

Introduction: There is one thing that most people, and even many Christians, struggle to overcome: the desire to do away with injustice in their own strength and in a way that seems right to them, without seeking God and asking Him to bring about justice in His perfect and righteous: love, mercy and grace. *** No one has enough information, or enough wisdom, to determine how to rightly bring about justice. This is due, in part, because it is not easy to decide what perfect justice is. For disciples of Jesus, a good starting point [is the Word of God. But how do the principles given to people beginning from thirty-five hundred years ago until two thousand years ago apply to what is happening now? What about cultural practices that we take for granted are innocent, but actually cause harm? [And what about 'blind spots' in the moral compass of people who genuinely seek to do what is right but they seize on a few mistakes made by a person of goodwill and declare that person to be unfair and not to be trusted? Life and people are complicated. *** The only tried and true approach to take is to seek God about every issue, and have many dialogs with people affected by this issue, many times, [over many weeks; and, all the while asking Him to do what He knows is best. And, His people must always trust that He will act rightly, in His time and in His way. *** David and Saul are, respectively, good and bad case studies in the difference between godly and un-godly approaches to seeking God's will to overcome injustice by faith in His righteous character and actions, both in the short term and [especially in the long term. *** Saul over-reacted to God's rejection of him as king of Israel and choice of David to replace him. For over a decade, which must have seemed an eternity to David who became king at age thirty (2 Samuel 5:4), Saul unjustly sought [to destroy David. But we heard today, when David had opportunity to kill Saul and be safe, he refused to take Saul's life with his own hands. *** Instead, David dealt with Saul in a gracious way by allowing him to escape; but, he did take a piece of Saul's robe to prove what he could have done to him. David was guided by a total confidence that ultimately both judgment and sentencing are the prerogative of God, not people. *** Some time after this incident, after Saul died in battle and David had been established as king of Israel, he composed a psalm to his covenant God, Yahweh (whom we know by The Name: Father-Son-Holy Spirit, Matthew 28:19), in which he praised Yahweh for giving him salvation because of His eternal love, by exacting His vengeance on David's enemies. *** Let's dig into our texts to better understand all this, so we will live by what God shows us.

I. David has an opportunity to kill Saul in a cave but plays a 'practical joke' on him; David's heart is stricken and he lets Saul go but later reveals himself to Saul. (1 Samuel 24:1-8)

- A. David's men urge him to kill Saul who had entered a cave where David and his men were, David only cuts off the edge of Saul's robe. (Verses 1-4)
1. When Saul returned from (following) after the Philistines, he was told: Behold! David (is) in the wilderness of En-gedi; then Saul took three thousand men, chosen from all Israel, and then he went to seek David and his men before the rocks of the mountain goats. (Verses 1-2)
Location: En-gedi, fountain of the young goats, is in the hills west of the Dead Sea, near the middle of the Dead Sea. Saul sought David with five times the number of men David had.
 2. Then he came to the sheepfolds above the way, and there (was) a cave; then, Saul went in to 'cover his feet'; and, David and his men (were) in the inner parts of the cave, sitting. (Verse 3)
Privacy: 'Cover one's feet' is a euphemism for defecate. Saul sought privacy for this human function.
 3. Then David's men said to him: Behold! The day which Yahweh said to thee: Behold! I am giving thy enemy into thy hand, thou will do to him as will be good in thine eyes; then, David rose up and he cut the edge of Saul's robe in secret. (Verse 4)
Practical joke: This is the only time we hear of this word from Yahweh, so we should be skeptical. David ignores his men. Instead he does what we call a 'practical joke': frustrating but not fatal!
- B. David's heart is stricken over his disrespectful deed and he persuades his men to let Saul leave; then, he shows himself to Saul. (Verses 5-8)
1. After this, David's heart smote him because he had cut off the corner of Saul's (garment); he said: far be it from me, Yahweh! that I do this thing to my lord, Yahweh's anointed (king): to stretch out my hand against him, because he (is) Yahweh's anointed. (Verses 5-6)
Heart smitten: David did no ultimate harm to Saul, but his heart is convicted by Yahweh that he would act against the man Yahweh anointed to be His king, and to whom David was loyal. David knows Yahweh said through Moses: Vengeance is mine (Deuteronomy 32:35-43).

Vengeance belongs to Yahweh

2. David rebuked his men with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul; and, Saul rose up from the cave and went in his way. (Verse 7)
Saul leaves: David rebuked his men with cutting words so they would not kill Saul. This allows Saul to leave the cave ignorant that he was almost struck down to the grave!
3. After this, David rose, went out of the cave, and called after Saul: My lord, the king! Then Saul looked behind him and David bowed his face to the ground to his superior. (Verse 8)
Bows: David's action could be considered worship, but in the context it is more likely he was indicating to Saul that he still respected Saul. The narrative clearly shows us that David felt rebuked by his God, and is determined to let Yahweh decide Saul's fate.

Application: Like David, our hearts must always be open to receive reproof and correction from Yahweh as the first two steps of how the Holy Spirit teaches us (2 Timothy 3:16).

II. David is innocent of evil to Saul, and he is loyal, leaving vengeance to Yahweh; as king, he praises Yahweh for saving him by vengeance on his enemies, thanking Yahweh for salvation and steadfast love. (1 Samuel 24:9-15; Psalm 18:46-50)

- A. David strongly states to Saul that he has no evil intentions, using the piece of the robe as evidence, pledges his ongoing loyalty, and leaves vengeance to Yahweh. (1 Samuel 24:9-15)
1. Then David said to Saul: Why will thou hear the words of men saying: Behold! David is seeking (to do) evil to thee? (Verse 9)
Question: With a rhetorical question, David asks Saul why he is listening to the words of men (*adam*) saying he has evil designs on Saul? Implicitly, he asks: why don't you seek the God of Israel?

2. Behold! This day thy eyes saw that Yahweh gave thee into my hand in the cave, and some said to slay thee, but (He) spared thee; and I said: I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, because he (is) Yahweh's anointed. (*Verse 10*)
See: David asks Saul to truly see the evidence that he spared Saul, under the conviction of Yahweh, in spite of what his men said. He repeats to Saul almost verbatim what he told his men about leaving vengeance to Yahweh.

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3. My father, thou must see, indeed! thou must see: the edge of thy robe in my hand, because I cut off the edge of thy robe and did not slay thee; thou must know and see that nothing (is) in my hand evil or transgression; I have not sinned against thee, and thou are lying in wait my soul to take; Yahweh will judge between me and thee; and, Yahweh has avenged me from thee; and, my hand is not on thee. (*Verses 11-12*)
No evil: David strongly confronts Saul, who is his father-in-law (1 Samuel 18:20-29), with the cloth cut from Saul's robe to prove he intends no harm to Saul. He tells Saul to 'back off' because David is confident of Yahweh's just vengeance.

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4. As says the proverb of the ancients: From the wicked will go out wickedness; and, my hand is not on thee. (*Verse 13*)
Saying: This is not a biblical proverb because Solomon has not been born. It is most likely common human 'folk wisdom'.
5. After whom has the king of Israel come out? After whom are thou pursuing? After a dead dog? After a flea? Yahweh will be a judge and sentence judgment between me and thee; and, He will contend my case and deliver me from thy hand. (*Verses 14-15*)
Four rhetorical questions: David wants Saul to realize he is pursuing a humble and faithful servant in David. The word pursue is later used by David in the shepherd song (Psalm 23:6) in confidence that, whatever happens, Yahweh will pursue him with goodness and strong love!
Submitted trust in Yahweh: David is expressing true faith in Yahweh in the face of a human threat that cannot be denied. But, David knows that Yahweh will execute judgment with total justice, so he waits for Yahweh to avenge him on Saul.

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Application: We must have David's submitted obedience of faith in Yahweh. But our faith should be stronger because Jesus has showed us more about Yahweh through the Cross and His resurrection.

- B. In a psalm written decades later, David praises Yahweh for saving him and avenging him from enemies, and he gives thanks for salvation and eternal strong love. (*Psalm 18:46-50*)

Comment: The header of this psalm says David wrote it after Yahweh delivered him from Saul and all his enemies.

It took seven years after Saul's death before 'all Israel' made David king (2 Samuel 5); and, David battled Israel's enemies the Philistines for many years after that.

1. Yahweh lives! And blessed be my Rock / and He will be exalted, the God of my salvation. (*Verse 46*)
Bless living God: David exhorts all to bless the living God: their exalted and strong savior. He echoes Job's confident assertion that he has known his kinsman-redeemer lives (Job 19:25)!
2. The God is giving vengeance to me / and He has put to flight peoples under me. (*Verse 47*)
David waited patiently: David waited a decade, maybe two, for this day when Yahweh is avenging his enemies for him, making them flee. But, now it is happening, he is full of praise.

We can praise Yahweh for avenging us

3. The one delivering me from my enemies / surely from those rising above me, Thou will exalt me / from men of violence, Thou will rescue me. (*Verse 48*)
Sure deliverer: Three-fold strong faith from David: he is being delivered from enemies, will be exalted from usurpers, and will be rescued from men of *hamas* – violence!
4. Therefore, I will thank thee in the nations, Yahweh / and to Thy Name, I will sing praises. (*Verse 49*)
Give thanks, sing praise: For all this, David will thank Yahweh to all people with songs of praise!
5. He makes great the salvation of His king / and does strong steadfast love to His anointed / to David and to his descendants until eternity! (*Verse 50*)
Salvation, strong love, forever: By this time, Nathan must have given David Yahweh's Word to David that one of his descendants would be the eternal Messiah-King (2 Samuel 7:4-17)! David declares the great salvation Yahweh gave to him, and praises Him for His strong life-giving and life-changing love that will be with his descendants forever!

Application: David's great descendent has come, so we must remember in this 'now and not yet' age, what Jesus did for our salvation, and will do when He comes again to judge, so we will always act in faith, despite: threats from evil people, suffering, injustice and extreme violence, which BOTH Jesus AND His first great Church planter said would happen to all who live by the faith of Jesus (John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12-13). Then we can live in peace and joy.

Conclusion: David has an opportunity to kill Saul in a cave but plays a 'practical joke' on him. David's heart is stricken and he lets Saul go but later reveals himself to Saul. David is innocent of evil to Saul; and, he is loyal, leaving vengeance to Yahweh. As king, he praises Yahweh for saving him by vengeance on his enemies, thanking Yahweh for salvation and steadfast love.

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