

1 Samuel 23:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Saul said, Blessed be ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me.

Analysis

And Saul said, Blessed be ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me.

Saul's response reveals profound spiritual confusion. The Hebrew 'beruchim attem la-Yahweh' (blessed be you of the LORD) invokes divine blessing on those helping him pursue God's anointed. His claim that they showed 'compassion' (Hebrew 'chamaltem') for him casts himself as victim rather than persecutor. This distorted self-perception typifies those who have rejected God's word—they reinterpret their wickedness as righteousness and view enablers as compassionate friends. Saul blessed in God's name those who helped him oppose God's purposes. Religious language employed against God's will becomes blasphemous inversion.

Historical Context

Blessing formulas invoking Yahweh were common expressions of gratitude. Saul's use of such language to thank those helping him pursue David shows how religious vocabulary can be divorced from genuine piety. His self-pity ('compassion on me') denied his role as aggressor.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How can religious language be misused to sanction ungodly actions?
2. What does Saul's self-perception as victim teach about spiritual blindness?

Interlinear Text

ס	י	לִיהְיוּ	ה	אַתֶּם	בָּרוּךְ יְמֻשָּׁא	וְלֹא	תִּיְאַמְרָה
said	And Saul	Blessed		H859	be ye of the LORD		H3588
H559	H7586	H1288			H3068		
עַלְיָהָם	מְלֹאת	תִּמְלֹת	תִּמְלֹת				
for ye have compassion				H5921			

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 22:8 (Parallel theme): That all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

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