

# The Point of the Spear

David the Fugitive Pt.9  
1 Samuel 26:1-25 5-10-2009

Summary: God gave justice to David not only in punishing David's enemies, but also in reversing the circumstance so that David was on top, and also by exonerating David from Saul's own mouth. God did this because David was a man after His own heart as seen in David's distress over having to leave the land where the presence of God was.

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**1 Samuel 26:1** 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 chosen men of Israel, 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 desert. 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 Ahimelech 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 my 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; either 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?" **15** David said, "You're a man, aren't you? And who is like you in Israel? Why didn't you guard your lord the king? Someone came to destroy your lord the king. **16** What you have done is not good. As surely as the LORD lives, you and your men deserve to die, because you did not guard your master, the LORD's anointed. Look around you. Where are the king's spear and water jug that were near his head?"

**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?"

**19 Now let my lord the king listen to his servant's words. If the LORD has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. If, however, men have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD! They have now driven me from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other gods.' 20 Now do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the LORD. The king of Israel has come out to look for a flea--as one hunts a partridge in the mountains."**

**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 erred greatly."**

**22 "Here is the king's spear," David answered. "Let one of your young men come over and get it. 23 The LORD rewards every man for his 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, my son David; you will do great things and surely triumph." So David went on his way, and Saul returned home.**

## **Introduction**

Starting in chapter 24 (with Saul in the cave) God is teaching David about trusting Him completely for justice. Try to fight your own battles and gain justice for yourself, and you will do nothing but fall into sin. But leave justice entirely in God's hands and you can count on Him to give you justice.

### **Relative Justice**

And when you hear me talk about God giving you justice, you might have some hesitation at that point, because we mostly tend to think of justice in negative terms. We think justice is getting the punishment you deserve, so it is not something you want. In fact I have even heard preachers say, "Don't ever ask God for justice. Justice is the last thing you want from God because you deserve eternal hell."

The problem with that is the psalmists cry out to God for justice all the time. The reason we have a hard time with that is we tend to run all accounts together. So if you are guilty and deserving of punishment in one area, then the only thing justice means to you is punishment. We figure, if you are guilty of murder, and then you get an unfair parking ticket, you do not go to the judge and say, "This parking ticket is unfair – I want justice," because the judge might say, "What do you mean you want justice? Justice means you go to prison for life." In our simplistic minds we cannot separate one issue from the other.

But God can and does. God is the type of judge who says, "I'll deal with the murder thing in another trial, but as far as this unfair ticket goes, you are right – it is unfair and so you do not have to pay it." God does not mix all our accounts into one balance. He is both able and willing to separate the various issues in our lives.

So if you are a Christian, the capital crime of sin against God that deserves eternity in hell – that is taken care of. Jesus paid the penalty for that on your behalf, and has credited Jesus' righteousness to your account so you can be declared not guilty. But what about temporal consequences? Suppose you have sinned this past week, and God is going to allow you to suffer some consequences for that this coming week. So you have some chastisement coming this week. But on the other hand, suppose yesterday someone treated you unfairly. Are you in a position to ask God for justice with the unfair treatment yesterday? Yes! God keeps the accounts separate, and so even while you suffer chastisement over one thing where you were in the wrong, at the same time you can seek justice from God in the other area where you were in the right. Praise God for His amazing mercy, and His willingness to give us positive justice even as He shelters us from negative justice!

So, David has been treated unfairly for many years now, and he is trusting God totally for justice. And last week we talked about one aspect of that justice – punishment on David's enemies. God strikes Nabal dead, and that is just a small picture of what God is going to do to Saul. But there is more to justice than just seeing your enemies punished. There is also the matter of exoneration and vindication. Those two words mean pretty much the same thing. Exoneration and vindication are when it becomes clear that you were not in the wrong. You were the one who was in the right.

If you are treated unfairly and the other person is punished by God, but that is all that happens, and everyone still thinks you were in the wrong – that is not quite justice. Justice requires that the person be punished AND that you be vindicated.

And if God punishes your enemy and gives you vindication, that still might not be justice, because when you were mistreated you probably suffered some loss. And until that is restored, you are still on the losing end of the injustice. And as long as your enemy is on top and you are on the bottom, and they have the power and the advantage and you are in a position of disadvantage, the injustice is still in place. So last week we saw God provide one piece of justice – punishment of David’s enemies, but today we will see God beginning to work the other elements of justice.

## Reversal

For a long time now David has been on the bottom and Saul has been on the top. Saul has every advantage and has power to make David’s life miserable. Saul has been in control. Saul has been chasing, David has been running.

But that cannot go on forever. If David is going to fulfill the role to which God called him – if he is going to be king of Israel, it is obvious that a major reversal is going to have to take place. At the beginning David is powerless. But obviously that cannot continue if God wants him to be king. If God wants David to reign as king, David cannot go on being powerless.

So bringing about that reversal is part of what David needs from God. And it has been subtle, but the whole time David has been running from Saul, bit by bit God has been putting that reversal in place. And by the time we get to chapter 26 we see quite a reversal already.

### David comes after Saul verses 4-12

When you read the first three verses it sounds exactly like what happened in previous chapters. The Ziphites tell Saul where David is, Saul comes after him, and it looks like it is probably going to be another situation where David gets cornered and has to make some narrow escape again. But in verse 4 things take a very different and very surprising turn.

**When he saw that Saul had followed him there, 4 he sent out scouts and learned that Saul had definitely arrived.**

David’s coming after Saul. Up to now Saul has been gathering intel on David’s location all the time; now David is sending out scouts to pinpoint Saul’s location.

The entire time they have existed as an organization David and his men have done one thing – run from Saul. So the scouts come back, report to David immediately, and say, “We found where they are. They are camped about 11 miles straight northwest. Judging from the direction they have been moving, they probably have a good idea where we are. If they set out in the morning and come up through that valley, they could come down out of that canyon just west of us before noon.” And David’s leadership immediately start throwing out ideas of which direction they should go and how they will make their escape. And then David makes a shocking announcement.

### 5 Then David set out and went to the place where Saul had camped.

“Men, break camp. It’s time to move. We’re going up over those hills, then north.”

“North? That’s where Saul is.”

“Yes, we are going to circle up above him, and approach him from behind.”

I am sure his men were a little shocked, but they follow David. They travel through the night and get to Saul’s camp while it is still dark. And David and a few of his men get real close – close enough to see individuals in the dark.

**5 ...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.**

Most people would see that and say, “Wow – impossible to get to Saul. The entire army is camped around him. And the mighty Abner is laying right there next to him. No chance of getting to Saul tonight.”

Or maybe, if you or I had been there, we might think, “Man – look at all those soldiers. Three thousand Special Forces troops. I’m nervous just standing here – what if they have scouts in this area?”

I am sure all the guys who were with David had various different thoughts running through their minds. But you want to know the first thing that struck David when he saw the camp? “What are those knuckleheads doing? That’s not how you guard a king! What kind of a lame-brained system is that? And what is Abner doing sleeping? He should be shot. He is leaving the king totally vulnerable. I can’t stand this kind of incompetence – I am going to have to go down there and do something about this. Who’s coming with me?”

**6 David then asked Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruah, Joab's brother, "Who will go down into the camp with me to Saul?" "I'll go with you," said Abishai.**

David asks for a volunteer because he wants the guy who is the most gung-ho for this.

### *Abishai*

So the writer introduces us to a new character here – Abishai. This is the only place where that Ahimelech guy is ever mentioned, but Abishai is going to be a key character throughout the rest of David’s life. He was David’s nephew. David’s sister had three boys, and all three ended up not only being in David’s army, but they became leaders. Their names were Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Joab and Abishai became David’s two primary generals when he took the throne. Asahel *ran* into trouble – literally. 2 Samuel 2:18 says he was as fast as a gazelle. But he turned out to be a little too fast for his own good. He was chasing down Abner and Abner suddenly stopped and turned around and impaled him with the shaft of his spear.

So Asahel died somewhat early on, but the other two brothers – Joab and Abishai, were with David for many years to come. In fact, Abishai would one day be the one to save David’s life in battle (2 Sam.21). David was getting old, but he was still out there trying to fight, and in one battle he becomes exhausted and a gigantic Philistine named Ishbi-Benob was just about to kill David. And just then Abishai showed up and struck down Ishbi-Benob and killed him. And then he told his uncle David, “That’s it – you’re not coming out to these battles any more. You are too old for this. You stay home – we’ll take care of the fighting from now on.”

Abishai was a really, really tough character. He was not only one of David’s 30 mighty men of valor, but he was the leader of a group known as The Three – the three toughest of the 30. Abishai once killed 300 men with his spear.

But today’s event takes place many years prior to all that, and no doubt Abishai is very young at this point. And yet he is still fearless. He instantly volunteers for this crazy mission.

So why does David bring Abishai? Just in case someone wakes up and he has to fight off 3000 Special Forces soldiers? I don’t think so. The writer does not tell us just yet why David brings Abishai along, but we will see in a minute.

***God put them to sleep 12 (not in danger when God is protecting you)***

**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.**

Amazing. They have made it down into the camp without being detected. Then they move inside the outer defenses. Then they start making their way toward Saul – stepping over soldiers, getting deeper and deeper into the army. CRACK – a twig snaps under Abishai’s feet! They both freeze – hands on their swords. Five seconds – 10 seconds – no one seems to be stirring. David and Abishai start breathing again. David gives him the, “step on another twig and I’ll step on you” look.

The closer they get to Saul the bigger and stronger and meaner looking the soldiers get. Some of these guys are so big you can hardly step over them. And finally – there is Abner! And next to him – Saul! And at this point Abishai decides it is time to have a conversation.

**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 my 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; either 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."**

That whole heated debate takes place right there by Saul and Abner. I don't know how quiet they managed to be, but as it turned out, it probably did not matter.

**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.**

It was not because David and Abishai were so sneaky or stealthy. It was because God just knocked everyone out. That word "deep sleep" is the same phrase used to describe when God put Adam under to do the open rib surgery – it is a *really* deep sleep.

And there is no indication that David knew that – it is just a comment between the narrator and the reader. David and Abishai probably think it is because of their stealth. They probably thought they were being so sneaky, but in reality they could have tripped and fallen on one of the soldiers and he would not have woken up.

Sometimes we think we are in so much danger, and the truth is danger is the farthest thing from us. I think God must chuckle sometimes. David and Abishai are whispering and tiptoeing and the angels are thinking, "You guys could shout at each other if you wanted to. Nobody's going to come to."

Do you see what has happened here? God has given David the upper hand. The reversal has taken place. Instead of running from Saul, David is coming after Saul. David stands there with his sword and his toughest man at his side, and Saul and Abner are horizontal on the ground with drool running down their cheeks.

### **David rebukes Abner 13-16**

Well, now it is time to give the wakeup call.

**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.**

So they get a safe distance – shouting distance, but outside of where they could be seen in the dark. Now it is time for David to present his evidence to Saul. But before he talks to Saul he has got something to say to Abner.

So God lets them out of the deep sleep, Abner starts to wake up and thinks, "Man – that's the best night's sleep I've had in a long time!" And just as his awareness is starting to return he realizes he is hearing a voice. Someone has been calling his name.

**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?"**

You call to the king's general you are calling to the king. Abner wants whoever this guy is to realize who he is talking to. This is not just some group of soldiers. This is the king and his men, so watch your mouth.

**15 David said, "You're a man, aren't you? And who is like you in Israel?"**

Abner alerts the person yelling at them that he is addressing some powerful, important officials, and the implication is, "You had better be careful. You had better be respectful. Say the wrong thing to the king and his men and you lose your head, so watch what you say." And David responds by questioning Abner's manhood.

"Are you a real man or not? You're the toughest guy in Israel, right?"

**15 ...Why didn't you guard your lord the king?**

Does this sound like a lowly fugitive on the run to you? You know what that sounds like to me? To me it has the sound of an authority rebuking a subordinate.

**15 ...Why didn't you guard your lord the king? Someone came to destroy your lord the king.**

Now we see why David needed a volunteer. He did not need a volunteer to help him fight – he had no intention of fighting, and he certainly did not need help carrying a spear and a water bottle. He asked for a volunteer because he knew the type of guy who would volunteer would be the kind of guy who would do exactly what Abishai did. David knew that whoever volunteered would probably be a hothead who would be ready to use his sword against Saul. And that would enable David to say this – someone came into the camp last night to destroy Saul. If David went by himself that statement would not really be true. But Abishai really did fully intend to destroy Saul, and David prevented him.

So Abner alerts this person on the other hill that he is addressing the king's men, and implies that he had better be careful in what he says. And David responds by calling Abner's manhood into question and then rebukes him for dereliction of duty. And he is not done...

**16 What you have done is not good. As surely as the LORD lives, you and your men deserve to die, because you did not guard your master, the LORD's anointed.**

It is like David is saying, "Am I the only one around here who has any respect for the Lord's anointed?"<sup>1</sup> Sleeping instead of guarding the Lord's anointed – what is the matter with you? You deserve to die for that!" So David convicts the highest officials in the nation of a capital crime. He declares them guilty and worthy of the death sentence.

**16 ...Look around you. Where are the king's spear and water jug that were near his head?"**

Imagine the thoughts that go through Abner's head at this point. He turns and looks at where Saul was laying and his heart sinks when he sees the hole in the ground where the spear had been and footprints leading away.

Abner does not answer David. He knew David was right – he did deserve to die. He gets spanked here by David and can do nothing but submit to it in silence. An enemy intent on killing Saul walked right up in the night and took Saul's spear. And had it not been for David, that enemy would have probably killed both Saul and Abner.

So what does Saul do about it? What can he do? What do you do when your entire army deserves to die? If Saul ordered their death, who would carry it out? But beyond that, Saul is not concerned about his men right now. His attention is fixed on David. He hears that unmistakable voice ringing out of the darkness and he knows immediately who it is. So in verse 17 Saul begins speaking to David. (And I am sure that was a great relief to Abner, because he had no idea what to say at this point.)

**David on top**

So in verses 17-25 Saul and David exchange some words, and then go their separate ways and this is the last time they will ever see each other. David leaves the country after this, and does not come back until Saul is dead.

This is the final encounter between these two, and the circumstances have come full circle. He is still not on the throne, but David is now very much in control. David is now on top. Instead of being the lowly fugitive accused of treason, he is the judge and jury convicting the highest officials in the nation of treason. And instead of running for his life, David pursues Saul. David spies on him, tracks Saul down, finds his camp, and

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<sup>1</sup> When you see David always speak so respectfully of Saul because Saul was the Lord's anointed, you might think, *Wait a second – isn't David also the Lord's anointed?* The answer is yes. So didn't David deserve at least as much honor as Saul? Yes. But David did not concern himself with that. He was not concerned with the honor that was due him. He was concerned with the honor others were due and he let the Lord worry about what he was due. A humble person is not consumed with policing how others treat him. When you find yourself falling into that – "My husband isn't loving me enough," or "This church isn't friendly enough to me," or "People aren't meeting my needs. People aren't calling me, they aren't giving to me, they didn't invite me, they didn't say hello to me, they didn't include me in the conversation..." When you start concerning yourself with how well you are being treated that is a sure ticket to misery. But David does not worry about the fact that he is God's anointed; his attention is on the fact that Saul is God's anointed.

gets him in a position of weakness. Saul continues to live only because of David's mercy, and only because of David's mercy does Saul get his spear back (which was the symbol of Saul's royal authority) in v.22.

So at least symbolically, if not literally, Saul continues on the throne only by David's permission. David's superior position is now fully established. Up to now it has been predicted verbally – by Samuel, then by Jonathan, then by Saul, then by Abigail. But now we see it not only in words, but in circumstances themselves. Saul is reduced to a place of obvious inferiority to David right in front of all his top soldiers. It must have been the ultimate humiliation, after all that Saul had said about how he was going to hunt David down and kill him, and now he and his top general are standing there in total disgrace. Even to the point where David is pronouncing death sentences on Saul's men. David holds his own, personal court marshal and finds the whole lot of them guilty. God has given David the power – the only thing he lacks is the title.

This scene where David makes someone come and fetch Saul's spear is amazing. When there are descriptions of Saul conducting his official business as king it always mentioned that spear – it was a symbol of his kingship. This great warrior – this man who has reigned for almost 40 years has to humble himself right in front of everyone and say to his arch enemy, "Uh, could I please have my spear back?"

### **God will empower you**

Oh, how tempting it must have been for David to think this reversal was his own doing. He is strong, he is smart, he is crafty. I am sure it must have seemed like it really was because of his skills that he is now on top. But it wasn't. Apart from God's special help David would be rotting in prison in Gath where he was captured years ago. Apart from God's special help David would have no army – remember God brought them to him. Apart from God's special help David would have died in the battle at Keilah. Apart from God's special help he would have been captured that time when Saul had him surrounded. Apart from God's special help some soldier would have had to get up and go to the bathroom right when David and Abishai were sneaking up on Saul. It is God who has brought all this about.

And He did it not to stoke David's ego, but because it was something that was needed in order for David to carry out what God had called him to do. One thing is for sure - you can count on the fact that if God calls you to something He will empower you to do it. Do not ever be like Moses, who responded to God's calling by lecturing God about how he did not have the right skills. He said, "Sounds like a great plan and everything, God, but what about the fact that I am a poor speaker – ever thought of that?" And God said, "Who created your mouth? Do you think I can create a mouth but I don't have the power to make the right words come out of it?" Do not ever resist what God is calling you to do because you lack the ability or the power. And do not hesitate to obey because circumstances do not appear to be on your side. God will empower and enable you to do what He calls you to do.

## **Exoneration**

So God provided the first part of justice – punishment of David's enemies. And He is in the process of bringing about the second aspect of justice – reversing roles so David is in a position of advantage rather than disadvantage. But there is still another part of justice – exoneration. The question is looming – is David guilty of any wrongdoing when it comes to the way he took power in Israel? I believe a major purpose of the book of 1 Samuel is to answer that question. The writer of 1 Samuel makes an air tight case exonerating David in every way. God wants it to be crystal clear that David did not usurp the throne.

### **The need for exoneration**

Saul has made some accusations against David and it is important that everyone know whether those accusations are true or not. In 2 Samuel 16, many years after Saul was dead and David had taken the throne, a guy by the name of Shimei said David did not deserve to sit on the throne because he got it by shedding the blood of Saul's house. Basically Shimei was accusing David of doing to Saul what David almost did to Nabal. You see, God knew that when David took power there would be people – especially people loyal to Saul – who would make accusations like that. They would accuse David of taking the throne by force and usurping power that was not rightfully his. So a big part of the reason for these chapters is to answer the question of whether David was guilty or not.

## **Either there is sin or there isn't verses 17-19**

**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?"**

Here is Saul's chance. If David is guilty of anything, now is the time to let it be known. What sin is David guilty of?

And we can learn from David here. That is a great question to ask when someone is at odds with you. "Tell me what my sin is." If you are afraid to ask that question, that is not a good sign. It probably means either your conscience is not clear, you know you have not repented of some sin, you are too proud to hear a rebuke from this particular person, or you do not even care if there is sin in your life.

But David is humble and he cares about righteousness, so he does not hesitate to ask Saul – What is my sin? Saul does not answer, and David goes on to make the question even more pointed.

**19 Now let my lord the king listen to his servant's words. If the LORD has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. If, however, men have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD! They have now driven me from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other gods.'**

David boils the situation down to two possible options – either Saul's hostility is coming from the Lord or from men. That is, either God is angry with David about something and He is using Saul to chastise David, or some man is angry with David and God isn't.

Those are two interesting options. Pay careful attention to what David says about each one. The first possibility is that God is displeased with David. And David says, "If that is the case, then I need to get right with God." If this is all happening because of some sin David is guilty of, then David needs to go through the process of repentance prescribed by the law. And he needs to do all he can to seek favor with God again through the expressions of worship prescribed in the law.

However, if that is not the case – if there is not anything between David and God – if David was not guilty of some unrepentant sin, then David says:

**19 ...If, however, men have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD!**

There is no in-between. If David is in sin and God is angry with him then yes, it is a serious matter, and David does need to get right with God. However if that is not what is happening, then whoever is angry with David is wrong and should be cursed by God. There is absolutely no place for anger at people for anything else.

If you are mad at someone, show that person his unrepentant sin so he can repent. But if there is no unrepentant sin then you have absolutely no business being mad. And the same goes for if you suspect there is a sin, but you cannot put your finger on exactly what it is. If you cannot tell the person what his unrepentant sin is, and show him in Scripture where that is sin, and explain to him exactly what repentance would look like, then you have no business being at odds with that person.

## **Saul vindicates David**

So, David has thrown down the question.

"What is my sin, Saul?"

This is Saul's chance. David has just given his greatest enemy the floor to spout off any and every accusation and complaint that he has against David. All the government officials are there, the proceedings are being recorded right on the pages of holy Scripture, whatever sins David was guilty of – Saul now has a chance to get it all out there.

**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 erred greatly."**

"What is my sin Saul?"



“You haven’t sinned, David. I have.”

Total vindication. David is pronounced innocent by none other than Saul himself. And there are 3000 eye-witnesses.

### **Conclusion: God provided justice**

So David left justice in God’s hands and this is what happened. What do you suppose would have happened if David had decided to fight this battle himself? What if David took matters into his own hands and tried to get justice himself? Would David have ever been vindicated? No. Everyone would assume Saul was right all along. Would the reversal have taken place that put David on top and in control? No, because that was God’s doing, and God does not fight our battles unless we trust Him enough to handle them. Would Saul have been punished if David had killed him in the cave? Not nearly as much as he ended up being punished. If David would have tried to get justice for himself he would have done nothing but forfeit any claim he had to it, and make it impossible to obtain anyway. But by leaving it in God’s hands, David gets all of it.

You can count on justice from God. Entrust your battles to Him and He will give you vindication, reversal of roles, and punishment of your enemies. It may happen instantly and it may not happen until Judgment Day, but it will happen. And not only will you receive justice, but you will have something supremely valuable – a clear conscience.

### **24 As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble."**

That is amazing. That is what I call a clear conscience. Could you pray that? “God, please treat me the way I treat those who hurt me.” Would you be comfortable asking God to think and feel and behave toward you the same way that you think and feel and behave toward those who hurt you? Would you ever ask God to place the same amount of value on your life that you have placed on the lives of those who hurt you?

## **Conclusion: After God’s Own Heart**

Why did God bless David and curse Saul? Because David was a man after God’s own heart and Saul was not. And if there is anything about David we want to learn from, it is that.

### **Forcing David away from God’s presence verse 19**

Take a moment to think through David’s curse in verse 19, because I think this gives insight into what a heart after God’s heart looks like. David is pretty harsh here. He says, “If someone is falsely accusing me, may he be cursed.” Who is falsely accusing David? Saul. David is gracious and respectful. He gives Saul the benefit of the doubt and assumes it is someone else and not Saul who is making the accusation. So he is gracious in the way he says it, but what he says is severe – may that person be cursed by God. David wants Saul to understand what a serious matter this is.

But isn’t that an unloving thing to say? It is not unloving.

### **19 ...They have now driven me from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other gods.'**

That is not to say that by driving David out of Israel Saul was forcing David to serve other gods. David ends up going to Philistia after this, but there is no record that he served false gods while he was there. What David is saying is this: to push David out of Israel was to push him in the direction of other gods. And pushing someone toward false gods – whether you were successful or not - was a capital offense.

**Deuteronomy 13:6 If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods" (gods that neither you nor your fathers have known, 7 gods of the peoples around you, whether near or far, from one end of the land to the other), 8 do not yield to him or listen to him. Show him no pity. Do not spare him or shield him. 9 You must certainly put him to death. Your hand must be the first in putting him to death, and**

**then the hands of all the people. 10 Stone him to death, because he tried to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 11 Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and no one among you will do such an evil thing again.**

You see, the curse was not coming from David – it was coming from Deuteronomy 13. It was not unloving. When someone's sin places that person under the curse of God's law the most loving thing you can do is alert that person to the fact that he is under a curse. It is not judgmental to simply repeat the judgments God has already made in His Word.

### **Worship outside of Israel**

Could David still worship Yahweh outside of Israel? Yes, but not like he could in Israel. It is not like today, when you can worship God the same in any geographic location. The greatest expression of the presence of God was in the Tabernacle. If you are cut off from the Tabernacle you are cut off from the most direct experience of the presence of God. That is why in the psalms David longed to go to the house of God. It was not because he liked the decorations there. It was not because of the architecture (it was a tent!). It was not because they had great coffee, or a really good bagel shop. During times when David was away from the Tabernacle he longed to be there because he so desperately needed to be near the presence of God. He needed an experience of God's nearness that could not be obtained anywhere else but at the Tabernacle.

**Psalm 63:1 O God ... my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. 2 I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory.**

Sometimes people think God's presence can be experienced out in nature more than in His own house, but that is not the case. David was out in the desert and he longed to go to the sanctuary. Couldn't David see God's power and glory out there under the stars? Yes, but not nearly as much as in the sanctuary.

**Psalm 84:1 How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty! 2 My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. 3 Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young-- a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God.**

David says, "I envy the birds, because they can fly right into the Holy Place whenever they want."

**4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Selah**

**10 Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.**

Being in the temple and seeing the glory of God was the only thing David cared about.

**Psalm 27:4 One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.**

Think about that for a second. David asks for and desires just one thing. That means it is not only the most important thing, but the summary of all that is of any importance; otherwise he could not ask for just one thing. What David desires in Psalm 27:4 is the sum of all that is good and valuable and worth seeking after. And what is it? To simply be in a place? Of all the things it is possible for a man to set his desires on, the greatest and the sum of all of them for David was not to have something or to do something, but simply to be somewhere? And for what? Not to receive something or to attain something or to accomplish something or to create something; but merely to see something? And to see what? A beauty? If you summed up all that is wonderful about life, all that is most valuable and most precious and most worthy to be sought after, would the essence of your list be seeing something? For natural man seeing some beauty is nice, to be sure, but at best it

would be considered the icing on the cake of some much greater reality. But the man who really loves God knows that there is no greater reality.

Being exiled was going to be horrible for David not mainly because he would miss his family and friends, or his home or his culture. He does not mention any of that. Having to leave was going to be excruciating because in those days there was one location where you could experience the presence of God and behold His glory in the greatest way, and it was in Israel.

Is there a place like that today? Yes. What is the place that functions as the Temple of the Holy Spirit today? The Church. That is why you have got to wonder, when someone is content to cut himself off from the Church, if he even knows God at all. How could someone who loves the Lord be willing to banish himself from the greatest expression of the presence of God? The presence of God is the issue for David. That is clear in the next verse.

**20 Now do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the LORD.**

David loved the presence of God because He loved experiencing the glory of God. I hope that is why you come to church. I hope that is why you do everything you ever do in life. Sometimes God decides to give you justice quickly, in this life – right away, in dramatic fashion. Other times He decides you need to wait until Judgment Day. And one of the things that will move God’s heart to give you relief sooner rather than later is if you are a man or woman after His own heart. Because if you treasure the presence of God above all, rewarding that in this life is something that brings glory to God. It shows His presence to be the glorious treasure that it is, so when we crave nearness to Him above all, and you can see that in your affections and your words and your priorities and your actions, that increases the likelihood that you will receive justice and favor from God in this life.

**Benediction: 2 Thes.1:11-12 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith.**

# Devotionals

## Day 1

Starting in chapter 24 (with Saul in the cave) God is teaching David about trusting Him completely for justice. Try to fight your own battles and gain justice for yourself, and you will do nothing but fall into sin. But leave justice entirely in God's hands and you can count on Him to give you justice. And when you hear me talk about God giving you justice, you might have some hesitation at that point, because we mostly tend to think of justice in negative terms. We think justice is getting the punishment you deserve, so it is not something you want. In fact I have even heard preachers say, "Don't ever ask God for justice. Justice is the last thing you want from God because you deserve eternal hell."

The problem with that is the psalmists cry out to God for justice all the time.

The reason we have a hard time with that is we tend to run all accounts together. So if you are guilty and deserving of punishment in one area, then the only thing justice means to you is punishment. We figure, if you are guilty of murder, and then you get an unfair parking ticket, you do not go to the judge and say, "This parking ticket is unfair – I want justice," because the judge might say, "What do you mean you want justice? Justice means you go to prison for life." In our simplistic minds we cannot separate one issue from the other.

But God can and does. God is the type of judge who says, "I will deal with the murder thing in another trial, but as far as this unfair ticket goes, you are right – it is unfair and so you do not have to pay it." God does not mix all our accounts into one balance. He is both able and willing to separate the various issues in our lives.

So if you are a Christian, the capital crime of sin against God that deserves eternity in hell – that is taken care of. Jesus paid the penalty for that on your behalf, and has credited Jesus' righteousness to your account so you can be declared not guilty. But what about temporal consequences? Suppose you have sinned this past week, and God is going to allow you to suffer some consequences for that this coming week. So you have some chastisement coming this week. But on the other hand, suppose yesterday someone treated you unfairly. Are you in a position to ask God for justice with the unfair treatment yesterday? Yes! God keeps the accounts separate, and so even while you suffer chastisement over one thing where you were in the wrong, at the same time you can seek justice from God in the other area where you were in the right.

*Blessed be Your name, dear God, for Your amazing mercy, and Your willingness to grant me positive justice even as You shelter me from negative justice! Your heart is moved with compassion over the tiny little injustices I have to endure, while at the same time You overlook cosmic treason in my heart against You. Oh, how mercy has triumphed! Justice should be my greatest enemy. How could a sinner rejoice in an attribute that moves You to pour out wrath on sinners? Only because of Christ. Thank You, dear Lord!*

*Please, make me a mirror that reflects this attribute. Make me a man who fights to protect people from injustice, while at the same time overlooking the flaws of repentant sinners because of Christ. Make me alert to any injustice committed against others, but oblivious and indifferent to sins committed against me. Oh, Lord, I'm afraid so often just the opposite is true in Your servant's heart. I am hyper-sensitive to sins against me and oblivious to sins against others. Change my heart, dear Lord. Make it like Yours. Awaken me to how much I have been forgiven that I might love much.*

*Give Your servant a heart like David, who was so incensed when someone spoke against Saul because Saul was Your anointed. David was Your anointed too! He deserved even more honor than Saul, because Saul was Your rejected anointed and David was Your chosen anointed. Yet he did not concern himself with the honor that was due him. He was concerned with the honor others were due and he let the Lord worry about what he was due. Oh, Lord, humble me. Teach me humility, so I am not so consumed with policing how others treat me. I am always so worried about whether people are loving me enough or being friendly enough or including me or inviting me or whatever. Teach me to care about the honor due others and let You worry about the honor due me.*

## Day 2

For a long time prior to 1 Samuel 26 David has been on the bottom and Saul has been on the top. Saul has every advantage and has power to make David's life miserable. Saul has been in control. Saul has been chasing, David has been running.

But that cannot go on forever. If David is going to fulfill the role to which God called him – if he is going to be king of Israel, it is obvious that a major reversal is going to have to take place. At the beginning David is powerless. But obviously that cannot continue if God wants him to be king. If God wants David to reign as king, David cannot go on being powerless.

So bringing about that reversal is part of what David needs from God. And it has been subtle, but the whole time David has been running from Saul, bit by bit God has been putting that reversal in place. And by the time we get to chapter 26 we see quite a reversal already.

When you read the first three verses it sounds exactly like what happened in previous chapters. The Ziphites tell Saul where David is, Saul comes after him, and it looks like it is probably going to be another situation where David gets cornered and has to make some narrow escape again. But in verse 4 things take a very different and very surprising turn.

**1 Samuel 26:3 When he saw that Saul had followed him there, 4 he sent out scouts and learned that Saul had definitely arrived.**

David is coming after Saul. Up to now Saul has been gathering intel on David's location all the time; now David is sending out scouts to pinpoint Saul's location.

And David does not stop at just pursuing Saul. He goes so far as to rebuke Saul's top general!

**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?"**

You call to the king's general you are calling to the king. Abner wants whoever this guy is to realize who he is talking to. This is not just some group of soldiers. This is the king and his men, so watch your mouth.

**15 David said, "You're a man, aren't you? And who is like you in Israel?"**

Abner alerts the person yelling at them that he is addressing some powerful, important officials, and David responds by questioning Abner's manhood.

**15 ...Why didn't you guard your lord the king? Someone came to destroy your lord the king.**

This has the sound of an authority rebuking a subordinate. And he is not done...

**16 What you have done is not good. As surely as the LORD lives, you and your men deserve to die, because you did not guard your master, the LORD's anointed.**

David convicts the highest officials in the nation of a capital crime. He declares them guilty and worthy of the death sentence.

**16 ...Look around you. Where are the king's spear and water jug that were near his head?"**

Imagine the thoughts that go through Abner's head at this point. He turns and looks at where Saul was laying and his heart sinks when he sees the hole in the ground where the spear had been and footprints leading away.

Abner does not answer David. He knew David was right – he did deserve to die. He gets spanked here by David and can do nothing but submit to it in silence. An enemy intent on killing Saul walked right up in the

night and took Saul's spear, and had it not been for David, that enemy would have probably killed both Saul and Abner.

This is the final encounter between these two, and the circumstances have come full circle. He is still not on the throne, but David is now very much in control. David is now on top. Instead of being the lowly fugitive accused of treason, he is the judge and jury convicting the highest officials in the nation of treason. And instead of running for his life, David pursues Saul. David spies on him, tracks Saul down, finds his camp, and gets him in a position of weakness. Saul continues to live only because of David's mercy, and only because of David's mercy does Saul get his spear back (which was the symbol of Saul's royal authority).

So at least symbolically, if not literally, Saul continues on the throne only by David's permission. David's superior position is now fully established. Up to now it has been predicted verbally – by Samuel, then by Jonathan, then by Saul, then by Abigail. But now we see it not only in words, but in circumstances themselves. God has given David the power – the only thing he lacks is the title.

*It is You alone, dear Father, who determines who is on top and who is on the bottom – who has power and who doesn't. When I survey the various relationships in my life, in some You have placed me in a position of relative power and in others a position of relative weakness. Sometimes my boss or spouse or a person with whom I'm doing business has the upper hand. They have the power to hurt me or take from me, and I am powerless to do anything about it. They are in control and I'm not. Father, when that happens, teach me to look to You alone. Instead of thrashing about trying to gain some advantage, teach me to rest in bold and delightful confidence that You will bring a reversal when the time is right, and so I don't have to fight for it.*

*When I am on the bottom I squirm and struggle and cry out to You for relief. But when I'm on the top I usually don't even notice it (as if that is simply the way things ought to be as a matter of course!). As I sit here and contemplate all the relationships in which You have granted me a measure of power – where I am not helpless, Lord, I realize Your blessing hand has been at work. You have exalted Your servant. You have placed my feet upon a rock, and given me the advantage of higher ground against so many who would hurt me if they had the advantage. Thank You, dear Lord. Help me be more aware of this blessing in my life so I don't take for granted something that should be causing joy and gratitude in my heart toward You. And make me a faithful steward, so I never misuse the power You have given me in any relationship.*

### Day 3

Oh how tempting it must have been for David to think this “reversal of fortunes” was his own doing. He is strong, he is smart, he is crafty. I am sure it must have seemed like it really was because of his skills that he is now on top. But it wasn't. Apart from God's special help David would be rotting in prison in Gath where he was captured years ago. Apart from God's special help David would have no army – remember God brought them to him. Apart from God's special help David would have died in the battle at Keilah. Apart from God's special help he would have been captured that time when Saul had him surrounded. Apart from God's special help some soldier would have had to get up and go to the bathroom right when David and Abishai were sneaking up on Saul. It is God who has brought all this about.

**1 Sam.26:7 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.**

They have made it down into the camp without being detected. The closer they get to Saul the bigger and stronger and meaner looking the soldiers get. Some of these guys are so big you can hardly step over them. And finally – there is Abner! And next to him – Saul! And at this point Abishai decides it is time to have a conversation.

**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 my 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; either 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."**

That whole heated debate takes place right there by Saul and Abner. I do not know how quiet they managed to be, but as it turned out, it probably didn't matter.

**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.**

It was not because David and Abishai were so sneaky or stealthy. It was because God just knocked everyone out. That word “deep sleep” is the same phrase used to describe when God put Adam under to do the open rib surgery – it is a *really* deep sleep.

And there is no indication that David knew that – it is just a comment between the narrator and the reader. David and Abishai probably think it is because of their stealth. They probably thought they were being so sneaky, but in reality they could have tripped and fallen on one of the soldiers and he would not have woken up.

Sometimes we think we are in so much danger, and the truth is danger is the farthest thing from us.

God gave successes like this to David not to stoke David's ego, but because it was something that was needed in order for David to carry out what God had called him to do. One thing is for sure - you can count on the fact that if God calls you to something He will empower you to do it. Do not ever be like Moses, who responded to God's calling by lecturing God about how he did not have the right skills. He said, “Sounds like a great plan and everything God, but what about the fact that I am a poor speaker – ever thought of that?” And God said, “Who created your mouth? Do you think I can create a mouth but I don't have the power to make the right words come out of it?” Do not ever resist what God is calling you to do because you lack the ability or the power. And do not hesitate to obey because circumstances do not appear to be on your side. God will empower and enable you to do what He calls you to do.

*Forgive me, dear Lord, for all the times I've hesitated to do what You are leading me to do because I am afraid You won't supply the strength or resources. And on the other side, when I do obey and have success, forgive me for assuming it was my own strength.*

*And teach me also to love that strength that flows from You. I want to become more aware of the experience of being strengthened and enabled by You. I want to go through the day each day, when I have the ability to do what You call me to do in my job or ministry or family or whatever, and rejoice in the strength and ability I have, knowing without question that at that very moment I am actually experiencing strengthening directly from Your mighty hand! I am experiencing it even at this very moment! Oh, thank You, dear Lord!*



## Day 4

**1 Samuel 26:17 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?"**

Here is Saul's chance. If David is guilty of anything, now is the time to let it be known. What sin is David guilty of?

And we can learn from David here. That is a great question to ask when someone is at odds with you. "Tell me what my sin is."

If you are afraid to ask that question, that is not a good sign. It probably means either your conscience is not clear, you know you have not repented of some sin, you are too proud to hear a rebuke from this particular person, or you do not even care if there is sin in your life.

But David is humble and he cares about righteousness, so he does not hesitate to ask Saul – What is my sin? Saul does not answer, and David goes on to make the question even more pointed.

**19 Now let my lord the king listen to his servant's words. If the LORD has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. If, however, men have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD! They have now driven me from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other gods.'**

David boils the situation down to two possible options – either Saul's hostility is coming from the Lord or from men. That is, either God is angry with David about something and He is using Saul to chastise David, or some man is angry with David and God isn't.

Those are two interesting options. Pay careful attention to what David says about each one. The first possibility is that God is displeased with David. And David says, "If that's the case, then I need to get right with God." If this is all happening because of some sin David is guilty of, then David needs to go through the process of repentance prescribed by the law. And he needs to do all he can to seek favor with God again through the expressions of worship prescribed in the law.

However, if that is not the case – if there is not anything between David and God – if David was not guilty of some unrepentant sin, then David says:

**19 ...If, however, men have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD!**

There is no in-between. If David is in sin and God is angry with him then yes, it is a serious matter, and David does need to get right with God. However if that is not what is happening, then whoever is angry with David is wrong and should be cursed by God. There is absolutely no place for anger at people for anything else.

If you are mad at someone, show that person his unrepentant sin so he can repent. But if there is no unrepentant sin then you have absolutely no business being mad. And the same goes for if you suspect there is a sin, but you cannot put your finger on exactly what it is. If you cannot tell the person what his unrepentant sin is, and show him in Scripture where that is sin, and explain to him exactly what repentance would look like, then you have no business being at odds with that person.

**24 As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble."**

That is amazing. That is what I call a clear conscience. Could you pray that? "God, please treat me the way I treat those who hurt me." Would you be comfortable asking God to think and feel and behave toward you the same way that you think and feel and behave toward those who hurt you? Would you ever ask God to place the same amount of value on your life that you have placed on the lives of those who hurt you?

## Day 5

Why did God bless David and curse Saul? Because David was a man after God's own heart. And if there is anything about David we want to learn from, it is that.

David's curse in verse 19 gives insight into what a heart after God's heart looks like. David is pretty harsh here. He says, "If someone is falsely accusing me, may he be cursed." Who is falsely accusing David? Saul. David is gracious and respectful. He gives Saul the benefit of the doubt and assumes it is someone else and not Saul who is making the accusation. So he is gracious in the way he says it, but what he says is severe – may that person be cursed by God. David wants Saul to understand what a serious matter this is.

But isn't that an unloving thing to say? It is not unloving.

**1 Samuel 26:19 ...They have now driven me from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other gods.'**

That is not to say that by driving David out of Israel Saul was forcing David to serve other gods. David ends up going to Philistia after this, but there is no record that he served false gods while he was there. What David is saying is this: to push David out of Israel was to push him in the direction of other gods. And pushing someone toward false gods – whether you were successful or not - was a capital offense.

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You see, the curse was not coming from David – it was coming from Deuteronomy 13. It was not unloving. When someone's sin places that person under the curse of God's law the most loving thing you can do is alert that person to the fact that he is under a curse. It is not judgmental to simply repeat the judgments God has already made in His Word.

Could David still worship Yahweh outside of Israel? Yes, but not like he could in Israel. It is not like today, when you can worship God the same in any geographic location. The greatest expression of the presence of God was in the Tabernacle. If you are cut off from the Tabernacle you are cut off from the most direct experience of the presence of God. That is why in the psalms David longed to go to the house of God. It was not because he liked the decorations there. It was not because of the architecture (it was a tent!). It was not because they had great coffee, or a really good bagel shop. During times when David was away from the Tabernacle he longed to be there because he so desperately needed to be near the presence of God. He needed an experience of God's nearness that could not be obtained anywhere else but at the Tabernacle.

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Sometimes people think God's presence can be experienced out in nature more than in His own house, but that is not the case. David was out in the desert and he longed to go to the sanctuary. Couldn't David see God's power and glory out there under the stars? Yes, but not nearly as much as in the sanctuary.

**Psalm 84:1 How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty! 2 My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. 3 Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young-- a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God.**

David says, “I envy the birds, because they can fly right into the Holy Place whenever they want.”

**4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Selah**

**10 Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.**

Being in the temple and seeing the glory of God was the only thing David cared about.

**Psalm 27:4 One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.**

Think about that for a second. David asks for and desires just one thing. That means it is not only the most important thing, but the summary of all that is of any importance; otherwise he could not ask for just one thing. What David desires in Psalm 27:4 is the sum of all that is good and valuable and worth seeking after. And what is it? To simply be in a place? Of all the things it is possible for a man to set his desires on, the greatest and the sum of all of them for David was not to have something or to do something, but simply to be somewhere? And for what? Not to receive something or to attain something or to accomplish something or to create something; but merely to see something? And to see what? A beauty? If you summed up all that is wonderful about life, all that is most valuable and most precious and most worthy to be sought after, would the essence of your list be seeing something? For natural man seeing some beauty is nice, to be sure, but at best it would be considered the icing on the cake of some much greater reality. But the man who really knows loves God knows that there is no greater reality.

Being exiled was going to be horrible for David not mainly because he would miss his family and friends, or his home or his culture. He does not mention any of that. Having to leave was going to be excruciating because in those days there was one location where you could experience the presence of God and behold His glory in the greatest way, and it was in Israel.

Is there a place like that today? Yes. What is the place that functions as the Temple of the Holy Spirit today? The Church. That is why you have got to wonder, when someone is content to cut himself off from the Church, if he even knows God at all. How could someone who loves the Lord be willing to banish himself from the greatest expression of the presence of God? The presence of God is the issue for David. That is clear in the next verse.

**20 Now do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the LORD.**

David loved the presence of God because He loved experiencing the glory of God. I hope that is why you come to church. I hope that is why you do everything you ever do in life.

Sometimes God decides to give you justice quickly, in this life – right away, in dramatic fashion. Other times He decides you need to wait until Judgment Day. And one of the things that will move God’s heart to give you relief sooner rather than later is if you are a man or woman after His own heart. Because if you treasure the presence of God above all, rewarding that in this life is something that brings glory to God. It shows His presence to be the glorious treasure that it is, so when we crave nearness to Him above all, and you can see that in your affections and your words and your priorities and your actions, that increases the likelihood that you will receive justice and favor from God in this life.

*Lord, this verse shows so much that was in David’s heart that hasn’t been in mine. The desires and goals and strivings of the man who truly loves You are so opposite of what is natural for man. David asks for and desires just one thing. This must be not only the most important thing, but the summary of all that is of any importance; otherwise he couldn’t ask for just one thing. It is the sum of all that is good and valuable and worth seeking after.*

*When natural man sums up all that is wonderful about life, all that is most valuable and most precious and most worthy to be sought after, he would list many things; but would beholding a beauty even be on the list? For natural man seeing some beauty is nice, to be sure, but at best would be considered the icing on the*

*cake of some much greater reality. But the man who really knows You and loves You can't see anything that is of comparable value to simply being where You are that he might look upon Your pleasantness and favorableness. No number of sermons or souls won to Christ or verses studied or memorized or starving children fed or prayers recited compares in value or importance to this – seeing Your beauty in Your Temple.*

*Lord, please, never let this truth slip from Your servant's heart. Like David I want this all the days of my life. I don't want to go back to just seeking and beholding and being enthralled with Your beauty a few times a year in some special worship setting. I want it every last one of the remaining days I have on this earth. Any day when I have not beheld and enjoyed Your glory, thus deepening my desire and love for You, is an utterly wasted day. I know that, Lord; teach it to my heart that I may really believe it.*

*You are beautiful, Father, and the only worthy object of my gaze every day. Open my eyes! Soften my heart with Your light, that I may see enough of Your beauty to desire it like David did – like Jesus did. What has beauty that isn't derived from and illustrative of Your beauty? Each of Your attributes is splendid and pleasant and wonderful. But all of them together, like the rainbow, is even more beautiful than the sum of the beauty of the individual shades. The way they all fit together in perfect proportion and interdependence. In You mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and justice have kissed. Your mercy is like the heavens and Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds; Your righteousness is like the awesome mountains, and Your justice like the great deep.*

*There is nothing greater than sitting in Your presence and beholding Your beauty. But this is not inactivity. David didn't abandon all the duties of life to sit in a chair. He came to inquire of You; to seek Your guidance. Father, teach me what the connection is between enjoying You and serving You. When should I end my prayer time and get busy with work? How do I know? And how do I make my work communion time with You? Lord, whenever I ask You "What should I do, Lord?" let it be because I deeply desire Your will, not just because I want smooth outcome for myself or the best path for attaining my own will.*