

**CIC 1/5/25**

We're going to start with a nice, friendly question

**Have you ever been offered the chance to get vengeance?**

I was offered a rather funny chance to get revenge years ago. In college when I was in New Orleans, My freshmen and sophomore years I walked everywhere. It's a beautiful city. It's full of great architecture and great parks, trees, different restaurants, and cafes. Me and my friends walked all over the place and I was content doing that.

But then at the end of my second year, my friend Jashan from Chi Alpha, the Christian Fellowship I was a part of, was transferring out of school and was selling his bike, and I bought it. And it was like the invention of the wheel! Suddenly I could get places much quicker than if I walked, and for free! And New Orleans is great for biking, it's flat, parking can sometimes be a challenge, public transit is limited. The weather is warm for most of the year. And I biked everywhere. That Bike helped me live off campus, it helped me work, it helped me explore the city.

And then one night towards the end of my senior year. I go to campus, I lock my bike up on the same rack I always did, and I go to grab something at the student center. I'm there for like 10 mins tops and I go outside to ride home and my bike isn't there. Someone broke the lock and took it. It was gone!

And then a few weeks after graduation, my roommate sends me a picture, It's my old bike! And I know it's my bike because of a spot on the tip of the seat that's worn down. Like I said I rode it everywhere. And my roommate offers to steal it back for me.

Soooo... I could get my old bike back. In this moment, I have the opportunity to get vengeance, to right my wrong. But do I really want to steal my bike back? What if whoever is riding it now just bought it from the thief and has no idea where it came from? Yes I missed that bike, yes I was wronged, but the feeling of justification didn't outweigh the potential guilt. So I decide to let it go. I decide that the situation would have to get resolved differently, even if I'd have to wait.

The scripture we're reading today also deals with an opportunity for vengeance.

It's a story from David's time being persecuted by Saul

**1 Samuel 26. 1-14...17-18...21-25 NIV** (Read All Together, Not Separately)

**26** The Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah and said, “Is not David hiding on the hill of Hakilah, which faces Jeshimon?”

**2** So Saul went down to the Desert of Ziph, with his three thousand select Israelite troops, to search there for David. **3** Saul made his camp beside the road on the hill of Hakilah facing Jeshimon, but David stayed in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul had followed him there, **4** he sent out scouts and learned that Saul had definitely arrived.

**5** Then David set out and went to the place where Saul had camped. He saw where Saul and Abner son of Ner, the commander of the army, had lain down. Saul was lying inside the camp, with the army encamped around him.

**6** David then asked Ahimelek the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab’s brother, “Who will go down into the camp with me to Saul?”

“I’ll go with you,” said Abishai.

**7** So David and Abishai went to the army by night, and there was Saul, lying asleep inside the camp with his spear stuck in the ground near his head. Abner and the soldiers were lying around him.

**8** Abishai said to David, “Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I won’t strike him twice.”

**9** But David said to Abishai, “Don’t destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the LORD’s anointed and be guiltless? **10** As surely as the LORD lives,” he said, “the LORD himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish.

**11** But the LORD forbid that I should lay a hand on the LORD’s anointed. Now get the spear and water jug that are near his head, and let’s go.”

**12** So David took the spear and water jug near Saul’s head, and they left. No one saw or knew about it, nor did anyone wake up. They were all sleeping, because the LORD had put them into a deep sleep.

**13** Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the hill some distance away; there was a wide space between them. **14** He called out to the army and to Abner son of Ner, “Aren’t you going to answer me, Abner?”

Abner replied, “Who are you who calls to the king?” ...

**17** Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is that your voice, David my son?"

David replied, "Yes it is, my lord the king." **18** And he added, "Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done, and what wrong am I guilty of? ..."

**21** Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have been terribly wrong."

**22** "Here is the king's spear," David answered. "Let one of your young men come over and get it. **23** The LORD rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. The LORD delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. **24** As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble."

**25** Then Saul said to David, "May you be blessed, David my son; you will do great things and surely triumph."

So David went on his way, and Saul returned home.

I think the quality that best summarizes David's actions in this scene is **Forbearance**. Forbearance is a word that is associated with Scripture that isn't heard in many other contexts today. It is most commonly remembered as one of the fruits of the spirit mentioned by Paul in Galatians chapter 5. And because it isn't heard much outside of Galatians 5, it's easy to not exactly know what it means.

In Merriam-Webster's dictionary Forbearance is defined as:

**A refraining from the enforcement of something (such as a debt, right, or obligation) that is due.**

So actually, outside of Galatians 5, the setting where you see the word forbearance most often is in lending, specifically when those responsible for paying back loans are put into a state of forbearance, where the repayment of the loan is essentially paused.

And words that forbearance is often associated with are **Patience** and **Mercy**

Saul has been threatening David for some time now. This is the 3rd time that Saul has pursued David. David knows that Saul threatens his life. The simplest, quickest way to end that threat would be to kill Saul here and now.

If David decided to kill Saul at this point, it would also clear the way of the most obvious obstacle between himself and the kingship of Israel.

This is an obvious, easy opportunity in front of him, As Abishai, the voice of common sense in this situation says “Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands” but David decides to exercise patience and wait.

Besides the efficacy of potentially ending Saul’s life then and there, there’s also the fairness of it. Even though David never personally threatened him, Saul has personally tried to kill him, and has sent his army after him multiple times now because he knows David is destined to be king. In terms of the logic of an eye for an eye, David would be in the right to repay Saul for the way Saul has unfairly persecuted him and repeatedly put his life at risk.

But instead of giving Saul the death he deserved, David gave Saul the mercy he did not deserve. He spared Saul’s life. In doing so David calls to mind a scripture spoken by Jesus.

### **Matthew 5:38-41**

**38** “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ **39** But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. **40** And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. **41** If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

Even though Jesus’s incarnation and teaching are centuries in the future, David lives out this teaching almost to a T by choosing patience and mercy in the face of the opportunity for quick revenge.

Ultimately, **David models the grace that God gave us with Jesus’s death on the cross.**

Centuries before there were any Christians, David lives out another teaching that Paul writes to the Ephesian church.

### **Ephesians 4:32-5:2**

**32** Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. **1** Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children **2** and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

By being Forbearing, by being patient, by being lenient and merciful, David's actions towards Saul show the Christ-likeness of his leadership.

Also, by practicing patience and mercy when commonsense would dictate otherwise, David provides a powerful example of what it means to release a situation to God.

### **1 Samuel 26:10-11**

“As surely as the LORD lives,” he said, “the LORD himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. **11** But the LORD forbid that I should lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. Now get the spear and water jug that are near his head, and let's go.”

**David releases the situation to God.** David lets God be the one to punish Saul. He doesn't know how or when, but David is confident that God will be the one to judge Saul for what he has done. In this way he shows his fundamental difference from Saul. Back around election day, we talked about Saul's leadership, and how Saul was overall a very good leader, but he made the mistake of taking too much control in certain circumstances. Saul forgot his place and did what God never intended him to do.

When push came to shove, **Saul's security and confidence were ultimately in himself.**

But in this instance, we see that **David placed his security and confidence in God.**

When it was most tempting and easiest to take control of his circumstances, David gave up control to God. It's easy to imagine that Saul would not have done the same if the roles were reversed.

And David was right in his forbearance. Saul did not end up killing him, and David did not end up being the one who killed Saul. If you read until the end of 1 Samuel, in chapter 31, Saul ended up being defeated in battle by the Philistines and taking his own life. David became King without ever having to defeat Saul. His hands were clean. His patience and grace paid off over the long term. His decision was worth it. And that decision shows us that **forbearance, patience, mercy, and giving our situations to God, while not easy, are worthwhile choices to make.**

And for those still interested in what happened to me and my bike, my decision to be forbearing also paid off. And that story with the bike did end for the better. Now all of the bike shops in New Orleans were really expensive, so I couldn't afford their bikes. And a bike might not seem expensive to a lot of you, but if you just graduated school and

you have bills to pay and you're a low income missionary, it's a BIG expense. But there was a sporting goods store out in the suburbs that had better prices, so I took the bus to get there, like I said the public transit isn't great so it took awhile, and there weren't many buses going back and forth so I was kind of stepping out in faith by going out there. And I found a bike that had the tires and gears I wanted, and room for a basket on the back, and it was on sale!

My previous bike served me for 2 years. This bike ended up lasting me until I left New Orleans 8 years later. Because of this new bike, I was able to save money as a missionary. I didn't have to get a car until my last year with Chi Alpha in 2023. That bike was my main set of wheels for 7 years and 4 apartments. And at the end of my time in New Orleans, I gave it away for free to my friend Matt. Partially because it had a flat tire and I didn't have time to fix it, but also because I knew he could put it to good use and he had kids and he knew students that could use it.

And because I was using it in this sermon I checked in on the bike a few days ago. It's still being used, Matt actually gave it to his tenant Kaliah, who is my former student and is currently serving as a new campus missionary at the same university in the same Chi Alpha ministry I once led. So that bike is helping her minister to students and save money over 8 years after I bought it, all because back in 2016 I made the decision to not get vengeance, to let go of my old bike and wait for a different outcome. God has blessed that seemingly simple decision for years and is continuing to enable that bike to be used for the kingdom.

It was as David said in vs 23 **The LORD rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness.**

As we conclude, Hopefully nobody here is in a place identical to David's where you have the freedom to kill a sworn enemy that wants to kill you. If that's your situation, we're so glad that you're here today, but don't be surprised if we call the cops. Please get help.

More likely you're in a situation where forbearance is difficult, where patience, mercy, and giving up control are incredibly challenging. Where according to most people, it would be totally fair to have a hard heart or repay wrong for wrong.

Maybe there's a loved one that's wronged you. Maybe it's a parent that abused you or neglected you and perhaps still neglects you, a child that cut off contact and doesn't want to reconcile, a sibling that always has to put you down or be right, a husband, a wife that has been unfaithful to you, or refuses to compromise, or see eye to eye with you. Maybe it's a friend that betrayed your trust, a colleague at work that undermines you or makes messes for you to clean up, a leader that likes to power-trip or has

manipulated you. Maybe you've been estranged from them for years. Maybe it's a relationship you can't avoid. Maybe they've never apologized to you or made up for what they did. Perhaps they've always shrugged off what they did or said as normal or justified, maybe they even blamed you.

Invite Denise Up

What would you do if you had the opportunity to repay them for what they did and what they do? Would you choose to be patient, would you choose to be merciful, would you choose to let go and give it to God? or would you let them have it, would you give them what they deserve?

If you look at your decisions, your own heart, can you say that you've been patient, can you say that you've forgiven? Can you say that you've released this to God? Or have you been holding on to unforgiveness, holding on to control? Have you been repaying wrong for wrong? Perhaps your outward actions have been fine, but there's been impatience, unforgiveness, control in your heart that you can't let go of.

I want us to **choose patience and mercy today**. If you have a situation where those things are really hard, whatever it is, **release your situations to God**. This isn't to excuse what was done to you, or say that what was wrong was right, it's to make sure our hearts and our actions are right before God and our consciences are free. We're going to invite the prayer team to come to the front. If this message spoke to you and you are dealing with impatience, unforgiveness, control, I want you to approach the front to receive prayer. To have a brother or sister in Christ intercede for you, stand with you, challenge and encourage you. Also if you have any prayer needs in general I want to invite you up as well.