

## David Shows Great Mercy to Saul

### 1 Samuel 23:7-24:22; 26:1-25

**David Flees from Saul**  
David's growing reputation among the people as a warrior and leader incited Saul's jealousy, and Saul began trying to kill David. David fled from Saul in Gibeah (1) and went to Samuel at Naioth in Ramah (2), but soon Saul sought him there, and David fled back to Jonathan in Gibeah (3). After Jonathan warned David of Saul's determination to kill him, David fled to Ahimelech the priest at Nob (4), where he collected food and Goliath's sword. David briefly sought refuge in the Philistine city of Gath (5) and then set up his headquarters at the cave of Adullam (6), where the ranks of his army swelled to 400 men. In order to protect his parents from harm, David left them in the care of the king of Moab at Mizpeh (7) and went to live in "the stronghold" (8). After some time, David went to the forest of Hereth (9) and then left to rescue nearby Keilah (10) from some Philistine raiding parties. When David heard that Saul was coming to Keilah, he and his growing army of 600 men relocated to the wilderness of Ziph (11). After the men of Ziph betrayed David to Saul, David and his men went to live in the wilderness of Maon (12) and narrowly escaped capture there by Saul. Fleeing the strongholds of Engedi (13), David again evaded capture by Saul and refused an opportunity to take Saul's life. David returned to "the stronghold" (14) and then to the wilderness of Paran (15). While he was there, David was again betrayed to Saul by the men of Ziph and refused another opportunity to take Saul's life. Finally, David and his men sought refuge with Achish, the king of Gath (16).

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**Context:** After a difficult parting with Jonathan (Ch. 20), David had found a brief place of calm and protection in the cave of Adullam (22:1-2) after a scary time in Gath (Ch. 21; Psalm 34). David ended up having roughly 400 men of various backgrounds who joined him in opposition to King Saul—and for survival. But David knew that his life and the life of his parents was in jeopardy with Saul as king. In a drastic move, David relocated his parents to Moab. David listened to the prophet Gad and relocated his growing group of survivors to the forest of Hereth in the land of Judah (22:4-5). After Saul massacred the priests of God at Nob (who had given David aid), David was led by God to go help the people of Keilah from Philistine invaders. One would think that the people of Keilah would be loyal to David after he helped them. However, David asked God for wisdom and God revealed to David that he would be betrayed by the people of Keilah to Saul. David then departed to the "strongholds of the wilderness in the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph" (23:12-14). However, David would need to move again—but not until after Jonathan came and "encouraged him in the LORD" (23:15-18). After the people of Ziph betrayed his position, David fled, and God sovereignly used a Philistine attack on Israel to stop Saul from destroying David.

**Study:** In 1 Samuel Chapters 24 and 26, David is going to show remarkable and godly mercy to Saul, although Saul had relentlessly, mercilessly, and sinfully attempted to murder David.

## I. David spares Saul's life rather than getting personal revenge. (24:1-22)

- David was living out **Psalm 54** while continually running for his life (and not fighting against Saul).
- David and his men were hiding in a cave—and Saul by himself walked in to use the restroom! (The response of David's men in 24:4 is totally understandable.)
- David cut off a part of Saul's personal clothing that would later show Saul how close Saul came to having his life taken but for the mercy of David.
- David's reasoning for not killing Saul is theological and worshipful—rather than personal or revengeful. David respected the position of being God's anointed and he rested in God's sovereignty rather than in getting revenge. (24:6)
- David respectfully gave Saul an earful as Saul walked out alive from the cave.
- Saul was right in everything that he said in response—but his heart had not changed. (24:16-21)
- David mercifully agreed to spare Saul's offspring—but David had no reason to trust Saul and David remained where he was in the stronghold of the Engedi wilderness.

**Context:** While 1 Samuel 15 briefly records the death of Samuel, most of the chapter focuses on God keeps David from making a decision in anger and killing a worthless man named Nabal. God allowed Nabal to die by natural causes and David marries Nabal's wife Abigail as well as another woman named Ahinoam. (Saul had forced David's wife Michal to marry another man.)

## II. David spares Saul's life a second time rather than getting lawful vengeance. (26:1-25)

- David was still living out **Psalm 54** and "Act 2" happens with Saul again gathering 3,000 men to go and hunt David in the wilderness, thus violating any trust that David might have even thought of having towards Saul.
- David knew the wilderness far better than Saul and Saul's general Abner (who had taken David's position as commander of the Israeli army.)
- David and two men enter Saul's camp at night and easily have Saul at their mercy once again as he was sleeping unguarded. (We find later in 26:12 that God had put Saul and his army in a deep sleep. **God was testing David!**)
- The spear that Saul had used to try to kill David other time was now in David's hand with Saul at his feet—what would David do? (David's friend's response in 26:8-9 is once again totally understandable.) **Notice that Abishai asked David for permission to kill Saul—Abishai correctly assumed that David wouldn't do it.**
- David's response is once again theological and worshipful rather than personal or vengeful (26:9-11), even though David had a right to defend himself and his men.
- David wakes Saul's army up and again shows how close Saul was to dying if not for David's mercy (26:12-20). Saul promises to never again attempt harm on David, and this time Saul keeps his word, (26:21-25) although David wouldn't know that until the day that Saul died. David would relocate to the land of the Philistines in Ch. 27.

**Observation:** Proverbs 20:22, Romans 12:17-21, and Psalm 23:5 still ring true today.

**LOOKING AHEAD:** 1 Samuel 28-2 Samuel 5 (*David Finally Begins His Reign as King*)