

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

3rd - 5th Grade

## Sunday Morning

Study 6

*David Spares Saul's life*

# David Spares Saul's life

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

**Objective** To teach the students the importance of not repaying evil with evil, but overcoming evil with Good, and to show that God's way is always the best way.

## Key Verses

1 Samuel 24—Main Teaching Passage  
Romans 12:17-21

**Memory Verse** - Romans 12:21

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

## Hook

Review last week's memory verse, Proverbs 29:25.

Ask the students how they would feel if someone came up to them and punched them in the arm really hard. How would they react to that? Would they be tempted to punch that person back and get into a fight? Ask them how they think God would want them to respond to that person.

Tell them that David was hunted by Saul, who wanted to kill David. Ask them how they think David should behave towards Saul. What if David could ambush Saul and end all of his problems? Should he do that?

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

# BOOK

We begin our study with Saul hunting David in the wilderness. Saul had been told that David was close by, so he took 3,000 men with him to go and capture (and kill) him. As Saul and his men pass by a cave, Saul felt the urge to relieve himself and headed into the cave for privacy.

Unbeknownst to Saul, David and his men were hiding in the cave, and David's men saw the opportunity for David to take Saul's life and be freed from his anger. David's men went as far as to say that this was the Lord's will, and that God was fulfilling a prophecy by handing Saul over to David.

David, however, knew the Word of God. He knew that murder is a sin, and did not take Saul's life. Instead, David snuck up on Saul and cut off a piece of his robe, then allowed Saul to leave. Even this small act of defiance made David upset with himself, having raised his hand against his king.

David followed Saul out of the cave and called to him. He showed him the piece of his robe and told him that if he had wanted to, he could have killed him. In this way, David proved to Saul that there was "neither evil nor rebellion in my hand."

Saul was broken by this, falling to the ground and weeping. He stated that David was more righteous than he was, having shown goodness to Saul, where Saul only showed evil to David. Saul was so moved by this that he realized that God's blessing was on David and that he would be the next king. He asked David to care for his family once he was gone. Saul then abandoned his mission and returned home.

# LOOK

David had been on the run out in the wilderness. He had been sleeping on dirt and rocks, eating what he could gain off the land or whatever kind strangers would give him. All of his problems were a direct result of the actions of one man, Saul. Then, just like that, David was presented with a golden opportunity to take matters into his own hands and end all of the trouble that he had been facing. Saul came walking into the cave that he was hiding in. David could take his sword, strike him down and be free. There was only one problem. David knew that God didn't want him do that. Killing Saul would be a direct violation of God's law. So David resisted the temptation to sin and stayed his hand.

There are times when you and I might be tempted to do something that we know is wrong in an effort to make ourselves more comfortable, or to end some kind of problem we are having. We might be tempted to

The interpretation/  
exegesis of the passage.  
What does this passage  
mean? How does this  
passage apply to my  
life?

# LOOK (Continued)

tell a lie to avoid getting in trouble. We might feel pressured to join in with a sinful behavior so that our friends don't think we are different or weird. We might be tempted to steal something that we want instead of earning the money to pay for it. Or we might be tempted to be disobedient and lazy because we want to do something other than that which we have been told to do.

Whatever the case may be, just like David, we need to judge our actions not by what we want or what our friends are telling us to do, but by God's Word. We know that it is wrong to lie, steal, cheat, etc. Even though it may seem like doing that thing will make life easier in the short term, we need to remember that sin always leads to greater trouble and pain further down the road.

David didn't rely on his own strength, but rather put his fate in the hands of the Lord. David did things God's way, and God honored him for that. Saul was brought to repentance (for a little while at least), and David was able to leave the wilderness and return to his stronghold.

I am sure that David was very tempted to return Saul's violence with more violence. Romans 12:17-21 commands us not repay evil for evil, not to take revenge, but to allow the Lord to act on our behalf. It tells us to instead show goodness and love, even to those who are sinning against us. Read Romans 12:17-21 to the class and discuss it.

# TOOK

As a class, memorize Romans 12:21

Ask the kids if there has ever been a time where they "repaid evil with evil." Did the situation get better or worse? What could they have done instead?

**Pray:** Thank the Lord for His Word to us, and for his desire for us to live lives of righteousness. Ask for His help to know the Word and to live in obedience to Him.

**Parent Question:** Why was David tempted to harm Saul? What did David do instead?

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

# FURTHER STUDY

## Commentary on 1 Samuel 24 by David Guzik

### 1 SAMUEL 24 – DAVID SPARES SAUL’S LIFE

A. David doesn’t kill Saul when he has the opportunity.

1. (1-2) Saul seeks David in the Wilderness of En Gedi.

Now it happened, when Saul had returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, “Take note! David is in the Wilderness of En Gedi.” Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats.

a. When Saul had returned from following the Philistines: In the previous chapter, God miraculously delivered David by drawing Saul away to fight the Philistines at the moment Saul was ready to capture David. But when Saul was done with the Philistines, he went back to pursuing David.

i. We often wish that our next victory would be a permanent victory. We wish that the spiritual enemies who pursue us like Saul pursued David would simply give up, and we wouldn’t have to bother with them any more. But even when we have victory and they are sent away, they come back, and will keep coming back until we go to glory with the Lord. That is the only permanent victory we will find.

b. The Wilderness of En Gedi: The En Gedi canyon runs westward from the Dead Sea. One can still see the good sized creek flowing down the canyon, making En Gedi, with its waterfalls and vegetation seem more like a tropical paradise than the middle of the desert.

i. One can also see the numerous caves dotting the hills. This was a great place for David and his men to hide out. In the middle of barren desert, scouts could easily detect approaching troops. There was plenty of water and wildlife and many caves and defensive positions.

2. (3) Saul unknowingly comes to a cave where David and his men are hiding.

So he came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs. (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.)

a. The sheepfolds: This indicates that this was a large cave, big enough to shelter a flock of sheep. All or most of David’s 600 men could hide in the recesses of the cave.

b. Saul went in to attend to his needs: Since the Bible is a real book, dealing with real people living real lives, we aren’t surprised to see it describe Saul’s attention to his personal needs. But something as basic and common as this was timed and arranged by God, without Saul having any knowledge of God’s timing or arrangement of things.

i. The fact that Saul went in to attend to his needs also meant that he went into the cave alone. His soldiers and bodyguards were out of the cave waiting for him.

c. David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave: What are the chances? Saul must attend to his personal needs at the very moment he passes by the very cave where David hides. This was no coincidence but arranged by God to test David, to train David, and display David's godly heart.

3. (4-7) David restrains himself and his men from killing Saul.

Then the men of David said to him, "This is the day of which the Lord said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.'" And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe. Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe. And he said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord." So David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on his way.

a. The men of David said to him: David's men were excited at the opportunity and believed it was a gift from God. They knew it was no coincidence that Saul came alone into that cave at that moment. They thought this was an opportunity from God to kill Saul.

i. Apparently, on some previous occasion God promised David, "Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you." They believed that this was the fulfillment of the promise and that David needed to seize the promise by faith and by the sword.

b. David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe: We can imagine David listening to this counsel from his men and with his sword creeping quickly towards Saul, covered by the darkness of the cave. David's men are excited; their lives as fugitives are about to end, and they will soon be installed as friends and associates of the new King of Israel. But as David came close to Saul and put forth his sword he didn't bring it crashing down on Saul's neck or thrust it through his back. Instead he secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

i. Some wonder how David could have done this without being detected. Saul may have laid his robe down in one part of the cave, and attended to his needs in another part, so David did not have to get right next to Saul to cut off a corner of his robe. Or, it may also be that there was enough noise and commotion from the thousands of men outside of the cave along with their horses that David was simply undetectable.

ii. David decided to spare Saul because he knew that God's promise said, "You will inherit the throne of Israel." He knew that Saul was in the way of that promise. But he also knew it was disobedient of him to kill Saul, because God put Saul in a position of authority and it was God's job to take care of Saul not David's. David wanted the promise to be fulfilled but he refused to try and fulfill God's promise through his own disobedience.

iii. Sometimes when we have a promise from God we think we are justified in sinning to pursue that promise. This is always wrong. God will fulfill His promises, but He will do it His way, and do it righteously. Instead, we need to be like Abraham, who obeyed God even when it seemed to be at the expense of God's promise, willing to sacrifice the son of promise (Genesis 22). Even more, we need to be like Jesus, who didn't take Satan's offer to "win back the world" at the expense of obedience (Luke 4:5-8).

iv. In all this, we see that David knew not only how to wait on the Lord, but he also knew how to wait for the Lord. “We wait on the Lord by prayer and supplication, looking for the indication of his will; we wait for the Lord by patience and submission, looking for the interposition of his hand.” (Meyer) David was determined that when he sat on the throne of Israel it wouldn’t be because he got Saul out of the way but because God got Saul out of the way. He wanted God’s fingerprints on that work, not his own, and he wanted the clean conscience that comes from knowing it was God’s work.

v. We also see that David’s heart didn’t store up bitterness and anger towards Saul. Even as Saul made David’s life completely miserable, David kept taking it to the Lord, and he received the cleansing from the hurt and the bitterness and the anger that the Lord can give. If David stored up bitterness and anger towards Saul he probably wouldn’t have been able to resist the temptation to kill him at what seemed to be a “risk free” opportunity.

c. David’s heart troubled him: This is a remarkably tender conscience in David. Many would only be troubled that they did not take the opportunity to kill Saul. David only cut off the corner of Saul’s robe, yet his heart troubled him. Why? Because the robe was a symbol of Saul’s royal authority, and David felt bad – rightly so, according to the heart of God – that he had done anything against Saul’s God appointed authority.

i. David expresses this when he said, “The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord’s anointed . . . seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.” David knew better than anyone that Saul was a troubled and corrupt leader, yet it was in God’s power to take him away and David wouldn’t do what was only the Lord’s to do.

ii. “It was a trifling matter, and yet it seemed dishonouring to God’s anointed king; and as such it hurt David to have done it. We sometimes in conversation and criticism cut off a piece of a man’s character, or influence for good, or standing in the esteem of others. Ought not our heart to smite us for such thoughtless conduct? Ought we not to make confession and reparation?” (Meyer)

d. So David restrained his servants with these words: David not only kept himself from taking vengeance upon Saul, he also restrained his servants. Many men in the same situation, would say, “Well, I won’t kill Saul now, but if one of my servants does, what can I do?” and therefore leave the door wide open for Saul to be killed. But David wouldn’t do that, and he restrained his servants.

i. With these words: These were the words of a humble, tender conscience before God. They were the words of a man who was convicted at merely cutting off a corner of Saul’s robe. When David’s servants saw his godliness and how he wanted to please God in everything, their hearts were restrained from doing any evil against Saul.

B. David appeals to Saul.

1. (8) David reveals his presence to Saul.

David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, “My lord the king!” And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down.

a. David . . . went out of the cave: David took a big chance here, because he could simply remain in hiding, secure in the fact that Saul had not found him. But he surrendered himself to Saul because he saw the opportunity to show Saul his heart towards him and reconcile.

b. My lord the king . . . David stooped with his face to the earth and bowed twice: This was great submission to Saul. We might think that David had the right to come to Saul as an equal. “Well Saul, we’ve both been anointed to be king. You’ve got the throne right now, but I’ll have it some day and you know it. So from one anointed man to another, look at how I just spared your life.” That wasn’t David’s attitude at all. Instead he said: “Saul, you are the boss and I know it. I respect your place as my leader and as my king.”

i. When David stooped with his face to the earth and bowed twice he also showed great trust in God, because he made himself completely vulnerable to Saul. Saul could have killed him very easily at that moment, but David trusted that if he did what was right before God then God would protect him and fulfill the promise.

## 2. (9-15) David’s speech to Saul.

And David said to Saul: “Why do you listen to the words of men who say, ‘Indeed David seeks your harm’? Look, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, ‘I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord’s anointed.’ Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it. Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, ‘Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.’ But my hand shall not be against you. After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea? Therefore let the Lord be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand.”

a. Why do you listen to the words of men: David showed great kindness and tact to Saul. David knew very well that Saul’s fear of David came from Saul himself and not from anyone else. But David put the blame on nameless others so that it was easier for Saul to say, “They were wrong” instead of “I was wrong.” Even in confrontation, David covers Saul’s sin.

i. “He prudently and modestly translates the fault from Saul to his followers and evil counselors.” (Poole)

ii. Some might have said, “David, lay it on the line! Tell it like it is!” and David will, to some extent. But even as he does he will show mercy and kindness to Saul. David will fulfill Proverbs 10:12: Love covers all sins, and 1 Peter 4:8: Love will cover a multitude of sins.

b. I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord’s anointed: This principle of not striking out against God’s anointed leaders is good and important but sometimes has been misused.

i. The phrase touch not the Lord’s anointed is in vogue among some Christians and among many leaders. Often to them it means: “You should never speak against a pastor or a leader. He is above your criticism or rebuke, so just keep quiet.” Sometimes it is used even to prevent a Biblical evaluation of teaching. But when David recognized that Saul was the Lord’s anointed and refused to harm him, what David would not do is kill Saul. He did humbly confront Saul with his sin, hoping Saul would change his heart. But it is entirely wrong for people to use the idea of touch not the Lord’s anointed to insulate a leader from all evaluation or accountability.

c. See the corner of your robe in my hand: This was proof that David had full opportunity to kill Saul but did not take that opportunity. As David showed Saul the corner of his robe, Saul must have heard the Spirit of God speaking loudly in his heart.



- i. Through this cut robe, God sent a message to Saul. The robe was a picture of Saul's royal authority, and through this God said, "I am cutting away your royal authority."
- ii. In 1 Samuel 15:27-28 the prophet Samuel rebuked Saul for his hard-hearted disobedience to God. In his distress, Saul tried to keep Samuel from leaving, and grabbed his robe, and a portion of the prophet's robe tore away. When Saul was left holding the torn piece of Samuel's robe, Samuel said to him: The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. Now, when David confronts Saul with the torn robe, Saul must be reminded of this incident, and God's message to him was loud and clear.
- d. Let the Lord judge between you and me: David didn't need to do anything more to defend himself before Saul; he referred the matter to the Lord. David would let God plead his case and be his judge. David didn't just say, "My hand shall not be against you," he proved it by not killing Saul when he had the opportunity.
- i. The Living Bible gives a good sense of 1 Samuel 24:12: Perhaps the Lord will kill you for what you are trying to do to me, but I will never harm you. In fact, David protected Saul by restraining his men.
- ii. It was inevitable that Saul would be judged, and that he would lose the throne. But it was absolutely God's business to accomplish that and it was the business of no one else. Jesus established the same principle in Matthew 18:7 when He said, offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! God's judgment is God's business. We put ourselves in a bad place when we make ourselves instruments of God's judgment.
- e. Wickedness proceeds from the wicked: David used this proverb to make a point. "Saul, if I was really as wicked as your advisors say I am, if I really was out to kill you, I would have done that wicked act in the cave. Because no wickedness proceeded from me when I had the opportunity, it shows my heart is not wicked towards you."
- f. Therefore let the Lord be judge . . . and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand: David told Saul, "I'm still trusting God, that He will deliver me out of your hand." Instead of finding a way out of his trial in the flesh, David did the harder thing – he trusted in God to deliver him instead of trusting in himself.

### C. Saul's reaction to David.

#### 1. (16-19) Saul honors David's mercy towards him.

So it was, when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. Then he said to David: "You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the Lord delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day."

a. Is this your voice, my son David? Saul responded so emotionally because Saul lived on the delusion that David was out to get him, and David's refusal to kill Saul when he had the chance proved beyond doubt that this was false. David's obedience to God and his love to Saul made all the difference in softening Saul's heart.

b. You are more righteous than I . . . you have dealt well with me . . . you did not kill me . . . the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day: This was a dramatic change of heart in Saul. Every change David could have hoped for in Saul has happened, and Saul really seemed sincere about it (Saul lifted up his voice and wept). David heaped coals of kindness upon Saul's head and it melted Saul's heart.

2. (20-22) Saul looks to the future.

"And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. Therefore swear now to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father's house." So David swore to Saul. And Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

a. I know indeed that you shall surely be king: Saul knew it all along (1 Samuel 23:17) but now he really knows it.

b. Therefore swear to me know by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me: Saul simply wanted the same kind of promise from David that he made to Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20:13-16. In that day, when one royal house replaced another it was common for the new royal house to kill all the potential rulers from the old royal house. Saul knew that one day, David and his descendants would rule over Israel, and he wants David to promise that David and his descendants will not kill or mistreat the descendants of Saul.

i. "How then could David destroy so many of Saul's sons, 2 Samuel 21:8-9? David could bind himself by his oaths, but he could not bind God, to whose good pleasure all promises, vows, and oaths must in all reason be submitted; and that was done by God's command, and God was well pleased with it, 2 Samuel 21:14." (Poole)

c. And Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold: David didn't go back home with Saul and be restored to his home and his place at the palace because David knew that as much as Saul meant it at the moment, the struggle would be to remain in the place of victory.

i. Many times, a person repents and claims to recognize their sinful ways just like Saul did. But the validity of repentance and a changed heart isn't demonstrated by the emotion or sincerity of a moment. It is demonstrated by the ongoing direction of one's life and David had every right to say, "I'm going to stay in the stronghold until I see the direction of Saul's life."

ii. "What a miserable picture Saul is! What is the use of saying, 'I have played the fool,' if he goes on playing the fool? What use are his tears and confession before David if he doesn't act upon his remorse?" (Redpath)

iii. In fact, it is worse to have this kind of emotional response if it doesn't result in true repentance. "If a man is emotionally upset, as Saul was, and awakens to his condition, but only weeps about it and still doesn't obey God, his second state is a thousand times worse than the first. Emotion that does not lead to action only leads deeper into sin and rebellion." (Redpath)