

1 Samuel 24:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

Analysis

And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

Saul's confession employs comparative language that falls short of full repentance. The Hebrew 'tsaddik attah mimmeni' (you are more righteous than I) acknowledges relative moral standing without absolute self-condemnation. His recognition of the exchange—David giving good for evil—accurately describes the dynamic. The Hebrew 'gemaltani tovah' (rewarded me good) and 'gemaltikha ra'ah' (rewarded you evil) uses covenant language of recompense. Saul states facts without committing to change. His confession resembles Pharaoh's temporary admissions under pressure (Exodus 9:27; 10:16)—accurate assessments during crisis that failed to produce lasting transformation.

Historical Context

Public acknowledgment of wrongdoing before witnesses created binding social expectations in ancient Israel. Saul's confession before his army should have constrained future action, but his subsequent pursuit of David showed the confession's hollowness.

Related Passages

[Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth](#)

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Why is acknowledging someone is 'more righteous' insufficient for genuine repentance?
2. How do you distinguish between temporary remorse and transformative repentance?

Interlinear Text

כִּי מִתְּפִיר אַתָּה וְאָמַר
And he said to David Thou art more righteous
H559 H413 H1732 H6662 H859 H4480 H3588

תָּאַתְּ בְּטוּבְךָ מְלָאתִיךָ
than I for thou hast rewarded me good
H859 H1580 H2896 H589

בְּמְלָאתִיךָ בְּרָעָה:
than I for thou hast rewarded thee evil
H1580 H7451

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 26:21 (References David): Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

Matthew 5:44 (Good): But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Genesis 38:26 (Righteousness): And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more.

