

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Samuel: God's Shift Of Israel From Apostasy Under The Judges To David's Reign

I. 1 Samuel: From Samuel To The Death Of Saul

X. Functioning Wisely With Ungodly, Troublesome Overseers

(1 Samuel 24:1-22)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Many people have difficulty knowing how to deal effectively with ungodly, troublesome overseers:

(1) We as a people face this issue at the national level: a political cartoon in the October 24, 2016 Republican-American (p. 6A) that was distributed by the Washington Post Writer's Group has Uncle Sam standing on a stage with a moderator in the background asking him, "For the good of the nation, will you accept the results of this election?" Uncle Sam is holding his hat in front of himself, his eyes wide open with a nervous expression, and he says, "Gulp!"

(2) The nervousness of voters that is portrayed by this cartoon is played out even in family life: local radio talk show host Brad Davis on "The Talk of Connecticut" last Thursday was interviewing a Fox News reporter, and the reporter told how many voters are often not discussing the upcoming election even in extended family gatherings in order to protect their relationships. Feelings and fears on the subject of the election are just running too deep.

(3) The issue of handling ungodly, troublesome overseers affects us locally: we or others we know often report of such trials they face in the realms of local government, business, church, marriage, family or extended family!

Need: *So we ask, "How does God want us to deal effectively with ungodly, troublesome overseers?!"*

- I. David faced the trial of having to deal effectively with a very ungodly, troublesome King Saul:**
 - A. Saul was originally anointed of God to rule over Israel as her king, 1 Samuel 9:15-16; 9:27-10:1.
 - B. Yet, due to Saul's sin, God stopped blessing him and chose David to be king, 1 Samuel 15:22-23; 16:1, 13.
 - C. When God then began to bless David while Saul was diminishing as king, an insanely jealous Saul pursued a fleeing David even as far southeast as En-Gedi near the Dead Sea with Saul taking with him an army of 3,000 chosen men to kill David, 1 Samuel 24:1-2.
- II. God then allowed Saul to be delivered into David's hands, 1 Samuel 24:3: while David and his men hid from Saul's pursuit in the back part of a cave near En-Gedi, Saul himself entered the same cave's entrance to relieve himself, unknowingly leaving himself vulnerable to being slain by David's men.**
- III. The temptation for David and his men to kill Saul was great in view of their history, 1 Samuel 24:4a:**
 - A. David's men immediately told him that this was the day the Lord Himself had predicted for him, the day that God would deliver his enemy into his hand so that David should proceed to kill him, 1 Samuel 24:4a.
 - B. This statement reflects the great temptation these men had to harm Saul based on an extensive history:
 1. Saul had caused David to flee and live in exile from his hometown of Bethlehem, 1 Samuel 19:11-18.
 2. David even had to move his family from Bethlehem to Moab for protection from Saul, 1 Samuel 22:3-4.
 3. Saul had several times tried to kill David, even when David was ministering to Saul by playing his harp to settle Saul's terror bouts that were caused by an evil demon, 1 Samuel 18:10-19:24.
 4. The men who followed David were either fleeing from Saul or were discontent with him (1 Samuel 22:2), so they saw this chance to slay Saul in the cave as the solution to each of their respective problems.
- IV. Influenced in part by the words of his followers, David initially acted in a compromising way: instead of killing Saul, he secretly approached the unwary king and cut off a piece of his outer robe, an act that was still disrespectful since it marred an item that Saul possessed, 1 Samuel 24:4b NIV.**
- V. After committing this deed, David's conscience greatly bothered him, for he had shown disrespect for a man who had been anointed of God to rule Israel in violation of the spirit of the Law at Exodus 22:28 NIV, ESV. He thus confessed to his followers that he had done wrong in his action to Saul's robe since Saul was the Lord's anointed, so David kept his men from killing Saul, 1 Samuel 24:5-7a.**
- VI. Consequently, David exemplified the wise, righteous way of handling the ungodly, troublesome Saul:**
 - A. First, David honored Saul, telling him he intended him no harm as the anointed of the Lord, 1 Sam. 24:7b-22a:
 1. When Saul left the cave, David followed him at a distance and called out to him, greeting Saul and bowing respectfully before him in bowing himself all the way down to the ground, 1 Samuel 24:7b-8.
 2. David explained what he had done to Saul's robe, how he had thus proved that he did not intend to kill the king even though Saul was unjustly hunting for him, 1 Samuel 24:9-11, 13-15.
 - B. Second, David committed to God his conflict with Saul, letting God avenge him in it, 1 Samuel 24:12.

- C. Third, David shielded himself from needless future harm by Saul and those Saul might influence, v. 16-22:
1. Realizing the truth in David's words by the evidence of his cut robe, Saul wept, admitting that David was more righteous than he for David's not killing one who was trying to take his life, 1 Samuel 24:16-19.
 2. Saul added that he knew David would become king, so he asked him to swear that he would not destroy Saul's descendants when he gained the throne, and David graciously made the oath, 1 Samuel 24:20-22a.
 3. Leaving David, Saul then peacefully returned up north to his home in Gibeah of Benjamin, 1 Sam. 24:22b.
 4. However, David wisely realized that Saul's long record of trying to kill him meant that Saul would pursue him again, so David moved south from En-ge-di to the stronghold of Masada near the Dead Sea (1 Samuel 24:22b; The MacMillan Bible Atlas, 1968, map 92) for protection from Saul and others he could influence:
 - a. Masada, "a natural fortress," rose up "almost perpendicularly 440 yards above its surroundings" with an upper plateau of "twenty acres," protective high ground that was hard to reach for Saul or other people in Judah who could be influenced by Saul to harm David, Zond. Pict. Ency. of the Bible, v. Four, p. 112.
 - b. David's move to this fortress regardless of Saul's recent words of peace and his return north to Gibeah, reveals that David no longer trusted Saul or others who might side with him due to their long history of turning against him to harm him, a demonstration of practical wisdom by David.

Lesson: *David handled the trial of facing a relentlessly ungodly, troublesome Saul by (1) countering the temptation to take revenge against Saul out of respect for his divinely assigned office, by (2) letting God judge in the conflict he had with Saul and by (3) wisely shielding himself from future harm by Saul and others he could influence.*

Application: *If facing a ungodly, troublesome overseer, (1) may we trust in Christ to become a child of God and come under His "much more" care, John 3:16; Romans 8:32. (2) Then, may we (a) honor the overseer in obedience to God (cf. 1 Peter 2:17), (b) commit the issue of the conflict to God to judge (b) while taking wise action to guard ourselves as best we can from what troublesome things he and those he can influence might do to us.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

After our service last Sunday morning, a Church member asked me in the Fellowship Hall if Christians might face trouble from the government following the election. He explained that he was bothered about a shift away from personal liberties that he had observed for some time and was concerned about a continuing shift after the election.

I answered him at the time, but I wish to clarify that answer in light of this morning's message (as follows):

(1) Like David did to the ungodly, troublesome Saul, we must honor all who are elected to office, 1 Peter 2:17. Also, only if government officials call us to disobey Scripture's God must we peacefully disobey them, Acts 5:26-29.

(2) We must commit to God whatever conflict may arise between us and any elected official. In connection with this, and as we have before noted in past messages, God has promised to build His Church so that the gates of Hades will not prevail against it, Matthew 16:18, and we also know that the Holy Spirit Who is in us believers in Christ is greater than Satan who is in the world (1 John 4:4b) and who controls its kingdoms (1 John 5:19 NIV et al.), so we must rely on the Holy Spirit to function productively in God's will, Gal. 5:16. We also know from the Daniel 2 prophecy that the partly strong, partly weak, racially unmixed form of Western nations now existing will continue up to the rapture, and from Revelation 3:21-4:2 that antichrist-like rulers will arise via intrigue and oppress people in our era, and that God will use this state of affairs to drive people to the nurturing care of Bible expounding pastors and churches, giving them great worldwide influence. (Rev. 3:21 "in" the throne with Rev. 4:6-14 and Rev. 7:9-17)

Thus, we must trust God to keep the world order stable enough so that He can continue to build His spiritual Church, that we must then trust in Him to fulfill His agenda in our era and remain optimistic, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17.

(3) In addition, like David did in relation to Saul, we must take precautions to avoid what ungodly, oppressive overseers may try to do that harms us. This will involve trying to function as independent of government institutions as is reasonable and keeping a low public profile politically as a Church while staying involved individually.

Other practical steps of self-protection will include eating healthy foods, getting proper sleep and exercise to stay healthy and less vulnerable to government involvement in our health issues, diversifying our investments (Eccl. 11:1-6), keeping our financial welfare as much under our personal control as is reasonable (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12) for financial security and a good testimony and reading Scripture, praying and fellowshiping with others of like faith for nurture of the inner man. It will also include serving God in ministry in view of our accountability to Him.

May we (1) trust in Christ to be saved and come under God's "much-more" care. Then, (2) may we respond to ungodly, oppressive overseers by relying on the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16-23) to honor them, to trust God to deal with them in our behalf while also prudently guarding ourselves from harm by them.