



Studies in the Life of David

Text

First Samuel 24:1-22

Topic

Saul steps in to a cave to go to the bathroom and nearly gets waylaid by David and his men who were hiding there

Title

“He Came in to the Bathroom Waylay”

Introduction

Have you ever thought about how many everyday English phrases and idioms come from the Bible?

Let me give you a few examples:

- “A drop in the bucket” comes from Isaiah 40:15, “Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket...”
- “At their wit’s end” comes from Psalm 107:27, “They reel to and fro... And are at their wits' end.”
- “The blind leading the blind” comes from Matthew 15:14, “they are blind leaders of the blind...”

I see another very common expression having its origins in our text in First Samuel. We all know what it means to “cut corners.” It means to do something in the easiest, quickest, cheapest way, often affecting the quality of the finished product.

In our text we will see David and his men hiding in a cave when Saul and his men come by seeking to kill them. Saul goes in to the cave, alone, to relieve himself. It seems to be a golden opportunity for David to be rid of his enemy and become king. All he had to do was murder Saul, or order his men to murder him.

David instead goes to the robe Saul had laid aside and cuts the corner off of it. David does not kill Saul; he restrains his men from killing Saul; and he feels genuine remorse at cutting the corner of Saul's garment.

Why? Because he realizes you cannot 'cut corners' when it comes to God's will.

Murdering the reigning king was *not* a shortcut to the throne that could in any way honor God. It was a quick, easy, cheap way of ascending to power that would have negatively affected David as God's finished product.

David may have literally "cut the corner" of Saul's robe, but spiritually speaking, he refused to take the shortcut.

If David, the man after God's own heart, was tempted to 'cut corners,' then I can only assume you and I will be also. We, too, want to refuse to take those shortcuts.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Cutting Corners Is Not God's Way Of Growing You, and #2 Not Cutting Corners Is Your Way Of Showing God.

#1 Cutting Corners Is Not
God's Way Of Growing You
(v1-7)

Survey the men and women of the Bible and you'll see that God was in no hurry to develop them. Moses immediately comes to mind. He thought he was ready to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. His play - kill an Egyptian. As a result he had to flee into the desert where for forty years God taught him how to be a shepherd so that, when it was God's timing, Moses could shepherd the Jews out of Egypt.

Saul enters a cave seeking some privacy to relieve himself. He lays aside his kingly robe. Little does he know it's the very cave within which David and his men are hiding.

1 Samuel 24:1 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."

1 Samuel 24:2 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.

1 Samuel 24:3 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.)

On the surface this seems a golden opportunity to be rid of Saul. **But God's saints are not to look only on the surface.** Circumstances by themselves are not enough to determine God's will. We need His Word and the leading of His Spirit to interpret circumstances.

1 Samuel 24:4 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.

When, exactly, did the Lord say anything like this to David? I think this was their interpretation of the fact God had anointed David to be the next king. That being the case, they figured 'the end justified the means.' What they were suggesting was an assassination. It was murder.

David's men must have been excited when their leader arose with sword in hand. Their exile would be over. They would ascend with David and help him rule.

But, wait; what was he doing? *Cutting off a corner of the kingly robe!*
David, Saul is over there!

1 Samuel 24:5 Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe.

1 Samuel 24:6 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."

Saul was a terrible king. God had sent an evil spirit to trouble him. He was bent on finding David and killing him.

Nevertheless Saul was “the Lord’s anointed.” God had given him his position and it would be up to God to remove him. Open rebellion and murder could not in any way honor God.

We must be committed to interpreting our circumstances by the Word of God and not vice-versa. If I allow my circumstances to interpret God’s Word, I’m going to get in all kinds of spiritual trouble.

I should mention that this phrase, “the Lord’s anointed,” is not a magic, spiritual shield to protect leaders in God’s church **if they are sinning**. What David was referring to was the office of the king - which was pretty much a dictatorship. The offices of leadership in the New Testament, in the church, are not like that.

David showed remarkable restraint in not killing Saul. *Even more remarkable was that he was able to restrain his men!*

1 Samuel 24:7 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.

Saul was Israel’s first king. He’d been chosen because the Jews wanted to be like the other nations and have a king. But in those other nations, in their culture, succeeding to the throne by murder and intrigue was common and accepted.

God’s kingdom has a different set of rules, a different mindset. We must be careful to not allow our culture to influence our thinking about how we conduct ourselves as citizens in the kingdom of God. Whether we live in a democracy or a monarchy, under communism or a dictatorship, our character as Christians who are citizens of God’s kingdom is to be the same.

Assassination was not God’s plan to make David king. David could not in good conscience murder Saul or allow him to be murdered. He and his

men would have to wait on God. They would have to go on struggling, suffering, until God made His move.

We would say that they would go on growing in the Lord, in the understanding of His heart and His ways. The shortcut offered to them would get them the robe, the outward trappings of the kingdom. But it would not prepare their hearts for serving in the kingdom.

Look at Saul. He laid aside the robe so as not to soil it when he relieved himself. But he was 'soiling' it everyday by seeking to murder David. It's too easy to think only in terms of the outward when God is working on the inner person of the heart.

Beware of spiritual shortcuts. Let God have His perfect work in your waiting, in your struggling, in your suffering. Developing character is more important than achieving an outward goal using wrong means.

#2 Not Cutting Corners Is Your Way Of Showing God (v8-22)

David cut the corner of Saul's robe, but in his heart and by his actions it's clear he refused to 'cut corners' and ascend to the throne by the wrong means. As a result he was able to show God. We've already seen him show God to his men. Now, in the remaining verses, he shows God to his enemy.

1 Samuel 24:8 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.

1 Samuel 24:9 And David said to Saul: "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm'?"

1 Samuel 24:10 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.'

1 Samuel 24:11 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.

1 Samuel 24:12 Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you.

1 Samuel 24:13 As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.' But my hand shall not be against you.

Suppose, for the sake of comparison, that David or his men had murdered Saul. What kind of a testimony would he have had? What conclusions would people - both Jews and Gentiles - draw about the nature and character of God?

When we act and react out among people, we are representing God. We are the Bible people 'read.' It's humbling. It doesn't mean we need to be perfect; that's not possible. It does mean we must yield to the indwelling Spirit and not give-in to our habitual, fleshly impulses.

1 Samuel 24:14 After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea?

1 Samuel 24:15 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."

David was pointing out to Saul that his actions were beneath the dignity of his office. His priorities were out of whack. It was as if someone came to him and said, "There's a dead dog harboring a flea," and Saul marshaled all the resources of the kingdom to find it and kill it. Who cares? What harm could a single flea do to a dead dog?

The positions, or we might say, the roles, that we occupy as Christians have priorities. Men and women are told how to act in the body of Christ. There are passages about old men, young men, older women, younger women, and widows. Husbands and wives have roles and responsibilities. So do parents and children. So do employers and employees.

When our priorities in any of those roles cease to be spiritual, we are searching for a dead dog with a single flea rather than seeking the Lord for His help and strength with what we're called to be doing. In other words, our actions are just as ridiculous as were Saul's.

Are you pursuing something at the expense of your family? Or at the expense of your church family? Check your priorities.

1 Samuel 24:16 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.

1 Samuel 24:17 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.

1 Samuel 24:18 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.

1 Samuel 24:19 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.

1 Samuel 24:20 And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand.

1 Samuel 24:21 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."

God was shown to Saul through David. Only a man walking with God, filled with the Word of God, knowing the ways of God, would have acted the way David did.

This teaches me that God purposely puts me in circumstances that give me opportunity to show Him to others. But since what needs to be shown are things like grace, mercy, love, peace, forgiveness, gentleness, kindness, and the like, **those circumstances are going to be tough at times.**

The people to whom God wants to be shown are like Saul. They are fleshly, pursuing their own agendas, thinking themselves "righteous" when they have no righteousness. So God puts you in a position where they understand they would commit murder while you are committed to God.

If you are going to show someone the mercy of God, then you need to be in a position to not give them what they deserve. You need to be mistreated by them, overlooked by them, insulted by them.

Anybody can return evil for evil. But to return good for evil, to love our enemies and do good to them, shows people the nature and character of God.

Jesus left Heaven, came to earth, and showed us God. Then He died on the Cross, taking our place - taking your place. He took upon Himself your sins and offers you His righteousness. It's the only way anyone can get to Heaven. All you must do is believe. It's not easy to believe; you must

admit your need, admit you are a sinner. When you do, you are saved, born-again. Have you done that?

1 Samuel 24:22 So David swore to Saul. And Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

After this encounter there was a temporary halt to hostilities. But before long Saul returned to hunting David, trying to kill him.

Was David, therefore, naive or foolish in his actions? *Of course not!*

Our part is to represent and reveal God. That is what we are about as servants. That is what we will be rewarded for when we see the Lord.

The reactions of those God is testifying to through us is their personal responsibility before Him.

Sure, it's discouraging when we show God, especially through suffering, and the people don't get saved. But that is not our responsibility.

You're going to be in circumstances that are unpleasant. Most of the time there will be a shortcut out of them. But if you are careful to analyze the shortcut, you'll see it is carnal, fleshly, not spiritual. You'll see that instead of showing God to the people watching you, it brings you down to their level.

Don't cut corners. Ask God to fill you so you can overflow with His grace and mercy and love and peace - whatever the situation calls for.

The bottom line is this: Which of these anointed men, Saul or David, revealed God to others?

Be like that man!