

1 Samuel 24:1-22 | “Cutting Corners”  
*Preached on April 3, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown*

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 24 this morning. *[pause]*

**Have you ever cut corners?**

At the parsonage, where we live, there’s a detached garage in the backyard.

And one day, we had the garage doors open, and so my oldest son wanted to race me *around* the garage and back.

That was the plan - to go all the way around the garage, and come back to the house.

So we were racing, and we were running around the garage, but all of a sudden, my son cut *through* the garage, in order to get ahead of me.

He had cut the corner, and even though I still beat him, I had to explain to him that you can’t just cut corners. *[pause]*

**But it made me think about how often we try to cut corners in other areas of our lives.**

Do you ever cut corners at your job?

What about at school?

How about with that project at your house? Cut any corners?

Here’s a stinging one: do you cut corners in your parenting? *[pause]*

I’ve entitled the sermon this morning, “Cutting Corners,” and it has a double meaning.

**We will find that David cuts the corner of Saul’s robe, and in this story, we will see how we shouldn’t cut corners when it comes to obeying God.**

For David will show us a shining example of someone, who could have taken the easy way out, but stood strong in reverent obedience to God. *[pauseeee]*

As we consider where we are in 1 Samuel, we have been talking about the animosity between Saul and David, as Saul has been hunting David down.

In chapter 23, we heard about how Saul was chasing David, but just in the nick of time, a messenger came and told Saul of a Philistine raid, and Saul’s attention went elsewhere.

David was saved! *[pause]*

And now in our story this morning, we will find the tables turned.

This time, it won't be Saul, who has a chance to kill David, but David, who will have the chance to kill Saul.

What will happen?

Will David kill Saul and no longer have to fear for his life, or will something else happen?

*[pause]*

Let's START READING in verse 1...[\[verses 1-3\]](#)

Here we find Saul pursuing David once again, and you're thinking, "Uh oh, here we go again."

He's gathered 3,000 men to chase David down, and Saul ends up having to go to the bathroom in the very cave that David is hiding in.

This should be interesting, right? Now what?

Well David's men see this situation as a positive one, beaming with God's providence.

Just listen to what they say in verse 4...[\[read verse 4\]](#)

David's men can't help but be excited, for they see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Finally, David can be free from running and hiding from Saul, but what does David do?

Verses 4b-7 tell us...

Instead of killing Saul, he cuts off the corner of his robe.

And all of David's men are like, "What?! You could have easily just killed him right there and got this all over with!"

But David has a reason, for he recognizes that he can't just kill the Lord's anointed king. *[pause]*

Even though Saul is not a good king, and the Lord promised to take the kingdom away from him and give it to David,<sup>1</sup> yet it's not time yet.

Saul is still reigning, and therefore, should be honored in his position. *[pause]*

In fact, David even feels bad for cutting off the corner of Saul's robe.

The reason is because this cutting was a very *symbolic* act.

The king's robe was a symbol of his position, so cutting it was a sign of rebellion.

It's kind of like an attack on the office of the king, showing disregard for it.

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<sup>1</sup> See 1 Samuel 15:26-28.

And so he feels bad for this act, and has to persuade his men to not go and kill Saul. *[pause]*

That would have been hard, too, I'm sure.

Because David could have easily thought, 'Well, I won't be the one killing him. I can just let my men do it.'

Yet he doesn't let his men do this, but shows respect for Saul's kingship. *[pause]*

How could David do this?

It all came down to a deep reverence for God.

That was the controlling factor in David's life - the fear of the Lord. *[pause]*

David revered the Lord so much that he couldn't kill God's anointed king.

That leads me to the first point.

*Reverence for God is displayed when we...*

#### **A. Show respect to who God has put into authority.**

Back in 2012, terrorists attacked a United States diplomatic compound in Benghazi and killed U.S. ambassador Chris Stevens, among others.

That was a sad event, and there have been other U.S. ambassadors killed over the years. *[pause]*

When those terrorists or people attack a country's ambassador, are they just attacking the ambassador?

No, it actually symbolizes more, doesn't it?

They are sending a message to the nation that sent the ambassador and essentially attacking that nation. *[pause]*

So also, in a similar way, David knew that killing the king's anointed was like showing God a lack of reverence.

And that thought restrained him from killing Saul, even though he wanted to. *[pause]*

Listen to what David says and does as he comes out and talks with Saul later, starting in verse 8...[\[read verses 8-15\]](#)

David shows great respect for Saul in his words and actions, but he also tries to prove his innocence to him.

His actions prove that he isn't out to harm Saul, for he could have killed him, but didn't. *[pause]*

There's no reason Saul should be trying to kill David, for he's loyal, and Saul is spending all of this time and resources on him.

It's foolish because it's like someone with the resources of the kingdom going after a dead dog or a flea. *[pauseeee]*

David understood that it's never right to do something wrong.

**Even if the temptation was great, he would show respect to Saul.**

Even if Saul was the one trying to kill him, yet he wouldn't touch the Lord's anointed, who represented God. *[pause]*

**This mentality came from an utmost reverence for God.**

He understood that respect for human authority was based on respect for divine authority.

If God has placed a human authority in our lives, out of reverence for God, we respect that authority.

This is why Peter says, "Be subject *for the Lord's sake* to every human institution."<sup>2</sup> *[pause]*

**Saul was definitely an anointed one, who had sinned and failed in many ways, yet David's love for God led him to not harm him.**

Though Saul was unworthy, yet Saul's divinely-given office was to be honored. *[pauseeee]*

**If we are going to respect God-ordained authorities in our lives, we must begin at the foundation, which is reverence for God.** *[pause]*

Do you revere God?

God is not just one of your buddies - He is the God of the Universe, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Judge, and the Holy One of Heaven.

He is a loving Heavenly Father, may we never forget that, but He is also a holy, all-powerful Lord, who deserves obedience and reverence.

**And if we would conduct ourselves with reverence,<sup>3</sup> it would make a huge difference in how we treat the authorities that He has set up.** *[pauseeee]*

Does your heart and actions reflect respect for who God has put in authority over you?

**In our country, God has set up governing authorities, who have a specific role to play, as His servant.**<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 2:13 (italics is mine).

<sup>3</sup> See 1 Peter 1:17.

<sup>4</sup> See Romans 13:1-5.

In the home, parents are given authority over their children.<sup>5</sup>

In marriage, the husband is called to be the head.<sup>6</sup>

In the church, there are leaders, who are to be submitted to.<sup>7</sup>

Whoever is that authority that God has set up in our lives, they should be shown respect because God has *given* them that authority. *[paauseeee]*

Now we understand that they will fail and not be perfect, for even Saul was definitely not perfect.

But David still showed honor towards him because he understood what position he had. *[pauseeee]*

Did you know that there is a very clear way to see whether we have reverence for God the Father?

The greatest way that we show reverence for the Father is by showing honor to Jesus. *[pause]*

Jesus Christ has authority over us, and *He* is perfect, and *He* is truly God's anointed One, and we dare not dishonor *Him*.

Instead, we worship and serve Him, who came and took on flesh, and who perfectly represents God to us because He is God.

And a reverence for Him displays a reverence for the Father. *[pause]*

As Jesus said, "Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him."<sup>8</sup> *[pauseeee]*

Honoring Christ is seen in whether we believe, trust, and obey Him in faith or not.

So do you believe in Jesus Christ, the One who came from the Father to die on the Cross for your sins?

Do you trust Him, who was raised from the grave three days later?

Do you submit and follow Him above all as Lord? *[pause]*

May our lives align with what He wants, and may we rejoice in His great grace by which He saved us. *[pauseeee]*

Reverence for God is seen in respecting those authorities over us who He has set up.

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<sup>5</sup> See Ephesians 6:1.

<sup>6</sup> See Ephesians 5:22-24.

<sup>7</sup> See Hebrews 13:17.

<sup>8</sup> John 5:23.

Do you have a rebellious attitude towards our government? What about your parents? What about your husband? What about your church leaders?

What about Christ?

May we revere God so much that we respect those whom He has set up in our lives. *[pauseeee]*

Thinking further about what David did here, we see how his reverence for God was further displayed, and it's in this way...

*Reverence for God is displayed when we...*

### **B. Trust God's timing and ways.**

Author Oren Arnold once said that the "Prayer of the modern American [is] 'Dear God, I pray for patience, and I want it right now!'"<sup>9</sup>

Do you ever feel that way?

We are impatient people, who want things done immediately, and 'immediately' always seems to be the timing of how long we want to wait for things.

We are used to fast food, and getting our packages delivered 2 days from when we click, "Order Now."

So it's hard to wait on God's timing. *[pause]*

Yet what do you find with David?

You find a man, who out of reverence for God, waited on God's timing and ways when it came to becoming king. *[paueese]*

It's truly amazing how restrained David was, for this was such a tempting situation.

It was an easy way, for he had Saul in a position that he could stealthily kill him, and get the kingdom.

It was a quick way, for it would have been over in seconds.

It was a suffering-relieving way, for once he did this, he wouldn't have to keep running and hiding.

And it was a way of much peer pressure, as his men tried to pressure him to do it. *[pause]*

The kingdom would have been his, but here's the thing - David knew it would be premature.

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<sup>9</sup> Oren Arnold - in Who said that? by George Sweeting p. 349.  
<https://www.family-times.net/illustration/Patience/201651/>.

David may have had the promise of God about becoming the next king, but he knew that it must come to him in God's way and God's timing.

He had no right to take matters into his own hands and cut corners to get what he wanted.

David understood the common idea, "Just because I *can* doesn't mean that I *should*." [pauseeee]

David revered the Lord so much that he laid down his fleshly desires at the feet of what God wanted. [pause]

**What about you?**

Do you have such a love and regard for God that you will say, "Not my will, but yours be done"?<sup>10</sup>

**Will your watch align with your schedule or His perfect timetable?**

David wanted to be king now, but out of reverence for God, he said, "You tell me when, God." [pause]

Just because it *looked* like God had given Saul into his hand didn't mean that it was right to kill him.

God may have promised him the kingship, but that didn't mean that he was allowed to take matters into his own hands to achieve it. [pauseeeee]

**In what ways may we face something similar?**

Let's say that you remember the promise of God to provide for your needs.<sup>11</sup>

Just because there's money in front of you at work doesn't mean that you can steal it because God promised to provide for your needs.

That's cutting corners and taking matters into your own hands. [pause]

You need to wait on God's timing and ways to be provided for. [pause]

Here's another one: let's say that you once again remember the promise of God to provide for your needs.

**And you are looking for a job, and one that looks very promising and has such good pay is available.**

So you put in your application, and you go into the interview and they start asking more about your qualifications. [pause]

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<sup>10</sup> Luke 22:42.

<sup>11</sup> See Philippians 4:19.

Just because God has promised to provide for your needs, and a good job is available doesn't mean that it's OK to lie about your qualifications during the interview. *[pause]*

It would be tempting because you are thinking, "All it would take is just saying this one little thing. It would be quick and easy."

We would even try to rationalize it and say, "If God didn't want me to get it NOW, then why is this wonderful opportunity in front of me right NOW? Isn't this an open door?"

But we must obey God and trust His timing and ways!

*Do what's right, and leave it up to God. [pauseeee]*

So often we want short-cuts away from hardship.

We want short-cups to grow in our Christian walk, short-cuts to success, short-cuts to everything.

But God doesn't always work by short-cuts, for he sees the big picture, and works sometimes by long drawn out processes. *[pauseeeee]*

*In what ways are you cutting corners and trying to take matters into your own hands?*

Are you cutting corners at work to try to get that promotion?

*Are you cutting corners in your dating relationship by having sex before marriage?*

Are you cutting corners in parenting because you want some peace and quiet?

*Submit your will and timing to God's!*

He is worthy of obedience in this way, but also, his ways and timing are always right. *[pauseeee]*

*When you think about Jesus, Jesus also faced temptation to cut a corner, but what did He do?*

The devil offered to give him all the kingdoms of the world, if only he would fall down and worship him.<sup>12</sup>

*Jesus could have cut corners and skipped the suffering of the Cross, and Jesus could have excused it away by thinking, "Well I'm going to get the kingdoms of the world anyway."*

But no, the perfect Son of God, resisted the temptation completely, and we are eternally grateful for His resisting of that temptation to take a short-cut...

*...For he went through the suffering of the Cross, taking the punishment that we deserved so that we could be forgiven.*

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<sup>12</sup> See Matthew 4:8-9.



His perfect obedience by resisting that temptation has been credited to our account, so that we can be declared righteous in God's sight. *[pauseeee]*

Praise Him that He didn't cut any corners, but he obeyed so that we could be forgiven and be empowered to obey God. *[pauseeee]*

*So reverence for God is displayed when we submit to God's timing and ways, but also when we...*

### **C. Leave vengeance in God's hands.**

Since David revered God, then he left vengeance in God's hands.

You see this most clearly in verse 12, when he says, "May the Lord judge between me and you, may the Lord avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you." *[pause]*

David knew that God is the ultimate judge, who judges justly, and so David was willing to leave vengeance with Him. *[pause]*

That is the key to not taking vengeance into our own hands - knowing and believing that God judges justly. *[pause]*

It is not our place to avenge our enemies, for we are imperfect, fallen creatures - but He is not.

He is perfect, He is all-knowing, He is all-powerful, and get this: He is truly *just*.

Will you believe that?

If so, will you leave vengeance in His hands? He will someday make all things right.

He will take care of it, so we must not step outside of our place, but leave it to Him. *[pauseeee]*

When you really want to get that person back for what they said, don't.

When you really want to pay that person back for hurting you, leave it to God.

God knows what goes down between you and another person, and that's what David knew about him and Saul.

In fact, he even points out that God knows and will vindicate him in the end.

Look at verse 15...

"May the Lord therefore be judge and give sentence between me and you, and see to it and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand." *[pauseeee]*

God will vindicate the one who was innocent in the matter, for He is the God of true justice.

So it all comes down to trusting God. *[pause]*

Taking vengeance into your own hands displays a heart that doesn't trust that God is just and will act justly...

...But leaving it in His hands displays a heart that believes that He is just and will do what's right. *[pauseee]*

Look at the outcome of David's refusal to take vengeance, as we see Saul's response, starting in verse 16...[\[read 16-22\]](#)

David lived out Romans 12:19-21.

Just listen to it: "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'

To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.'

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." *[pause]*

David truly overcame evil with good, as that's essentially what Saul says he did to him.

And this "heaped burning coals on his head," as Saul felt shame and remorse, wept, and admitted he did wrong. *[pause]*

This is the impact of repaying evil with good.

It can cause people to see their sin more clearly. *[pause]*

Imagine if you kept being mean to someone, but the person never got you back, instead, they always talked to you with kindness and grace.

That's going to make an impact on you, as you will start to feel bad and feel ashamed at how you are treating them. *[pause]*

It makes a huge impact, and really, it's counter-cultural, isn't it?

Saul even makes this point as he says, "If a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safe?"

He's saying, "This is astounding! No one does this, yet you have! No one, if he has his enemy in his grasp, just lets him go away safely. Yet, you did, David." *[pause]*

It amazed Saul, and you know, it will amaze your enemies, if you treat them with kindness.

Over time, they are going to think, "How does he respond with such grace and kindness instead of anger when I'm so mean to him all the time?"

Or, "Wow, she had the chance to humiliate me in front of everyone for all the times I did stuff to her, yet she didn't." *[pause]*

These acts of “overcoming evil with good” are totally unexplainable to those in the world, for they can only be explained by the grace of God. *[pause]*

Only the grace of God in a person’s life leads them to show such grace under duress.

Only when we have experienced the grace of God that showers us with kindness, even amidst our hostility towards God, can we be motivated to do the same to others. *[pause]*

Do you truly understand what happened at the Cross?

God showed his love towards you in that while you were yet a sinner, Christ died for you.<sup>13</sup>

He repaid our immense evil with eternal good!

And He didn’t *just* refuse to retaliate, he actually took the punishment we deserved upon Himself.

And this kindness melts our hearts, as we can’t help but respond with repentance and love. *[pauseeee]*

People inherently know that repaying evil with good is commendable, don’t they?

They know that there’s something in it that is laudable.

And we even see how Saul admires it, for he says, “May the Lord reward you with good for what you have done.”

Saul admits that David is innocent and that David deserves to be king, so all Saul has left is to try to protect his family from being killed when David reigns.

And so Saul reaches out to David, knowing how grace-filled David is, and asks that his family wouldn’t be killed.

And David mercifully swears to this. *[pauseeee]*

You see, David trusted and revered God so much that he risked his life by refusing to take vengeance on Saul.

He refused to take the easy way out.

He refused to cut corners to become king.

He placed his life and destiny in the Lord’s capable, all-powerful hands. *[pauseeee]*

What will you do when someone does evil to you?

Will you take vengeance into your own hands, or will you leave it with God?

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<sup>13</sup> Romans 5:8 (I adjusted it to make it singular instead of plural).

Will you trust that He will take care of it someday?

Will you show the grace of God to others, remembering how much grace you have been shown?  
[pauseeee]

*What drove David's actions in this story is reverence for God, and it shows us that...*

**A deep reverence for God impacts how we live!**

If we truly revere God, we will display it in our lives.

But where does this reverence come from? A correct understanding and trust in God. [pause]

Since David understood and believed who God was, this led to reverence. [pause]

**Since the Lord is the ultimate authority, then I respect those who represent Him.**

Since His timing and ways are always right, then I don't cut corners, but trust His timing and ways.

Since He is just and will act justly, then I leave vengeance with Him. [pause]

In what ways are your actions demonstrating that you aren't believing things about God?

If you're anxious, could it be that you aren't believing that God is in control? [pause]

Let's start actually believing what we know about God, and trusting Him.

**Ask God to help you.**

Say, "Lord, I know that you are good and in control, so help me to trust your timing and ways."

"Lord, I know that you are just and will do what's right, so I give this situation with this person to you. Help me to respond with grace, as you have shown me grace." [pause]

That kind of mentality shows someone with reverence for God, and it will impact how you live.  
[pauseeee]

You know, this story here about David reminds me of David's future descendent, Jesus.

Peter says, "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly." [pause]

**What an example in Christ, and He did this, all the way to His death, so that "by His wounds you have been healed."<sup>14</sup> [pauseeee]**

We have a great, holy, and awesome God, who is also full of lovingkindness to us.

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<sup>14</sup> 1 Peter 2:23-24.

How else can we respond to such a Lord, than to respond in reverence to Him and grace towards others?