has written extensively about a belief in God’s vengeance as the only thing that will stop cycles of human vengeance.
 1. If God were not angry at injustice and deception and did not make a final end to violence – that God would not be worthy of worship ... The only means of prohibiting all recourse to violence by ourselves is to insist that violence is legitimate only when it comes from God.
 - iii. David leaves judgment and deliverance to the Lord, rather than taking up his sword and taking Saul’s life.
3. An apparent **repentance** (24:16-22)
- a. At first it seems like the words get through to Saul.
 - i. He calls David his son, which he was briefly by marriage to Saul’s daughter.
 - ii. He lifts up his voice and weeps.
 - iii. He affirms that David is more righteous than him and his own actions have been wicked.
 - iv. He acknowledged that a man will not typically let go of his enemy when he finds him (v. 19), so it must be that Saul is not David’s enemy.
 - b. He also acknowledges that the kingdom will go to David and asks that his descendants would be spared, which David does later go to great lengths to do, sparing Saul’s grandson Mephibosheth.
 - c. If we didn’t read on we would think everything is great between Saul and David.
 - i. ESV expository commentary - David’s plain speaking has penetrated Saul’s defenses and aroused his slumbering conscience. Overwhelmed by emotion (self-pity?), “Saul lifted up his voice and wept.” Only time will reveal the depth of Saul’s regret.
 - ii. Only time will show whether this is really lasting repentance. And sadly, it is not.
 - iii. David must know to be wary because he didn’t follow Saul back but rather he went up to a stronghold.
 - iv. Saul’s pursuit of David picks back up in ch 26 and continues until Saul’s death in ch 31.

4. The **theology** behind David’s actions (Psalm 57)

We have a rare opportunity to peer behind the scenes at the theology that led to David’s response. It’s likely that he wrote Psalm 57 at this time.

For the choir director; set to Al-tashheth. A Mikhtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

- a. God is **sovereign**. (57:1-2)
 - i. He will fulfill his purpose for me, he will accomplish all things for me – I don’t have to break His commands to get what I want.

- ii. God had promised through Samuel that David would be king. Hiding in a cave it might be hard to see how that would happen. But David trusted that God would accomplish it without David having to take it into his own hands.
 - iii. Don't take a desire and make it into a promise from God –
 - 1. A desire for marriage, financial security, good health, recovery, etc. isn't wrong but we aren't promised those things.
 - iv. But the things we are promised, God will be faithful to sovereignly accomplish.
 - 1. He will not cast out the one who comes to Him.
 - a. **John 6:37** "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.
 - 2. He promises to use all things to conform us to be like Jesus.
 - a. **Romans 8:28-29** And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.
²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;
 - 3. He promises to complete the good work that He began in us when He saved us.
 - a. **Philippians 1:6** *For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.
 - 4. He promises to hold firm to those that are His.
 - a. **John 10:27-28** "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;
²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.
 - b. God is loving. (57:3)
 - i. One author describes God's faithful love in v. 3 as a critical partner to sovereignty. God is not only sovereign, which may not have felt like a comfort, but loving. Sovereignty without assurance of love feels like blind fate.
 - c. God's glory is my highest goal. (57:4-5)
 - i. More than just relief, he prays for God's glory – for God to be exalted. "whether his prayer leads to rescue or more pain, David is less concerned with himself than with his God. This is one of the primary differences between David and Saul." Heath Thomas/JD Greer
 - ii. How can I show what I really think about God in this situation?
 - iii. **1 Peter 2:12** Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.
5. What should you do when you are mistreated:
- a. Entrust vengeance to the Lord.
 - i. **Romans 12:17a** Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.
 - ii. **Romans 12:19** Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of *God*, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

- iii. Along with this comes a wariness of our own hearts and evaluations of the situation. David's perspective was, "may the Lord judge between me and you." We must be careful of overconfidence in our own rightness. Trusting justice to God is the safest place to be.
- b. Entrust your heart and care to the Lord.
 - i. See Ps 57
 - ii. He knows, He sees, He cares, He's trustworthy. Cry out to him in your pain, your uncertainty, your frustration. Ask for strength when you feel like you can't bear up under the situation any longer but there isn't an exit.
- c. Act with integrity before the Lord.
 - i. **1 Peter 2:18-20** Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. ¹⁹ For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.
 - ii. Don't let their sin excuse your sin.
- d. Don't listen to bad counsel.
 - i. **Proverbs 1:5** A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,
 - ii. Getting counsel is good, but not all counsel is good. Some friends from work might counsel you to hit the divorce button at the slightest marriage conflict. Some friends might fuel your bitterness rather than help settle you down when you need it.
 - iii. Ask – do they share my commitment to biblical truth? Are they simply saying what they think I want to hear? Does their counsel reflect the culture more than God's perspective?
- e. Avoid naivety and cynicism.
 - i. Naivety would have been to join Saul's caravan and head back to Gibeah with him, where he promptly spears him to the wall.
 - ii. Cynicism would have been to say, "why should I even attempt to appeal to Saul's conscience. He'll never change."
 - iii. For example, a woman in an abusive situation may be wise to not take a quick apology as signs that things have really changed. Time will tell. But she should also guard against a cynicism that things will *never* change.
- f. Reach out for help.
 - i. Who could David have reached out to for help? No one, really.
 - ii. But that isn't necessarily your situation if you are being mistreated. Reach out to parents, pastors, elders, human resources, boss, police.



1

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vengeance (24:1-7)

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b. Entrust your *heart* and *care* to the Lord.

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