**Faithful Regardless – David spares Saul**

**1st Sam 23**:**15**

“While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. **16**And Saul’s son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.

**Psalm 54:1 “**Save me, O God, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your strength. (NKJV)

**2nd Cor. 12:9-10** “My strength is made perfect in weakness.” …For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**Let’s not pretend to be powerful, but let’s welcome our weakness.**

**Because, when we are weak, He is strong!**

**Let’s encourage ourselves in the Lord and find strength in the Lord our God.**

David’s integrity continues to be put to the test.

He is in the “waiting years” the years that God was preparing him to be king. He is proving that he has the character to honor God in spite of the opportunities for revenge and vindication. He proved that he **“Faithful, Regardless”** of circumstances, temptation, or the persuasion and influence of his peers.

**1st Samuel 24**

**1st Sam. 24:1-22**”After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, “David is in the Desert of En Gedi.” **2**So Saul took three thousand able young men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats.

*En Gedi – (Spring of a Young Goat) A beautiful mountain ravine for hiking and wading in the springs and waterfall, (including David’s Spring) right in the Judean Desert.*

**3**He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself.

*Yes, Saul went into a random cave to “use the bathroom*”.

3bDavid and his men were far back in the cave.

**4**The men said, “This is the day the Lord spoke of when he said to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.’” Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul’s robe.

**5**Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. **6**He said to his men, “The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord’s anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the Lord.” **7**With these words David sharply rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.

*David seemingly had every right to take his revenge on Saul. Saul had clearly declared that his pursuit was to kill David. He already killed or tried to kill anyone who even in the slightest way helped, or defended David.*

*Saul was an evil, hate-filled mass murderer. It seemed right for David’s faithful men to suggest that this was clearly God’s will in delivering David’s enemy into his hand.*

*The problem was, Saul was still the anointed/appointed King of Israel. David’s reverence for that position kept him from acting in vengeance and compulsion. Yet David also did not regard himself as worthy to execute such a judgement over Saul, and chose Mercy over Judgment.*

**8**Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, “My lord the king!” When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. **9**He said to Saul, “Why do you listen when men say, ‘David is bent on harming you’? **10**This day you have seen with your own eyes how the Lord delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, ‘I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the Lord’s anointed.’ **11**See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. See that there is nothing in my hand to indicate that I am guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. **12**May the Lord judge between you and me. And may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you. **13**As the old saying goes, ‘From evildoers come evil deeds,’ so my hand will not touch you.

**14**“Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Who are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? **15**May the Lord be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand.”

Despite Saul being undeserving of respect and title, David chose to address him in the most respectful terms. Not to honor the man, but to honor God.

He calls him;

* V. 8 – “My lord the king”
* V. 11 – “my father”
* V. 14 – “king of Israel”
* He says; “‘I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the Lord’s anointed.” V. 10

David was “Faithful Regardless”. Faithful to God, despite what his feelings are/were about Saul. Not only did he not lay a hand on him and kill him. He did not sin against him with his lips, by cursing, disrespecting or directing hate and vengeance toward him.

David’s integrity and kindness, even against very contrary sentiment, invoked a surprising reaction in Saul – He momentarily “repented”.

**16**When David finished saying this, Saul asked, “Is that your voice, David my son?” And he wept aloud. **17**“You are more righteous than I,” he said. “You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. **18**You have just now told me about the good you did to me; the Lord delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me. **19**When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the Lord reward you well for the way you treated me today. **20**I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands.

**21**Now swear to me by the Lord that you will not kill off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father’s family.”**22**So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.”

Saul in an unexpected response, did not retaliate and curse David, he repented “changed his mind” about David.

* He called him “David my son?” (v. 16)
* he wept aloud.  (v. 16)
* He declared“You are more righteous than I,” (v. 17)
* He confessed “You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly.” (v. 17)
* He admitted  “the Lord delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me.” (v. 18)
* He blessed him “May the Lord reward you well for the way you treated me today.” (v. 19)
* He finally conceded**“**I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands.” (v. 20)

This is an amazing and surprising response from King Saul,

He (at *least temporarily,* repented of his murderous hateful heart toward David).

*(Unfortunately, it didn’t last, Saul would soon be overcome with the evil in his heart and pursue David again).*

But for a moment, Saul repented.

All because David acted in integrity and kindness.

If David acted in vengeance and anger, it would not have turned out the same. Saul’s men may have killed David on that day.

God often puts us to the test, and gives us the opportunity to take revenge, but prompts us by the Holy Spirit not to.

Because God’s will for us is not to right the scales of justice on the earth by our own hands, but to show his kindness and offer forgiveness so that sinners will repent.

It is never God’s will to sin against someone in the same way they sinned against you.

If David had murdered Saul in that moment, he would have been just a *murderer who murdered another murderer.*

We are sometimes faced with situations where we are given the opportunity to retaliate against or even fight against people who deserve God’s wrath and we are in an advantageous place to execute it upon them…

But the Holy Spirit tells us not to, in fact sometimes he tells you to do the exact opposite…

In Romans 12, Paul writes;

* **14**Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse…
* **17**Do not repay anyone evil for evil…
* **18**If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.
* **19**Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord…
* **21**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

You read these words of Paul and may say, *that’s easy for him to say,*

* He doesn’t know my boss,
* He doesn’t know my co-worker
* He doesn’t know my neighbor,
* He doesn’t know my sister, brother, in-law or ex.

*No,* but Paul wrote this to Christians *living in Rome* during the worst years of the brutal Roman Empire, where Christians were tortured and martyred regularly and had to hide in underground caves to avoid being caught and dragged out and publicly murdered.

Much like David with Saul, these Roman Christians could have easily dismissed this sort of pacifist thinking due to the severity of their situations, but they didn’t.

Regardless of who your enemy is, or who you think it is, there is not a better way to bring about change in them than God’s way.

You may think that yelling at them for their offense, flaming them on Social Media, cursing them publicly or even executing “eye for an eye” justice on them will do the trick but it never does. It only prolongs and aggravates the conflict, and usually invokes more escalated offenses.

Jesus didn’t do that;

* He told us that he came into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world would be saved through him. (John 3:17)
* He tell us in the Sermon on the Mount;

“You’ve heard it said, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,but I say, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

*This is what David did* and *what we should do* as well if our goal is to honor God and bring about change in the other person, instead of satiating our own craving for revenge and judgement.

**Rom 2:1-4**You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. **2**Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. **3**So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? **4**Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?”

“God’s kindness leads to repentance”.

If you want an evil person to repent show them God’s kindness and watch what happens.

It’s very likely that, God’s kindness is what lead YOU to repentance.

*Les Misérables tells the story of ex-prisoner Jean Valjean, hunted for decades by the ruthless policeman Javert.*

*The drama begins with Valjean finishing a 19-year prison sentence for stealing a loaf of bread. Inspector Javert reminds him of his past sins and prophesies that he is and always will be a marked man.*

*But a godly bishop shows Valjean kindness and hospitality and allows him into his home. Valjean repays the bishop’s kindness by stealing his silver. The next day, the police catch him and bring him and the silver back to the bishop.*

*The bishop gives him a second chance, he tells the police that he gave the silver to Valjean.*

*Then he extends even more grace by telling Valjean that he “forgot to take the silver candlesticks too.”*

*This act of kindness and the experience of being forgiven empowers Valjean to repent and become an honest man.*

This is the sort of kindness that Jesus showed us that lead to our repentance.

And much like the kindness that David showed that led to Saul’s [temporary] repentance.

But what about when someone we know, know of, hear about, or read about, is truly guilty of a sin, and truly deserving of punishment and even condemnation?,

We have to ask the question;

**“Who is worthy to execute judgement?”**

Jesus said;

“Let he who is without sin cast the first stone” (John 8:7)

Jesus was hearing the case of a person who was caught red-handed in a very serious offense.

What did he do? Did he chastise, condemn, rebuke or cancel her?

**John 8:3:1-11** “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 4 and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” 6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” 8 Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

11 “No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

\* She was guilty, she did not deny it.

\* The law was clear about adultery; it was a capital crime.

\* Jesus did not ignore or excuse her sin; he just chose not to condemn her.

What do we do when someone we know or read about is guilty of any sort of malfeasance?

* Do we condemn them?
* Deprecate them?
* Cancel them?
* (or in David’s case, KILL them?)

We shouldn’t, none of us are qualified, no one is, unless (according to Jesus) we are without sin.

Jesus [and David] gave a beautiful example of what it looks like to show compassion, forgiveness and restoration to a clearly sinful person, without ignoring the sin.

*We should too.*

In our relationships, in our dealings, our interactions and even our judgment,

Let’s show the same “kindness that leads to repentance” that Jesus shows us.