

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian  
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic.,  
3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 16B**

**FIRST SAMUEL**

**CHAPTER 24**

**INTRODUCTION**

Very often we long for times of peace and tranquillity when we are in the midst of being tested. This is natural. A life of peace and tranquillity is what we seek after in life. We work hard to live in comfortable homes and have a happy family. We build societies that are peaceful and safe for the well being of our families and our state of mind. We can go out into any part of the city at any time of the day and know we will not be hurt or robbed or molested. But years of safety and tranquillity can lull us into a sense of complacency and take this blessed state for granted. It is only when we lose it that we begin to appreciate it.

David lost all these when the king whom he had served faithfully wanted to kill him. Saul knew that David would replace him as the next king of Israel but he wanted his sons to take over his kingdom and sustain his dynasty. To achieve that, David must be removed permanently, by force if necessary. He tried to kill David on many occasions but his attempts failed miserably. David had to flee for his life. He lived as a fugitive in his own homeland.

All seemed lost to this young man who had faithfully trusted his

God -- he lost his home, his family, his friends, his wealth, the comforts of life, the safety of his own homeland and all that he held dear. Should he curse God and die? Should he give up his faith? If an opportunity avails itself, could David take matters into his own hands and shorten his life as a fugitive?

This chapter challenges us to search our own souls as to what constitutes a life of obedience and to what extent we are prepared to obey and trust God in the face of great testing and trials.

**COMMENTARY**

**David Could Have Killed Saul—  
24:1-8**

After his return from defeating the Philistines, Saul's informants told him that David was in En Gedi. Saul led 3,000 men to seek David and his men "upon the rocks of the wild goats" (24:2b). This was the proper name of some of the cliffs near En Gedi. It was so called because the place was frequented by the ibex, a goat antelope which could still be found there today. Saul came to a sheeppcote where there was a cave. He entered the cave to "cover his feet" (a euphemism for answering to the big call of nature). Interestingly, David and his men were hiding in the same cave. Saul did not know that they were there. Saul was protected by 3,000 of his elite army but the simple call of nature turned apparent safety into open vulnerability.

Saul was completely helpless before David and his men in a most humiliating way. It was as if God was showing us that He has a great sense of humour! David was given a great opportunity to kill Saul and end his life as a fugitive. A life of ease

awaited him if he were to remove Saul there and then. David's men urged him to kill Saul. They interpreted that the LORD had given David a one-and-never-to-be-repeated opportunity to kill Saul and thereby end his misery. They were presumptuous. There was no previous reference in the LORD's word to this situation.

David stealthily crawled as close as he could and cut off a corner of Saul's skirt. The cutting off of a piece of the skirt was significant. Cyril J. Barber adds his comments: "Often vassals, to show their submission to a suzerain, would compare their attitude to bowing before him in lowly submission. To lend weight to their words they would use the figure of speech 'holding the hem of [their sovereign's] garment' to signify their loyalty" (*The Books of Samuel*, 253). It was this piece of garment that was cut from Saul's skirt.

But later, David's conscience convicted him for even cutting off a piece of Saul's skirt. He told his men that the LORD would not be pleased at what he had done to Saul, whom he referred to as his master, the LORD's anointed. With these words, David stopped his men from rising up against Saul who was the anointed of the LORD.

#### **David Defends His Innocence— 24:9-15**

When Saul left the cave and went on his way, David came out of the cave. When Saul was at a safe distance, David called out to Saul, saying, "My lord the king" (24:8). Saul looked back and saw David with his face to the earth, bowing. David asked Saul why he heed the words of those who told him that he [David] would hurt him. David went

on to profess his innocence. He pointed out that the LORD had given him a golden opportunity to kill him in the cave. Some of his men had encouraged him to do so but he would not lay hands on the LORD'S anointed (24:10). David addressed Saul, "my father", and showed him the piece of skirt that he had cut off. David submitted that he had no evil intent nor had he transgressed against Saul. Yet Saul sought to take his life. David appealed to the LORD to judge between them and declared that his hand shall not hurt Saul. David quoted the ancient proverb which they were familiar with, "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked." David repeated that he would not be the one to hurt or kill Saul (24:13). David said that Saul was chasing after "a dead dog" and "a flea". This was David's estimation of himself. Once again, David appealed to the LORD to judge between them. He was confident that the LORD would plead his cause and save him from Saul.

David made an excellent and passionate appeal in defence of his innocence. He showed his due respect to the king. He bowed before Saul because he was his lord and king. He told Saul not to listen to what others might have said about his evil intentions to hurt him. David showed solid proof that he could have slain Saul but he did not. He produced the piece of Saul's garment which he had cut off in the cave. Saul had no defence at all.

David declared that he was innocent and yet Saul wanted to hunt and take his life. David appealed to the LORD to judge between them. This was the highest court of appeal that a child of God could seek. God's judgment is always righteous and He

is able to mete out the correct punishment. David believed and trusted the LORD. He was confident that the LORD would avenge him, and this was a veiled accusation against Saul that he was the guilty party and the LORD would punish him. But he himself would not lay his hands on him. Let the LORD deal with him. In quoting the proverb, David was implying that Saul's intent to kill him could only be explained by wickedness. He quickly repeated that he would not lay his hands on him. David intimated that Saul was wasting his time trying to kill him. Nobody cared about "a dead dog" or "a flea". One was already dead while the other could not inflict much harm. David ended with another appeal to the highest court in the universe, the LORD, to judge between them. David was confident that the LORD would acquit him. This should cause Saul to examine himself, "Can he confidently say that the LORD would not find him guilty?"

#### **Saul's Response—24:16-22**

Saul responded with a rhetorical question. He should know by then that it was David but he was trying to save face. He wanted to kill his enemy but his enemy did not wish to kill him. He had been publicly rebuked by David in front of his men. Saul wept to demonstrate that he was remorseful. This was again a demonstration of his crocodile tears. Saul acknowledged that David had returned good for evil. He also admitted that the LORD had delivered him into David's hand and yet David did not kill him. Saul went on to acknowledge that David would be the next king.

He then seized the opportunity to exact from David an oath that when he became king he would not

"cut off" (eliminate) his descendants and destroy the name of his father. Even if Saul had not asked, David would not do such a thing. He had shown himself to be above such acts. Such a request could only come from a person who has such a character — as David had quoted: "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked." If the roles had been reversed, Saul would have destroyed the house of David even if he had promised not to. Saul had become a victim of his own wickedness and evil schemes. David as expected swore to Saul. Saul returned to his home. David and his men returned to their stronghold. David did not return to his home town. He knew Saul's remorse was momentary. If David had believed Saul, he would have returned to Saul's home since he was still Saul's son-in-law.

#### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

David's behaviour in difficult times was exemplary. He did not succumb to temptation with regards to obeying the will of God. When the opportunity presented itself, David knew God's Word and he stayed his hand. When his own men said that this was God's will, David said this could not be God's will because no one was supposed to touch the LORD's anointed.

David knew God's word and he had the faith and character to hold on resolutely, no matter what. He refused to be moved. 1 Corinthians 15:58, "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*" These words were

lived out in this episode of David's life.

Crocodile tears are worthless in the sight of God. Tears that are shed to manipulate men are evil and are an abomination in the eyes of God for it is a form of deception. Tears that come from the heart are revealed by the life and follow-up action of the genuinely repentant. Saul was a clear example of one who did not repent sincerely. His actions did not gel with his words. Why was it so difficult for him to repent?

How does one discern whether a man is sincere? David somehow knew that his king was not sincere. David kept his word to the king knowing full well that the king had no intention of keeping his. David was indeed a man after God's own heart. AMEN.

**DHW BIBLE CLASS  
DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**Monday:** 1 Samuel 24:1-8.

**Tuesday:** 1 Samuel 24:15.

**Wednesday:** 1 Samuel 24:1-22.

**Thursday:** 1 Samuel 24:1-22;  
Romans 12:19, 20.

**Friday:** 1 Samuel 24:1-22; Hosea 6:4.

**Analysis**

| Text              | Practical Value |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Samuel 24:1-15  |                 |
| 1 Samuel 24:16-22 |                 |

**Discussion Questions**

1. What held David back from slaying Saul when it was in his power to do so?

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2. I will not serve or live a righteous life because my pastors and elders are not living it. This is the thought pattern of some professing Christians. Should we live our lives based upon the lives of others? If not, what should be the proper basis or guideline for us?

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3. Why was it so difficult for Saul to repent sincerely?

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4. Do you think David should have cut off Saul's garment? Was it proper for him to be remorseful afterwards?

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5. "Tit for tat" is the philosophy for many in this dog-eat-dog world of ours. But David was able to love Saul and his descendants and not take revenge on them. How was such a thing possible for David? Do you wish to have this strength of character and heart?

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