

Title: Does Good Really Triumph Over Evil? Pt.2
Text: 1 Samuel 24
Theme: Blessed are the meek
Series: 1 Samuel 24
Prop Stmt: Never underestimate the power of God's grace to dismantle the kingdoms of this world.

The events of 1 Samuel 24 take place at En-gedi. He is a long way from home and an even longer way away from the throne. But this text is like biting into the very center of cream-filled donut, or a perfectly prepared steak. What David says is so sweet, so good and good for us. The juices overwhelm the tastebuds of our hearts as we see why he is a man after God's heart.

Read Text:

What would it be like to have a super-power? You know, to be that average looking guy or gal who in an hour of crisis is really not average, but actually a very powerful person? Would you use your power for the good of others, or for your own selfishness? Captain America has an indestructible shield. Black Panther has enhanced senses, magical resistance and a Vibranium-assisted outfit. Hawkeye is a superior bowman and a knife and sword master. Iron-man, Black Widow, Ultron and more each have super powers.

If you are a follower of Christ, you have a super-power. Your super-power is meekness. Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." They get it all. The meek get it all. The meek are about the last people you would think would get it all. But meekness is surprisingly powerful and this text is an amazing example of meekness and how mercy, grace and meekness dismantle the power of this world. Time is always on the side of the meek.

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel are answering the question: Who should be king? Israel wanted a king and in fact, demanded one. So, God gave them the one that they wanted. His name was Saul. He looked the part, but he did not have the heart. His rejection of God and promotion of himself resulted in God rejecting him. God then identified another to be king. He did not look the part, but God knew that he had the heart. And from the time that David was designated by God to be the next king, God kept exposing the heart of David and revealing why this time, God didn't give Israel the king they wanted, but the king that he wanted.

The first time that David's words are recorded is in chapter 17 and we are clearly impressed with his courage, his humility and his confidence in God. From then on, he really doesn't say that much until here in chapter 24. This speech is epic. Verses 8-15 are revealing and they are astounding for what they reveal. David is likely in his 20's at this point. He is past the naïve idealism of youth. He has seen a lot of death and pain, and is in the wilderness both literally and figuratively. He is cut off from his family. His wife has been given to another man. He is the reason for his mom, dad and siblings to fear for their lives. His brothers, who fought for Saul back in chapter 17 dare not do it now. David is being seasoned by the harshness of life, but as we see, it does not make him hard or bitter.

He had the chance of a lifetime to kill the man who was trying to kill him and take the throne by force. Instead of returning evil for evil, David showed mercy and restrained from killing Saul and restrained his men from doing the same. Saul had no idea of how close to death he was. He rose up and left the cave and went on his way.

David let Saul get a little way away and then he also rose and went out of the cave. He was quiet no longer. He called after Saul, and in the hearing of Saul, Saul's men and David's men, David said, "My lord the king!" Wow! Saul viewed David as his enemy. David's men viewed Saul as their enemy and David's enemy. David refused to let the world around him define his categories. Saul was not his enemy; Saul was his earthly lord and his rightful king. His address was followed by his posture of humility. David bowed with his face to the earth and paid homage. He really believed that Saul was his king and he honored him in private and in public. This was not an act. This was a conviction and it was not convenient.

From verse 9 - 15, we read an amazing speech by David that reveals some things about David. Keep in mind two things: 1) This was not a planned event that David had a chance to rehearse and prepare for. This was a reaction. You can plan your actions and they may or may not reflect your character and internal values, but your reactions are a more accurate indicator of what is in your heart. 2) David is under a great deal of pressure. He is in the wilderness. He has 600 men who are following him. David is responsible to protect these men. They believe in him. He has to figure out how to feed them, train them, correct them, work out their problems, keep their spirits up all the while Saul and 3,000 of Israel's finest soldiers and tracking them down in order to kill them and the local townspeople keep ratting them out to Saul. We could understand if David cracked under the pressure, because it is a lot of pressure. Leadership, properly understood is a weight, a burden, at times immense pressure, it is not a gig. He is in a very lonely position. All of this contributes to the fact that the content and conviction that is revealed in this speech is amazing.

1. **Justice belongs to God.** (9-15)

Throughout this entire book we see this contrast between David and Saul. Saul sees God as a magic charm, almost like a rabbit's foot or superstitious power to use when you need some help to get out of a jam. Ultimately Saul is loyal to Saul. David, on the other hand, sees God as God. David's submission to Saul has his earthly authority is the result of David's submission to God has his ultimate and final authority. David has a theology and it is personal. How many prayers of Saul are recorded? None. Saul had a ceremonial belief. It was all photo ops for him. He knew how to pose for the cameras, how to wrap his Torah in the flag of Israel. He knew what would look good in the press. But there was no humility. There was no mercy or grace in his life. There was no loving your enemy. There was no patience, or gentleness. Power was his to wield, control and hang on to no matter what. But, believing in God was not a ceremonial act for David. It was real. But what was it that David believed about God? In this text you hear it and see it. He personally believes that justice ultimately belongs to God. The sword of justice was not David's to pick up. The cup of mercy was. God had been merciful to David, so David was merciful.

How you live reveals what your real theology is. What matters to you, what you do under pressure, how you respond when life is not fair, what you say to your world when it tries to get you to do what it wants all reveals what you really believe about God. Part of David's belief about and view of God (his theology) is that God is the King and judge of the earth. Therefore, justice belongs to God and it is up to him to carry it out on his terms, not ours. This speech is masterful at so many points but at its heart it reveals how much David fundamentally believes that justice belongs to God, no matter what.

A. It doesn't matter what others say. (9-10)

David asks Saul a very pointed and telling question. "*Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Behold David seeks your harm?'*" That is an excellent question. Why Saul? You are the king. You have to lead. You have to do the right thing. That is your job. Why do you listen to people who are lying to you? Why do you allow people who are lying to you shape your thinking and control your actions? Look at the facts. Look at reality. Have I ever tried to kill you? Have I ever treated you this way? Have I ever been part of a plot to assassinate you? I had a chance to kill you just now in the cave. And guess what? I had people talking to me too. Some of them told me to kill you, but I spared you. I did not give up my convictions to others. I did the right thing. I did not listen to them. I did the right thing and spared your life.

Saul is a man after man's heart. He has no moral compass, no convictional set of principles that govern his values and decisions. Therefore, he is swayed by what others say. He does not fear God, so he fears man. He doesn't listen to the word of God, so he is blown here and there by the words of man. In the end, Saul doesn't know who he is, what he believes, and what he should do. It is a terrifying place to be. I am not just describing Saul; I am describing so many of our politicians. I am alerting you now to this theme because it becomes very prominent. In this world, political power is used to stay in power. Saul had supreme power in the land. His word was the law. What would he do with that power? He is seeking to kill his greatest general because he fears that his dynasty is in jeopardy.

The person who is in a position of power attracts people who, like leeches find their life source from the person in power. Through flattery, vanity, bribery and other means of trickery, these people worm their way like Grima did with Theoden into the hearing of the king and seek to exploit the fears of the king for their own purposes. Kings are wise to have advisors, but it is critical that their advisors are truly wise. Beloved, it doesn't matter what others say. In David's case, he stood alone but he knew what was right. He knew that justice belonged to God and that didn't change when it was convenient.

B. It doesn't matter what the circumstances are. (10-11)

Here is another obvious contrast with typical leadership vs. godly leadership. Back in chapter 13, Saul panicked when the Philistines were gathering and his own army was starting to bail out on so he violated the terms of his office, disobeyed a clear command from God and usurped the role of a priest and offered a sacrifice. Circumstantially, we can see the pressure that Saul was

under. He knew that it was the wrong thing to do even when he said to Samuel, "I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering." David could have said the same thing. What was I supposed to do? It's like God set this up for me.

Saul was alone, naked, vulnerable and easy to dispatch with. But, does the convenience of the circumstance change the conviction from God? No. That is not what you will hear from this world. David wasn't getting justice from God in a timely fashion, was he? David had a promise from God that he was going to be king, but there wasn't anything that David could point to that gave him any confidence that this was going to happen anytime soon. Maybe David should just take matters into his own hands, after all, Saul certainly has. But...

C. It doesn't matter what your opponent does. (11b-15)

I have not sinned against you, though you hunt my life to take it. (11b)

May the LORD judge between me and you, may the LORD avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you. (12)

May the LORD therefore be judge and give sentence between me and you, and see to it and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand. (15)

This is both convictional and as we will see, convicting. David trusts so deeply in the justice of God that David will not lift his hand against Saul. In fact, now we see why David was horrified at his own actions of cutting off the corner of the robe. Justice belongs to God. It doesn't matter what others say. It doesn't matter what the circumstances are. And, it doesn't matter what your opponent does. You do not have the authority to usurp God's position and take matters into your own hand.

This is something that I have to remember when I drive. Like you, I have witnessed more than my share of really bad decisions by drivers. Sometimes I get cut off and I am really tempted to "teach that other driver a lesson." Right? They should know better. They should know that you ought not drive like that because you could hurt someone. So, if I tailgate them for the next 15 miles, or better yet pull in front of them and slow down to 25, then they will get the message, learn their lesson, repent of their stupidity, change their behavior and of course, thank me profusely for kindly going out of my way to help them realize the error of their driving ways. It always works out like that, right? The truth is, that has nothing to do with me wanting to help them, but it has everything to do with me, attempting to take justice into my own hands. It is not my job to teach another driver how to drive and when I do that, I heap upon my plate a responsibility and a burden that is not mine to bear which only adds to frustration and angst.

Can you think of someone who lives a consistently frustrated and stressed-out life? How much of their frustration comes from them trying to force other people into changing? How much of their frustration comes from things that are unfair, or other people getting away with something and they have to do something about it! Unless God appoints me as a judge to render a verdict on a case, or a police officer to impartially apply the law, it is not my job to dispense justice on every person in this world. That is up to God. It was not David's job to be

the judge, jury and executioner of Saul. That was not on his plate. It would have been easy for David to think that because that is how Saul was viewing David. But it doesn't matter what your opponent does. Justice belongs to God. Let it go. He will handle it way better than you anyway.

Do you see how valuable this conviction would be for a king to have? I think one of the reasons why there is so much distrust in leaders is because we know what we would be tempted to do with the authority that comes from certain positions. If you are the king, you can do whatever you want. If someone offends you, you can dispense with them – immediately. Is that what a godly king should do? That is what Saul seems to do. But what do you see in David? He is often a very merciful man, who is content to let God mete out justice in his own time. I think it is one of the fundamental reasons why this guy remains so calm even through all of this. He really believes that justice belongs to God.

2. Grace dismantles thrones. (16-22)

Saul is completely undone by this speech. What happened to him in the cave literally now happens to him personally and publicly. He is completely exposed and he admits it. In fact, he literally has a breakdown. He “lifted up his voice and wept.” He then begins to rehearse and review what David has done as if he is trying to sort it out and make sense of it, even as he compares himself to David. His conclusion is: You are more righteous than I. You repaid me good for my evil, whereas I have repaid you evil for your good. You've proven to me that you have no ill intent toward me. The fact that you did not kill me is proof positive that you do not view me as your enemy (v.19) even though I have treated you as one. Then comes verse 20 and this is huge! “I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand.”

Do you see what just happened? For a moment, there was a break in the clouds of Saul's thinking and he admitted what he did not want to believe. But here it is coming directly from Saul's mouth. What he says is a clear admission of his sin and that Samuel was right. The kingdom was taken away from Saul and it was given to a neighbor of his who was more righteous than Saul was and it was David. In this moment he resigns himself to it. But what brings about this change? Did David put a sword to Saul's throat and demand that Saul renounce the throne and admit David to be the rightful king? No, he did the opposite. Saul is undone by grace. His authority was destroyed by the grace that was poured out to him. For the moment, at least, he has no heart to pursue David. Saul is completely defeated.

I will explore this in more detail in a later sermon, but we are witnessing the psychological breaking apart of Saul. He goes from knowing what is right and doing it, to knowing what is right and not doing it. This leads to him knowing what is right and not being able to do it and then to not being able to even know what is right or being able to do it. His personhood cannot handle this and he is breaking apart. It is a pathetic movie we are viewing. Time is not on the side of those who reject God. But time is clearly on the side of the meek.

Genuine Christianity is not advanced by the sword. Neither is it advanced by winning elections. Genuine Christianity is advanced only as grace overwhelms a heart and breaks down the defenses of pride and self-reliance. This is the gospel! When you realize how serious your sin is, and you realize how white-hot righteous God is and how offended his moral outrage is at our sin, we rightfully cower and anticipate his justice like a tsunami to crash upon us and we brace ourselves and wait..., only to discover that it crashed upon Christ in our place. Instead of justice, instead of judgment, instead of wrath, we get forgiveness, because his justice was satisfied by Christ. Only when a person admits their own emptiness and need are they ready to receive the good news of Christ. Now, we who have received mercy are able to give mercy. We who know that justice belongs to God, do not have to take justice into our own hands. We leave to God as Paul said, "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; ...Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Christ overcame your evil by the offering of his good and perfect life in your place. We can rest in that. Our meekness reflects our rest and the meek get it all. It's our super-power.