

Choices

2 Samuel 24:1-7

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A. Easy (v. 1):

1. Now – Saul was intensely seeking to kill David. He was about to trap (23:24-29) him, but God rescued David once more.

a) When things seem out of control, God is still in control. God allowed the Philistines to distract Saul when Saul could have caught David earlier (23-24-29).

2. Now – This is a time when David walked with the Lord, so no matter how intense Saul could have been to do evil against David, he could not succeed.

3. Return – As soon as Saul addressed what was taking place with the Philistines (23:26-29) he returned to seeking David's life. Evil does not rest until the Lord says enough because satan is always on the prowl (1 Peter 5:8-9).

a) Yet, as David said, the king had no just cause for hunting him down (24:14–15). In repentance, Saul acknowledged David's righteousness (vs. 17–19) and the fact that David would indeed be king (v. 20). ^[1]

4. Took 3000 Chosen Men – Saul became very purposeful in selecting the best, most vigorous young men who were in their prime to join him in looking for David and then commanded them to come with him. Saul became endlessly more strategic and intentional in seeking David's life.

a) Saul's army of 3,000 (cf. 26:2) is equal in size to the standing army he had formed earlier in his career (cf. 13:2) and there were five times as many men who were with David (23:13). His military superiority is also indicated by the word "select" which

modifies the word “men,” and by the fact that his forces represented the army of “all Israel” (cf. 26:2). [\[2\]](#)

5. On the Ways – Saul believed that he could capture and destroy David, based on the information he had about David’s location, and because of the 3,000 valiant men he had assembled. This was what he was going to dedicate his life to doing. No matter what advantage a person may seem to have, when God is on our side, He is our victor.
6. Went – God is sovereign in His decisions. When Saul believes he is at his strength, he goes into the cave from his mighty force only to deliver himself to David. Man’s best plans can be used to God’s advantage because all things work for the good of those who LOVE GOD (obey God no matter what; Romans 8:28).
7. Were Sitting; Remained – David and his men had already decided, before Saul ever came into the cave, to have a lengthy stay in the cave.

B. Under Pressure (v. 4):

1. The Men of David Said to Him – David’s men repeatedly kept seeking to order him to kill Saul. So David was not the only person who knew Saul was in the cave.
2. Behold This is the Day – David’s men did everything possible to get his attention in an effort to get him to kill Saul.
3. Lord Said – David’s men falsely speak of the Lord’s authority, power and covenant relationship with David. In their desire to help David and with Saul being very vulnerable, they believe the Lord had delivered Saul to David. In other words, the Lord’s covenant with David that was established in the past is now completed.
4. Lord Said – Even though a passage may be correct (God’s covenant with David), it is never correct when it violates another part of the scriptures (Don’t touch my anointed).
5. Lord Said – God’s Word is exposed in the midst of various circumstances, but circumstances do not determine the interpretation of God’s Word. In other words, we cannot allow circumstances to directly influence the interpretation of God’s Word.
 - a) There is no previous record of the divine revelation here alluded to by David’s men. Perhaps this was their own interpretation of the anointing of David to replace Saul (16:13-14), or of assurances given to David that he would survive Saul’s vendetta against him and ultimately become king (20:14-15; 23:17).

6. Behold/ I (God? – Not Really) am about to Give – Your Hand –David’s men are doing everything possible to gain his complete attention, so they told him that the Lord had generously delivered Saul into his control. In other words, this is all God’s doing so there is no way David can disobey God. People can spiritualize a lie in order to deceive us.

a) But when did God say this? Were they referring to Samuel’s words to Saul in 1 Samuel 15:26–29, or to God’s message to Samuel in 16:1? Perhaps the idea came from Jonathan’s words in 20:15, which some of the men might have heard personally. The leaders of the 600 men likely discussed these matters among themselves, for their future was wrapped up in David’s future and obviously they came to some false conclusions. David never planned to kill Saul, for he was sure that the Lord would remove him from the scene in His own way and in His own time (26:9–11). ^[3]

b) No matter the fact, they believed and said God will still hold David accountable for what he knows to be true.

7. Shall Do to Him – Because this is what the Lord has done for David, says David’s mighty men, he is obligated to kill Saul.

a) David’s men saw it as an opportunity for revenge, while David saw it as an opportunity to show mercy and prove that his heart was right. God was giving him an opportunity to answer his own prayer for vindication (Ps. 54:1). David stealthily crept up to the garment that Saul had laid aside, cut off a corner of the robe, and went back into the cave. Saul left the cave not realizing what had happened. ^[4]

8. Acceptable in His Eyes, Pleasant or Well – On the one hand, David’s men say it is the Lord’s will, but on the other hand David needs to work very hard to accomplish what is beneficial for David. This they believed David deserved because of all he had tremendously suffered because of Saul’s negative descriptions of him and hunting him, like a wild animal to kill him.

9. David Arose – David set his mind to what his men told him, believing it came from the Lord, and with full determination continuously sought to strategically find Saul, in the cave, and kill him.

a) But perhaps the narrator only meant to imply that Saul went into the cave alone, unattended by bodyguards, which made David's opportunity to kill him all the easier. The fact that Saul would have the bad luck to choose the one cave where David and his men were staying is a sign of his tragic fate and, perhaps, of God's guidance. David's forces may have been in the back of the cave or in one of the galleys branching off from the entrance. ^[5]

10. Cut Off – Destroying the edge of Saul's kingly garment was an act that David planned and the moment his friends spoke of. He developed it, based on what his friends said, a deep commitment to destroy any loyalty he had to Saul. David's friends convinced his heart to do what he knew was wrong.

a) Like the elaborately decorated hem on the high priest's garments (Ex 28:33–34), Saul's robe would also have had a distinctive fringe or design marking him as the king. It may have been specially dyed or contained special stitching reserved only for the king's use, and it symbolized his power and authority. ^[6]

11. Cut Off – David, however, was completely resolved not to kill Saul. By cutting off the edge of his kingly garment, David had decided to transfer kingship to himself because his friends had convinced him it was the Lord's will.

a) Possession of (a part of) the royal robe might imply that one was the legitimate heir (cf. 18:4 where Jonathan took off his garment and gave it to David). Later in chap. 24, of course, David held up a piece of cloth as a sign of his innocence—it showed that he only cut the robe when he had the chance to take the king's life (v 12). David swore an oath, whose breach would have capital consequences (v 7; cf. the interpretation of Mettinger, 199), that he would never lay a hand on Yahweh's anointed. Hence the taking of the robe in the present context is a sign of restraint and innocence (cf. v 12). ^[7]

C. Willful (vs. 5-7):

1. So David Said to His Men – After David goes and finds Saul completely delivered into his hands and David cut the edge of his garment (this signifies he strips him of his kingship), David repeatedly says to his men that this is not the will of God.
2. David's Conscience (Heart) Bothered Him – David's innermost feelings took an emotional beating as if he became emotionally wounded so that he felt severely wrong for his actions.

a) David's conviction must have been quick because he was still in the cave, Saul was still there.

3. David's Conscience (Heart) Bothered Him – A man of God felt wrong for what he did, but David's men did not feel the same way. When God speaks to us His voice should be louder than any friend's. We must be more loyal to God than to friends.
4. Far Be It – David strongly, emotionally, repeatedly kept verbalizing to his men that what he did should have never taken place.

a) He had been given his position by God and only God could take it from him. Political assassination is a very bad precedent for a claimant to a throne to employ (see the way in which it escalates in 1 Kings 15:25–16:27). Divine right to the throne could serve as an extraordinary insurance policy for the king as long as the mystique of being the "Lord's anointed" was maintained. Thus David's refusal to act demonstrates his loyalty to God's original designation of Saul as king and also provides an argument against future attempts on his own life when he became king.

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5. Yehovah – David knew what the Word of the Lord said about His anointed. This was not a sin against Saul, it was a sin against God.
6. Should Do This Thing – David said that because of his commitment to the Lord, he should not have a continuous obligation to work hard to accomplish what should not have taken place.
7. Should Do This Thing – What David communicated to his men is that there is no way he should have listened to them, by putting a lot of energy into trying to fulfill what they said when he already knew what God told him to do.

8. Stretch Out Hand – What David says to his men is that he should have never taken this situation into his control, but left the circumstances to God’s direction and determination.

a) By voiding Saul’s claim to kingship, he was at some level lifting his hand against “the anointed of the Lord” (v. 6; Hb. v. 7). This was more than an act against the king; it was a rebellion against the Lord, who had commanded Israelites not to curse their rulers (Exod. 22:28), and had previously punished the Israelites who had expressed a rebellious attitude against the constituted authority (cf. Num 12:2–15; 16:1–35). ^[9]

9. Anointed – What David means by God’s anointed is that God put Saul in place so it is God’s choice when Saul is removed, not the will of a man.

10. David Persuaded His Men – David’s men were still committed to killing Saul. David had to literally tear them away from what they planned to do.

11. David Persuaded His Men – Doing God’s will does not just require obedience, it sometimes requires leadership when it involves others who are trying to lead us in the wrong direction. Providing that leadership can be a challenge when they are committed to what they believe is the right thing to do, especially when they are convinced it is the thing God wants them to do.

a) Not because we know what God is saying to us, everyone will agree.

12. Allow Them to Raise Up – David prevented his men from having the opportunity to kill Saul. It seems like they were intent (like when they did all they could to get David water) on killing Saul because of all that Saul intended to do to David. They were fiercely loyal to David.

13. Allow Them to Raise Up – Friends who are loyal buddies must not succeed in pressuring us to disobey the Lord.

a) This shows that even when God provides us with various possibilities for action, it is left to us to decide which course of action to take and this decision is influenced by one’s discernment of God’s will in any given context. Some scholars think that this skirt-cutting was part of an ancient magical ritual to exercise control over the person whose robe is cut (Martin Noth, “Bemerkungen zum sechsten Band der Mari-Texte,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1 [1956]: 329–330; repr. *Aufsätze zur biblischen Landes- und Altertumskunde* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1971] 2:240–41; Fritz Stolz,

Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel, 154). However, that was clearly not in the mind of David. ^[10]

14. Saul Arose – Without any knowledge of what was taking place around him, Saul woke up from his sleep and prepared to leave the cave, a place he thought was safe. Without the Lord, because we are outside His will we are never safe.
15. Went on His Ways – When Saul awoke nothing changed about what he was planning to do to David.
16. Went on His Ways – Being gracious to people does not mean that they would make the same return to you. They may still be hateful.

^[1] Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 451–452). Victor Books.

^[2] Klein, R. W. (1983). [1 Samuel](#) (Vol. 10, p. 239). Word, Incorporated.

^[3] Wiersbe, W. W. (2001). [Be successful](#) (p. 128). Victor/Cook Communications.

^[4] Wiersbe, W. W. (2001). [Be successful](#) (p. 128). Victor/Cook Communications.

^[5] Klein, R. W. (1983). [1 Samuel](#) (Vol. 10, p. 239). Word, Incorporated.

^[6] Matthews, V. H., Chavalas, M. W., & Walton, J. H. (2000). [The IVP Bible background commentary: Old Testament](#) (electronic ed., 1 Sa 24:4–5). InterVarsity Press.

^[7] Klein, R. W. (1983). [1 Samuel](#) (Vol. 10, p. 239). Word, Incorporated.

^[8] Matthews, V. H., Chavalas, M. W., & Walton, J. H. (2000). [The IVP Bible background commentary: Old Testament](#) (electronic ed., 1 Sa 24:6). InterVarsity Press.

^[9] Bergen, R. D. (1996). [1, 2 Samuel](#) (Vol. 7, p. 239). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

^[10] Robinson, G. (1993). [Let us be like the nations: a commentary on the books of 1 and 2 Samuel](#) (pp. 128–129). Eerdmans; Handsel Press.