David and Saul

In a nutshell
King Saul treated David very badly on many occasions and in many ways. He was cheated by Saul; in his absence, Saul gave his wife to another man; he was labelled a trouble causer and outlaw, pursued by Saul and his army. Saul tried to kill David and even asked others to kill him, but God always protected David. In the face of this injustice, David always put his absolute trust in God and behaved in an exemplary manner to Saul. Even when God gave Saul into David’s hands, he still would not ‘touch the LORD’S anointed’.

Why did David live this way and how did he manage to keep behaving in this God honouring way to a tyrannical oppressor? What was the secret of David’s life and how can this help us to behave in relation to the injustice we face?

The background
Saul anointed as King of Israel 1 Sam 10:1
Over a period of time, Saul disobeyed God & showed weak leadership, so God took kingdom from him.
God told Samuel to anoint David as next king of Israel. Only David’s family knew.
Saul troubled by an evil spirit & David was called to play the lyre (a harp like, ‘U’ shaped stringed instrument) to calm him.
David kills Goliath & Saul retains David in his service, full time.
David rapidly grew in fame with the people. Women sang, ‘Saul slew his 1000’s’ David slew his 10,000’s.
Saul is jealous of David & ‘kept an eye on him’.
Gripped by an evil spirit, Saul threw a spear at David whilst playing the lyre.
Saul saw something of God on David & feared him.

Saul tries ‘legitimate’ ways to get David killed but continually God protected David E.G. Saul gives his daughter to David & demands 100 Philistine foreskins as the bride price, but David brought him 200!
Saul knew the LORD was with David & is more afraid; he is continually David’s enemy. Saul tries to get others to kill David, but God protected him.
Jonathan, Saul’s son intervenes, Saul relents & David comes back to Saul’s court.
Saul throws another spear & misses. David escapes. He vows to kill David.
Saul has priests of God killed for helping David.
Saul starts a campaign, pursuing David to kill him.
1 Sam. 23:14 Saul sought him every day but God did not give him into his hand. ESV

Two memorable occasions when God delivered Saul into David’s hands; Saul is pursuing David with 3000 men.
He goes into a cave to go to the toilet, unaware that David & men are there.
David’s men want to kill Saul but, instead, David cuts corner off Saul’s robe.
Even then he is convicted because he acted against the LORD’S anointed.
He tells his men that this is wrong & he will not lift his hand against Saul.
He persuaded his men & did not permit them to attack Saul.
Saul left the cave completely unaware that he had just escaped death.

Now read 1 Sam 24:8 – 22
David showed incredible grace to Saul
Unjustly pursued by Saul, David entreats him as his errant father (in law). He addresses him as “My lord, the king!” He bows in respect & pays homage. David asks Saul why do you listen to men who lie to you about me?

He points to the cut robe & says “Today, God gave you into my hand. "I could have killed you as some wanted me to do, but I spared you!” He did not kill him, even though he had a God given opportunity. Instead, he stated his case before Saul & asks God to judge between them.

The hand of God was on David as the next king. When anointed, ‘Holy Spirit rushed on David from that day forward’. 1 Sam16:23

David was Spirit filled man who demonstrated grace of God to his oppressor.

In the face of grace, Saul is filled with bitterness & remorse at his actions. He rightly says David is more righteous than he. Saul retreats having gained assurance that David will not kill Saul’s offspring. Saul relents but does not truly repent. He has not changed his heart to David, even though he knows he is wrong. Saul may have been embarrassed in front of his men to have been so vulnerable. Saul felt publicly ashamed for treating an honest man this way. He was a tormented man who meant to do well, but could not live up to it.

In Chapter 26 we read again of Saul pursuing David with 3000 men. Yet again, God gives Saul into David’s hand. David could have killed him, but he refuses to strike the LORD’S anointed. On both occasions, David’s men want to kill Saul, but he forbids it.

David & men had justifiable motive for killing Saul.
Saul initiated attempts on his life, directly & indirectly. David, the hero of Israel, had been insulted by Saul, labelled a trouble causer. He was not given the wife he won for killing Goliath, but a younger sister. 18:17 Michal, his wife, Saul’s younger daughter given to another man whilst on the run.

David also had troops who were filling to fight to the death for him. He had two God given opportunities to kill Saul. He could have led a justifiable coup, killed Saul & seized power. Still he said, Who can put out his hand against the LORD’S anointed & be guiltless? 1 Sam 26:9

There was a dynamic difference about David.
By saving Saul, he protected himself & his men from God’s future judgement. David recognised that as the anointed King, Saul represented God. Lifting his hand against Saul, was lifting his hand against God.

We gain an insight into David’s leadership skills.
Initially, they were a rag tag bunch of malcontents!  READ 1 Sam 22:1-2
Everyone who was in distress, in debt, discontented... not an ideal army!

Some of them are later described as David’s ‘Mighty Men’. They greatly respected & loved David. (See 1 Chronicles 11:10-46 to see why they were mighty!) They were also fugitives from Saul, but they obey & trust David’s judgement. They were transformed to godly, honourable valiant men under David’s leadership. God blessed David because he honoured God by honouring Saul. Consequently, David’s men shared in the blessings that came to David.
1. David totally trusted God for everything.
He had proved God as a shepherd boy against the lions and bears.
He proved God as he killed Goliath and freed Israel from the Philistine threat.
He knew that God could vindicate him in his dispute with Saul.
V12 paraphrased ‘May the Lord avenge me against you, but I won’t do it!’

He wanted justice, but he wanted God, the Ultimate Judge to deliver it.
God removed Saul & gave Saul’s kingdom, AND MUCH MORE, to David.
If we trust God & let him vindicate us, God does a better job of settling scores.

In my life, I have seen God vindicate me when I have committed injustice to Him.
The Apostle Paul suffered great injustice at the hands of many people.
He encouraged his readers to have the right attitude to injustice against them.

Romans 12:17-21
Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all.
If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.
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.

The Apostle Paul suggests,
• Don’t get your own back – give thought to what is right before God.
• Try & live at peace with everyone around you.
• NEVER avenge yourselves, as opposed to ‘try not to avenge yourselves’.
• Let God deal with it! He has promised to repay people for their deeds.

Some years ago, a friend and I were in a parked car near where I used to live and we were
chatting about the future and what God could do.
Suddenly a man & his wife came out of the house and started to scream at us in the car – they
were both hysterical! They claimed we always parked there which we didn’t and the man
violently kicked my friend’s car! It was very intimidating and scary. I went home a bit shaken
but also very angry. Very soon, thoughts of revenge came into my mind! My favourite idea was
to order 3 ton of sand and have it delivered on his front garden! Thankfully I didn’t!
I recognised there was a spiritual element to it and so I retaliated by praying for him and his
wife every day, as many times as I could for 10 days. I put my trust in God and I trusted Him
to avenge me as he saw fit. Consequently, I did not remain bitter or a victim and one day I will
found out what happened!

Paul continues...
• Do the opposite to what you want to do! Be nice, feed & clothe him!
• Do it with the RIGHT attitude, not vengeance.
• This protects US from bitterness which is like cancer, eating away at us.
• Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. It can be done!
• We beat evil by doing good or we can choose to be beaten by evil & a victim.

David lived a counter cultural lifestyle for all to see because he trusted God.
Even more so, Jesus allowed mankind, His creation, to unjustly kill Him.
He trusted God to raise Him from the dead, know God would not abandon Him.
He also knew God’s plan to save mankind from sin & its consequences.
In his apparent defeat, Jesus won the greatest victory & defeated the biggest
giant of all time!
We also need to live ‘counter cultural’ lives which are full of grace & mercy. We can only do this if we are willing to trust God totally with our lives. Even then, we still need another element to help us!

2. David lived a Holy Spirit filled life

**1 Sam 16:13** Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward.

NIV ‘the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power’. ESV ‘Rushed upon’.

David was **full** of the Holy Spirit & the fruit of Holy Spirit was evident in his life. God significantly affected his behaviour & actions. He made choices others thought were mad! Why not kill Saul? He was not just a nice man, he was a **brave, bold** man, who **dared** to honour God.

The Apostle Paul talks about the fruit of the spirit in Gal. 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

We need to be saved from our corrupt, sinful natures. Only Jesus can save us! God’s Holy Spirit brings about changes in our character & nature. **Walk by the spirit & you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.** Gal. 5:16

Great personality is not enough. Need to be Spirit filled & daily walk in Spirit. Only then can we demonstrate the life that Paul writes to the Galatians about.

3. Saul relented, but David repented

Saul relented but then picked up where he left off, taking 3000 men after David. David repented **even** of cutting Saul’s robe.

His change of heart brought a change in his behaviour.

**In chapter 26**, Saul was at the mercy of David again. David only took Saul’s spear & water jar, and returned them undamaged! He would not even cut his robe or damage anything belong to him!

Usually, when we confess guilt for a crime, we usually face the punishment. But when we become a Christian God forgives all our sin & makes us His children.

- **We move** from being guilty to being innocent.
- **We move** from condemned to pardoned.
- Jesus even justifies us - Justified - **Just if I’d** never sinned.
- God gives us His grace, (God’s riches at Christ’s expense) & forgives us.
- We have His peace. We know what it feels like to be forgiven!

**This change in our position before God is reflected in our lives!**

David points to Jesus as our ultimate role model & apostle Peter also refers to this

**1 Peter 2. 21-24**

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, **leaving you an example**, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 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. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.
Christians are called by God to live by different standards to the wider world. Jesus is our example of how we are to follow in His steps. He did not retaliate, but entrusted Himself to God, just as David did. David bought a victory over Saul that his men shared in. Jesus bought a much greater victory that we can all share in.

To share in Jesus’ victory, we trust our lives to God & become His child! To consistently live as God intends, we need God the Holy Spirit in our lives. To receive the Holy Spirit, we need to give our lives to God. It is a catch 22, circular situation and but there is no other way!

Ephesians 2 has some bad and good news for us!
We are spiritually dead until we become a Christian, then we are spiritually alive! Only when spiritually alive can we live this way.
• We can be forgiven and forgivers.
• We can be recipients of grace as well as dispensers of grace.
• We receive mercy so we can be merciful to others.

If we try & do this in our strength we will be like Saul
He was genuinely torn by his own behaviour towards David;
On one hand he wanted to treat him well; on the other he wanted to kill him.
He was a tormented man who knew what was right but could not do it!
We are in the same position as Saul until we commit our lives to Christ.
We know what is right but we cannot consistently live that way without God.

New spiritual life means we are alive in every way, as God intended!

So how do we get this new life?
We only get forgiveness by admitting we need it & asking for it.
We must accept that Jesus died for us on the cross & rose again from the dead.
We submit our lives to Jesus, first & foremost. Jesus is our Lord, we follow Him.

There is a cost to be a Christian, because we choose to live a counter cultural life!
However, the benefits are incomparably greater than any apparent costs!

If we have never asked God to forgive us, we can do this today.
Here is a simple prayer you can pray to become a child of God.
Dear Lord Jesus, I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life. (Take a few moments to ask his forgiveness for anything particular that is on your conscience). Please forgive me. I now turn from everything which I know is wrong. Thank you that you died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free. Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your Spirit. I now receive that gift. Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever. Thank you, Lord Jesus, Amen.

If you prayed the prayer, please contact us & we will send some free information.

If we know Jesus, but we have stopped submitting to Him as Judge & protector.
We need to come again, ask for His mercy, so we can be whole & forgiven.
We will never be at peace whilst we are alienated from God.

In spite of his trials, David was never the victim, always the victor.
Jesus is the perfect fulfilment of everything David stood for.
Jesus is the only way for us to always be the victor & never the victim.