

## David Respects the Lord's Anointed

**Lesson Scope:** [1 Samuel 24 and 26](#)

### Lesson Focus

This week's lesson covers both the chapter preceding and the chapter following David's dealing with Nabal and Abigail. Saul was seeking David's life because he felt threatened by David's popularity. This jealous rage had already claimed the lives of the priests of Nob, threatened the lives of David and Jonathan, and caused Saul to neglect his responsibilities.

David saw and understood the reproach Saul was bringing to the throne and upon Israel. He could have found many excuses for retaliating against Saul, but he was steadfast in his convictions. Since God had appointed Saul king, He alone had the authority to remove him. David's faith in God was strengthened by the trials and temptations occasioned by Saul's jealous pursuit. He stayed his hand in recognition of God's authority over earthly government.

God in His sovereignty sets up "whomsoever he will." Our attitude toward the office of these God-appointed authorities affects our relationship with God.

How do we relate to the government authorities over us? This lesson can be made quite practical, as most families have had to deal with government at some level. The most common examples relate to highway driving. Do we stay within the speed limits? Are our vehicles properly maintained? Are our children properly secured? Building codes and environmental requirements may also affect us. Do we cut corners with these codes if what we are doing will not be seen? In most cases, the officials in charge have experience with all kinds of violators, and they are not deceived. What testimony does that leave for us and for the church?

Government leaders are men with the same human constitution we have. They are subject to emotion, limited insight, negative influence, and temptation. Since many of them do not profess to know the Lord, we cannot hold them to our standard. We should not speak disrespect-

fully of someone in public office. It is not in our place to declare someone more or less fit for office. That choice is God's and His alone.

**Lesson Aim:** To present principles for relating to earthly authorities.

**Theme Verse:** [1 Samuel 24:6](#). And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.

### Lesson Text

#### Respecting the Lord's Anointed

[1 Samuel 24:2-7](#) <sup>2</sup> Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. <sup>3</sup> And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where *was* a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. <sup>4</sup> And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. <sup>5</sup> And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. <sup>6</sup> And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD. <sup>7</sup> So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on *his* way.

[1 Samuel 26:8-11](#) <sup>8</sup> Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not *smite* him the second time. <sup>9</sup> And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless? <sup>10</sup> David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish. <sup>11</sup> The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that *is* at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

## Entreating the Lord's Anointed

1 Samuel 26:17-18 <sup>17</sup> And Saul knew David's voice, and said, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* And David said, *It is my voice, my lord, O king.* <sup>18</sup> And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil *is* in mine hand? 1 Samuel 26:21-25 <sup>21</sup> Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. <sup>22</sup> And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it. <sup>23</sup> The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into *my* hand to day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed. <sup>24</sup> And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation. <sup>25</sup> Then Saul said to David, Blessed *be* thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great *things*, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

## Questions for Study

### Respecting the Lord's Anointed

1. How might David have rationalized taking Saul's life?
2. Why did David cut off part of Saul's robe and take his spear?
3. Who are the present-day counterparts to "the LORD'S anointed"?
4. What are some appropriate ways to honor earthly rulers?

### Entreating the Lord's Anointed

5. What was David's appeal to Saul?
6. Discuss the proper way to make requests to those in authority.
7. How can we lay the groundwork for good relations with government officials?
8. Enumerate the blessings of showing proper respect to earthly authority.

## Analyzing the Passage

En-ge-di (1 Samuel 24: 1) is a region on the western shore of the Dead Sea. The area is barren and very rugged with numerous rock outcroppings and caves. By going there, Saul was placing the safety of his ar-

my at risk. That his own life was at risk is evident in the Scripture account.

Sheepcotes (1 Samuel 24:3) were enclosures or shelters for sheep. The cave must have been large, if the hundreds of men with David could hide in its recesses. David's own men tempted him by suggesting that the Lord Himself had provided this opportunity to eliminate Saul and take the throne. David would not hear of this treachery and cut off the words of his men. David respected the Lord's work in Israel through Saul, and he was willing to wait until God's chosen time to deal with Saul.

Chapter 26 records a second time when David and his men were able to enter Saul's encampment. They were once again near enough to take Saul's life if they chose, but David again deferred to the Lord's timing. The trench (1 Samuel 26:7) was a military arrangement of the camp whereby the campsite was encircled to provide the greatest possible protection. Saul was asleep within this circle with his spear stuck in the ground near his head.

Note that in both encounters David refers to Saul as "the LORD'S anointed." This is further evidence that David understood that Saul's time had not yet come, and he would not consent to the killing of the king.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Respecting the Lord's Anointed**

1. Earthly authorities are subject to error through miscalculation and misdirected zeal (1 Samuel 24:2). God alone is perfect. Human judgment and action are frequently influenced by shortsightedness, prejudice, and ignorance. Government leaders will inevitably make some laws and establish some policies that favor special-interest groups. Often their actions bring some unintended, harmful effects. It is the duty of God's people to honor and respect them regardless of their shortcomings. Furthermore, we are called to obey, except when doing so would violate God's requirements.

2. Men of lesser principle may urge unadvised action toward errant earthly authorities (1 Samuel 24:4). In a democracy, people will voice severe disapproval of their leaders by demanding recall elections or impeachment. In totalitarian settings, the preferred course is armed rebel-

lion to either depose or dispose of those who abuse their power. In either case, such action is preceded by a buildup of resentment, civil disobedience, and threatening. God's people must remain aloof from either active or passive resistance against government. Since God places earthly authorities as He sees best, to resist them is to resist God (Romans 13:1, 2).

3. The godly cultivate a sensitive conscience and clear testimony regarding their relationship with earthly authorities (24:5-7). In a land where laws are numerous and complicated, full compliance becomes difficult and even at times impossible. How do we perform when no one sees us? Do we knowingly violate the law on the highway, at the construction site, or on the farm if we are unlikely to be caught? These situations test our integrity. If we are obeying "for conscience sake," we need not fear being questioned by the authorities because our good intent will be evident.

4. God holds us accountable for our actions toward earthly authorities (1 Samuel 26:7-9). Getting in trouble with the law of the land may result in fines, court proceedings, or imprisonment. Civil justice may sometimes be too harsh or too lenient, or even be avoided altogether. Divine justice, however, cannot be circumvented. If we relate improperly to civil authorities, we will give an account to God for our motives, speech, and actions.

5. Earthly authorities are wholly dependent on God for their physical protection (1 Samuel 26:7-8). God places them according to His plan, and no one may remove or destroy them without His permission. When God's time for change arrives, He will work out the needed change. Until that time, those appointed by Him will stand.

6. The Lord, who appoints men to office, holds the prerogative to remove them from office (1 Samuel 26:9-10). Some modern governments work on a democratic principle—the people elect their leaders. This gives the appearance that men are in control. As God's children, however, our primary citizenship is not with an earthly nation. We are part of a far greater kingdom—God's kingdom. We therefore have no business going to the polls or working to influence the results of political elections. God will set up whom He will, and He will remove an official when the time is right.

## **Entreating the Lord's Anointed**

7. The godly use entreaty in relating to authorities who oppose them (1 Samuel 26:17-18). Earthly governments will sometimes require what we cannot, in good conscience, obey. We may not respond by signing formal petitions, joining public protests, or slandering government officials. Rather, we should meekly and humbly explain our position and ask for consideration.

If it is not granted, we maintain an attitude of meekness, even while we "obey God rather than men."

8. The life of the godly may prod the conscience of ungodly rulers (1 Samuel 26:21-25). Jesus likened the influence of the righteous to "the salt of the earth." None of us know to what extent the prayers and example of godly people influence the thoughts and actions of earthly rulers. Certainly the Lord uses that influence to direct and preserve nations.

9. Those who show proper respect to earthly authorities are blessed in the end (1 Samuel 26:25). David received the blessing of Saul and the favor of the nation as a result of his actions in both these encounters.

First Timothy 2:1-2 teaches us to pray for those in authority so "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life." This will aid us in our role as ambassadors for Christ. God will bless those who respect His plan, perhaps even in the form of unexpected favors from earthly rulers.

## **Important Teachings**

1. Earthly authorities are subject to error through miscalculation and misdirected zeal (1 Samuel 24:2).

2. Men of lesser principle may urge unadvised action toward errant earthly authorities (1 Samuel 24:4).

3. The godly cultivate a sensitive conscience and clear testimony regarding their relationship with earthly authorities (1 Samuel 24:5-7).

4. God holds us accountable for our actions toward earthly authorities (1 Samuel 26:7-9).

5. Earthly authorities are wholly dependent on God for their physical protection (1 Samuel 26:7-8).

6. The Lord, who appoints men to office, holds the prerogative to remove them from office (1 Samuel 26:9-10).

7. The godly use entreaty in relating to authorities who oppose them (1 Samuel 26:17-18).
8. The life of the godly may prod the conscience of ungodly rulers (1 Samuel 26:21-25).
9. Those who show proper respect to earthly authorities are blessed in the end (1 Samuel 26:25).

### **Answers to Questions**

*1. How might David have rationalized taking Saul's life?*

David could have reasoned, as Abishai did, that the opportunity to take Saul's life was God-given. By killing Saul, David would be doing only what Saul intended to do to him. Israel was declining under Saul's rule and was badly in need of good leadership. David could have concluded that, since God had rejected Saul and chosen him instead, the throne now rightfully belonged to him.

*2. Why did David cut off part of Saul's robe and take his spear?*

David longed for reconciliation and to prove that he was not the dangerous murderer that Saul imagined him to be. Saul's spear and part of his garment in David's hand proved clearly that David was innocent.

*3. Who are the present-day counterparts to "the Lord's anointed"?*

God has ordained various types and levels of earthly government to maintain order in society. The persons who fill public office are there by God's sovereign direction. Honoring them calls for the same attitude that David had toward Saul. Although not in focus in the lesson text, the authority of parents and church leaders also comes from the Lord.

*4. What are some appropriate ways to honor earthly rulers?*

Government officials hold an important place in the order that God has ordained for mankind. We must obey the laws of the land unless they conflict with the commandments of God. We honor rulers by speaking respectfully of them, even if we disagree with their decisions. We honor them by obeying the Scriptural command to pray for them.

*5. What was David's appeal to Saul?*

David appealed to Saul's reason. How could David be a dangerous Enemy if he had an opportunity to kill Saul but spared him? Indeed, if David had done Saul any wrong, he was open to correction.

*6. Discuss the proper way to make requests to those in authority.*

Consideration should be requested only in rare circumstances, such as when the law conflicts with God's requirements, or if there is an oversight. We need to channel our request through the office that is empowered to grant it. The request must be made clearly and respectfully. We should accept the decision meekly. If consideration is not given, we must not speak negatively of the matter.

*7. How can we lay the groundwork for good relations with government officials?*

We do this by quiet, consistent living in daily activity. We must avoid meddling in the affairs of the government. We strive to obey the laws of the land, refusing to participate in anti-government activities. When we have interactions with officials, we must be polite and compliant.

*8. Enumerate the blessings of showing proper respect to earthly authority.*

We can live peaceably in the land. We have a strong testimony and a clear conscience. We experience orderliness in our community. We have good relationships with those around us and over us. We have God's blessing.

## **Research Guide**

1. Read the entire lesson scope for context, noting similarities and differences in the encounters.
2. Read the chapter on "Civil Government" in *Doctrines of the Bible*.

## **Summarizing the Lesson**

Living under a tolerant government raises the temptation to cross lines of separation established for our spiritual safety. By remaining committed to Biblical principles and leading a blameless, peaceable life, we leave a strong testimony to those around us. When our paths do cross with the government, we must maintain our Christian demeanor and remember that all authority comes from God. He raises up and removes leaders according to His sovereign will. Let us not speak disrespectfully of or do evil unto those appointed by our Lord.