

1st Samuel

Lesson 49

(iii) David Cuts the Edge of Saul's Robe (24:4b-7)

The writer tells us how David cuts the edge of Saul's robe. Verse 4b.

"Then David arose and cut off the edge of Saul's robe secretly. ⁵ It came about afterward that David's conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul's robe. ⁶ So he said to his men, 'Far be it from me because of the LORD that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the LORD's anointed.' ⁷ David persuaded his men with these words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul. And Saul arose, left the cave, and went on his way." (24:4b-7)

After Saul left the cave, *"David's conscience bothered him."* The Hebrew is better translated *David's hearing smote him*. But why? David had touched *the LORD's anointed* by cutting off a portion of Saul's robe.

David was also the LORD's anointed. He was promised when he was anointed by Samuel that he would be the next king of Israel, but he did not have a command from the LORD to kill Saul and rush the process.

It is here that we must look intently at David's words and the reason for his words. I had not heard the thought of "thou shall not touch the LORD's anointed" until I was eighteen years old, serving in my first ministry church in Longview, Texas. It was a little Church on Odem Street still pastored by its founder, Merle Brooks. Merle was a part-time pastor and full-time mailman. I must say, he was a wonderful man. He was wonderful to me, hiring me on January 20th, 1974, to be the minister of music and youth in the middle of my senior year in high school. I lived in Waxahachie, a two-and-a-half-hour drive from the church. Each Wednesday, I would leave school and drive directly to the church arriving in time for service, followed by choir rehearsal. On Fridays, I would leave directly after school and stay in Merle's home through all the weekend plans and events and then drive home late after worship was over at eight o'clock on Sunday nights. On my graduation night, I had planned to move to Longview on Saturday the following morning, but after the graduation party at the country club, I was still so excited that I decided to hop in the car and drive out to Longview arriving about four o'clock in the morning. Of course, I had the keys to the church and stayed there in my office, not to bother Merle's family by showing up early. About the end of June, I was down at momma Forbes' house. She was a widow who had a boarding house. The huge home had a parlor where all the tenants spent the evenings talking, reading, and, when I was there, singing. Momma Forbes had a small short-scale piano that was terribly out of tune, but that did not matter. We sang and sang and sang when she invited me over. One evening much talk was going on about Merle. I heard things I had never heard and could not believe. A mutiny was in the works. Mr. McClintock showed up to deliver something to momma Forbes. He was her assigned deacon. As he left, I stopped him outside on the steps and told him what I had heard. He instructed me, as a minister of the Gospel, to go back into the house and tell them that whether or not the rumors were correct, "do not dare touch the LORD's anointed." It was the first time I had heard the words. I asked him to explain. We sat on the steps, and he laid out the whole concept and used this passage as his starting point. Thus, when he was through with me, I did as he asked, and I was soon glad I did. It was not long before the truth was revealed. The story being told in the parlor was a rumor that was heard at the beauty parlor about Merle. The problem was, at the time, there were two Merle's in Longview who were preachers. In a day or so, the rumor hit the newspapers and was all over the daily news stations. It was not our Merle that had done such things; it was the other. I

know there is a moral to that story about checking the facts before you accuse, but I will address that at another time. The point here is that Merle was our anointed pastor, and he was truly anointed to be the pastor by the LORD. Later, after I left the church, with the decline in the Odem Street area since he started the church thirty years before, he led the church to sell the property and move out on the loop to the east of town. When they arrived there with a new building built, the name of Temple Baptist Church was changed to Woodland Hills Baptist Church with Merle as the pastor. He was the LORD's anointed.

My point in this story is a little different, as indicated by David. Saul was not a good person. That point we have firmly established. Saul had an evil intention against David. That point, too, has been firmly established. But, David knew the Scripture. It was not David's place to seek vengeance against Saul for what Saul was doing to David. In Leviticus, the LORD says, *"You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD."* (Leviticus 19:18) In Deuteronomy, the LORD says, *"Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are hastening upon them. For the LORD will vindicate His people...."* (Deuteronomy 32:35) David knew these laws from the LORD. He heard them read every sabbatical year along with everyone else in the nation. David knew he did not have the right to strike vengeance on Saul in retaliation for Saul's vengeance against David. David knew that the LORD would handle Saul *"in due time,"* in the LORD's time. David did not know it at the time, but Saul's time was near its end, and the writer will tell us about that soon. When David cut the material from the hem of Saul's garment, David's heart hurt because he had touched Saul, the king, the anointed king of Israel. Pastors fall into this same category. It is never the place of the people or the lower staff members to set in motion to terminate a pastor, at least not one whom they did not call to be their pastor but was the founding pastor of the Church, anointed by the LORD. A local church has done just that to its founding pastor in the last months. Some of the lower staff, like the men with David in the cave, decided on their own that the pastor had to go. For two years, people who agreed with mutinous staff were put in positions of authority on the most important committees. Protocols were broken, which allowed certain committee members who should have rolled off to remain so that at just the right time, they could all vote to terminate the pastor. Two years were spent, at the direction of a paid consulting group, to establish a fake plan to use when the pastor retired or died while still pastor. At the end of the process, the plan was supposed to go in the drawer for when it was needed. Rather, the committee acted on the plan, and a few members visited the pastor and told him his retirement date. When you are told your retirement date, it is not your choice; you are being terminated. The pastor had every right to say; we need to take this to the Church and let them decide if he should leave. But, the pastor had a heart like David and did not want to seek vengeance on those who were wronging him. One day, before the letter went out to the Church, the pastor spoke with me. It was a long conversation. Late in the conversation, I asked the pastor's permission to do something, and his response was, "I am not sure I have the authority still to give you permission." My response was, "You are the pastor. You have that authority, and you always have." To that, he said, well, the letter will be sent on Monday. I asked, "What letter? What have you done?" His response was. "Don't you know? I thought you were part of it?" "Part of what?" I asked. "Oh, I cannot say if you do not know," was his final reply. The retirement letter went out the next Monday. About a year later, I had a conversation with one of the staff members who led the mutiny against the Pastor, which I did not know was a mutiny at the time. He revealed to me the whole plan, and I just let him talk. The longer he talked, the more I heard Mr. McClintock's words from 1974 ring in my ears, "Thou shalt not touch the LORD's anointed." In his bragging, he told me I was purposeful left out of the process and purposefully not told anything about the two-year plan because I had too much influence in the Church and would have been able to stop the plan. Then came the words that lit my fire. He said, "I was faithful to the

pastor for thirty-five years, and I have been unfaithful to the pastor for two years.” With that, I responded, “You had no right to touch the LORD’s anointed. The day you decided to harm the ministry of the LORD’s anointed, you should have left the Church staff.” That was my last voice contact with that minister. It was all too late. A new pastor with a completely new and cultic theology was already installed. This new pastor is seeking to ordain women as deacons, make elders the sole decision-makers in the church, and allow deacons to drink wine and strong drink. This may not seem like much, but it is a complete theological change from the half-century theology of the Church. The theology has changed; these things will become the customs of the Church when some funerals occur in the deaconate that remove the old guard and allow the young neo-Calvinist to begin having their beer and theology Bible studies. It is coming. It has been so in every denomination that women have taken the lead with this cultic theology. In addition, this neo-Calvinist theology has infiltrated the Baptist denomination and has caused the greatest drop in salvations in its history. Why? Because the new theology uses the same old words but with new definitions. The word sovereign, grace, and gospel do not mean the same to them as has been the theology of the convention of Baptist Churches. The problem in the theology is *what they do with Jesus, His work on the cross, His gift of grace, and His self-place restrictions on His rule over humanity*. It is a theology that I could not be a part of. I tried to stop the change, but it was a little too late. The damage was done. It is now time for the LORD to seek His vengeance for the sinful actions of touching the LORD’s anointed. It will come “*in due time*” – be assured of that.

Here is the quandary with David. Saul is intent on killing him. David has respect for Saul because of the office he holds, even though his days are filled with sin and demon possession. David did not harm Saul’s body, but he did transgress his property. David felt that he had sinned against Saul as a lower member of Saul’s cabinet. How can David repent? He must confess. To whom? To Saul.

(iv) David Reveals that He Means No Harm to Saul (24:8-15)

With David’s revelation of his personal sin against the LORD’s anointed, David must do something. David reveals that he means no harm to Saul. Verse 8.

“Now afterward David arose and went out of the cave and called after Saul, saying, ‘My lord the king!’ And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself.”⁹ David said to Saul, ‘Why do you listen to the words of men, saying, ‘Behold, David seeks to harm you’? ¹⁰ Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but my eye had pity on you; and I said, ‘I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD’S anointed.’ ¹¹ Now, my father, see! Indeed, see the edge of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the edge of your robe and did not kill you, know and perceive that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands, and I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait for my life to take it. ¹² May the LORD judge between you and me, and may the LORD avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you. ¹³ As the proverb of the ancients says, ‘Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness’; but my hand shall not be against you. ¹⁴ After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog, a single flea? ¹⁵ The LORD therefore be judge and decide between you and me; and may He see and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand.” (24:8-15)

Sin must be repented. David did what was right with his sin against Saul, even though in his repentance, great wrath may have been inflicted on him from Saul. David must have taken Saul by surprise. David’s words were true. Saul was by himself without any guards. He might not have had his faithful spear that he has become so famous for having in his room to throw at David twice, at the banquet table to throw at Jonathan, and with him under the tamarisk tree outside Gibeah. Saul seems to be defenseless at this time. When David showed him, the material cut from Saul’s garment, no doubt Saul checked to see and saw that David was being truthful. David even admits, that he is nothing but a “*dead dog or a single flea*,” meaning that David is absolutely harmless and

insignificant to Saul. Saul is the anointed king and David respected and honored that about him as king.

i) A Summary of Saul's Confession (24:16-22)

(1) Saul Confesses His Sin Against David (24:16-21)

The interaction with Saul was significant. The writer gives an important summary of Saul's confession. David's confession jolts Saul. Saul confesses his sin against David. Verse 16.

"When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, 'Is this your voice, my son David?' Then Saul lifted up his voice and wept. ¹⁷ He said to David, 'You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you. ¹⁸ You have declared today that you have done good to me, that the LORD delivered me into your hand and yet you did not kill me. ¹⁹ For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safely? May the LORD therefore reward you with good in return for what you have done to me this day. ²⁰ Now, behold, I know that you will surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hand. ²¹ So now swear 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 household." (24:16-21)

David had wronged Saul in one little thing. Saul had wronged David in many large things. Nevertheless, the two met together, and things were resolved at that time between them.

About two years ago, I was greatly wronged by a person, a pastor. I had every reason to lash back and tell the world what had been done to me. I knew what he did, but I did not understand why he did what he did. I still, to this day, do not understand why he did what he did. I asked a former pastor to meet with the new pastor and me right off the bat. I sent the new pastor word that I wanted to meet with him, give him a gift, hug his neck, and depart as friends. I also stated that I did not have an actual schedule at the time and so I would leave it up to the old pastor and the new pastor to set the meeting. Three months passed, I sat patiently. Finally, the old pastor called and told me he had asked the new pastor twice for the meeting and the new pastor "snubbed his nose at it twice." I had this story in mind. I wanted to do what David did. I wanted to make everything good even though evil had been committed against me. But the evildoer would not have anything to do with it. Instead, the new pastor doubled down and participated in lies, proven lies. *"Why do you listen to the words of men, saying, 'Behold, David seeks to harm you'?"* David said to Saul. Saul had been listening to the men say these words about David. So, too, the new pastor had been listening to the words of the men who designed the mutiny against the old pastor. But, unlike Saul, the new pastor refused to acknowledge his sin and do what was right. At least Saul did what was right. At least Saul faced the one he wronged and repented. In chapter 25, we will see where Nabal snubs David in like manner in this story. There, Nabal is called a worthless man although, on appearance, he is wealthy and prosperous in every way.

Saul admitted what he already knew. David would be the next king of Israel, and he could not do a thing to stop it. He asked David for one favor when he became king. *"So now swear 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 household."* At this point, Saul had several descendants who already had offspring. He had the daughter who did not marry David and the daughter who did. He had two wives, Ahinoam and Rizpah. His sons were Jonathan, Ishbosheth (Eshbaal), Abinadab, Melchishua, Armoni, and Mephibosheth. Saul's oldest daughter and these sons had children too. But what does Saul mean in his request to *"not cut off my descendants after me?"* His concern has merit. The custom of the nations around Israel, if followed by David, would rightfully cause him concern. In that day and time, in all the surrounding nations, even those that were cousins of Israel, when new kings came to the thrones of different bloodlines, all the blood relatives of the previous king were slaughtered, wholesale massacred.

For example, In 1st Kings 15, we find,

Now Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel ... and he reigned over Israel two years. ... Then Baasha the son of Abijah of the house of Issachar conspired against him, and Baasha struck him down ... It came about as soon as he was king, he struck down all the household of Jeroboam. He did not leave to Jeroboam any persons alive, until he had destroyed them.... (1st Kings 15:25-29)

In 1st Kings 16, we find,

... Elah, the son of Baasha became king over Israel at Tirzah and reigned two years. His servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him. Now he was at Tirzah drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, who was over the household at Tirzah. Then Zimri went in and struck him and put him to death ... and became king in his place. It came about when he became king, as soon as he sat on his throne, that he killed all the household of Baasha; he did not leave a single male, neither of his relatives nor of his friends. (1 Kings 16:8-11)

These are two examples of barbaric practices. To make it more interesting, in both cases, in the context of each, the LORD declared the total destruction of both families. The LORD would take vengeance on the sin of both. But as we see here, the LORD always uses humans to bring His vengeance on the sinners. The unknown question is, who will the LORD use. It is rarely the ones we might think he will use. In addition, it never seems to be the one who was wronged by the sinner. It will be someone who is clearly unexpected. The LORD will bring the vengeance. Those of us who have been wronged must be like David and allow the LORD to select the avenger.