Kings execute justice on ruthless assassins 10 / 18 / 2026

2 Samuel 4:(*1-12*) & *Psalm 45*:*2-7*

Introduction: People who act in their own self-interest with no regard to God or other people become slaves to wickedness leading to death (Romans 6:16). In a fallen world it seems that wicked oppressors prosper at the expense of those who innocently seek to be pure before God (Psalm 73:1-16). *** Apart from revivals from the days of the judges through the first century Church of Jesus, and in various places around the world for a decade or so since then, it seems God's people always suffer under ruthless, violent and wicked people. But in the suffering, those who truly know Jesus through a surrendered relationship to Him based on whole-hearted faith and gratitude to Him for all He has done, are able to enjoy His amazing love in all circumstances and have hope for the future. All who come to obedient faith in Jesus are set free from the penalty of sin to serve God in righteousness. And this results in their being made holy as they take on more and more of the resurrected life of Jesus (Romans 6:17-23)! ***
In our passage this morning, two brothers from the Gibeonites living in the territory of Benjamin selfishly seek to gain position and political power by assassinating the last surviving son of king Saul. They expect king David will reward them for their cold-blooded killing of the son of the man who pursued David to kill him. Instead, David shows his heart for God. He knows and realizes that love for God and people must also include hatred of all wickedness and appropriate punishment of people who act violently to gain worldly prosperity for themselves. *** Temple musician-priests wrote a psalm about the ideal king in the line of David who lives in the righteousness of the truth of God in order to bring justice on the wicked. *** So, let's look at the account of this dark and violent action in our texts in the light of God's gracious intent in Jesus to do justice in His time and in His way.

I. When Ish-bosheth hears Abner was killed he becomes weak before two commanders and his lame nephew; **the commanders come upon him at mid-day**, **slay him on his bed and take his head to David**. (*2 Samuel 4*:*1-8*)

A. Saul's son hears his army general was killed where David ruled and he became weak, he had two commanders from his tribe and a nephew with crippled feet. (*Verses 1-4*)

1. When the son of Saul heard that Abner died at Hebron, his hands dropped (he became weak) and all Israel was troubled. (*Verse 1*)
   Abner's death: Saul's only surviving son was Ish-bosheth. He had driven Abner to go to David to reconcile and unite all Israel under David as their king. The news of the death of his army general crushed him!
2. Saul's son had two captains (commanders) of plunderers named Baanah and Rekab the sons of Rimmon from Beeroth of (the tribe of) Benjamin, for Beeroth is also reckoned of Benjamin; and the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day. (*Verses 2-3*)
   Lower officers: These brothers were lower level army officers from a Gibeonite city. The Gibonites were pagans who deceived Joshua (Joshua 9:16-18; 18:25), but were reckoned as Benjaminites.
3. Jonathan, son of Saul, had a stricken in his feet; he was age five when the news of Jonathan and Saul at Jezreel came; then his nurse took him up and fled; and in her haste to flee he fell and became lame; his name was Mephibosheth. (*Verse 4*)
   Mephibosheth: Perhaps Jonathan named his son 'dispeller of shame' in the hope that he would have his father's faith in the covenant God to overcome the shame and guilt of his grandfather Saul. The coming chapters will show how David honored his covenant with Jonathan by caring for Jonathan's son (1 Samuel 20:12-17).

B. The two Gibeonite commanders come on Ish-bosheth resting on his bed in the heat of the day to kill and behead him; then, they bring his head to David. (*Verses 5-8*)

1. Then the sons of Rimmon, the Beerothite, went and came, about (the time of) the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth; and, he was lying down (on the) bed at noon. (*Verse 5*)
   Brothers unto Ish-bosheth: These brothers from Beeroth (Gibeon) come to their 'king', Saul of Benjamin's son, as he is lying in rest as the afternoon heat is beginning.
2. Behold! They came into the midst of the house, (as if) taking wheat, and they smote him 'under the fifth' (rib) and the brothers escaped. (*Verse 6*)
   ***Kill* '*king*'**: With a minimum of words the Author tells the pretense they used to enter the house.
   Ironically, the description of how they killed Saul's son is exactly the same as when Joab killed Abner (2 Samuel 3:27)!
3. When they came in the house as he was lying down on his bed in his inner room, they smote and slew him, and beheaded him; then they took his head and went by the way of the desert plain all night. (*Verse 7*)
   Ruthless: They killed Ish-bosheth in cold blood as he was sleeping in his own bed in the middle of the day. Then they ruthlessly desecrated his body by removing his head. Then they carried it with them all night through barren terrain.
4. Then they brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David (at) Hebron and said: Behold! The head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul your enemy who sought your life; Yahweh has given vengeance to my lord the king this day on Saul and his offspring. (*Verse 8*)
   Show and tell: They were excited to show Ish-bosheth's head to David. Their words showed they thought they were the covenant God of Israel's means to give David revenge on the man who tried to kill him.
   They expected some great material reward for killing the weak and defenseless son of a deposed king.

Application: We must learn to never assume we know what will please another person. Instead, we must always seek to know God's will before taking any action. Then we must communicate first by listening intently before humbly expressing our desires to the other person, especially one with God-given authority.

II. The ruthless brothers are executed by David, just as was the Amalekite who claimed to kill Saul; a blessed Davidic king uses his weapons in righteous truth to enforce justice on the wicked. (*2 Samuel 4:13-16*; *Psalm 45:2-7*)

A. David informs the ruthless glory seeking brothers what he did to the man who claimed to slay Saul, and he has them executed. (*2 Samuel 4:13-16*)

1. Then David answered the brothers: (As) Yahweh lives, who ransomed my life from every distress;
when (one was) telling me, Behold! Saul is dead; and he, indeed, was bringing good news in his own eyes;
then I took hold of him and killed him at Ziklag, which I gave him for his news. (*Verses 9-10*)
Ignorant: David attributes all his rescues to his God. The Amalekite with Saul (2 Samuel 1:1-16)
and these brothers went by their own thoughts. They should have known what happened before.

Kings execute justice on ruthless assassins

2. Also when wicked men have slain a righteous man in his own house, on his bed, will I not require his blood
from your hand (what it did) and burn you from the earth? (*Verse 11*)
You were worse: The previous incident was on a battlefield. What you did in killing an innocent man on his bed
is much worse! You will meet the same fate: execution for assassination.

Kings execute justice on ruthless assassins

3. Then David commanded young men and they slew them. then they cut off their hands and feet; then they hanged them
beside the pool (at) Hebron; and the head of Ish-bosheth, they took and buried in the tomb of Abner (at) Hebron. (*Verse 12*)
David's action: David ordered his trusted young men to kill Rimmon's sons, cutting off the hands and feet that assassinated
Ish-bosheth. The beautiful irony is that even though Abner and Ish-bosheth had a falling out just before Abner was killed,
they were buried together, given equal honor by David.

Kings execute justice on ruthless assassins

B. The sons of Korah praise the messianic (anointed) Davidic king who received grace and uses his weapons so righteous truth brings justice on the wicked. (*Psalm 45:2-7*)

1. You (are more) handsome than the sons of *adam* / grace has been poured on your lips /
therefore God has blessed you forever. (*Verse 2*)
Beautifully handsome: This Davidic king is handsome with the physical beauty God graciously bestows, as Joseph
also was (Genesis 39:6). Furthermore, his speech is gracious. God has eternally blessed him with these qualities.

2. Gird you sword upon (your) thigh, mighty one / your honor and your majesty // and (in) your majesty you must ride and
prosper / for the (word) of truth, meekness (and) righteousness / your right hand will instruct you doing fearful (things).
(*Verses 3-4*)
Warrior sword: The king is a mighty warrior able to use his sword to defend honor.
Prosperous: His battles are for the cause of three words that describe God: truth, meekness and righteousness.
Jesus is all three (John14:6; Matthew 11:29; 1 John 2:1).
Result: This messianic king will learn fearful things in battle so he will have a reverential fear of God
which is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10). Wisdom is the gift from God by which people can rightly
apply God's Word in everything they do in every minute of every day.

3. Your arrows are sharp / peoples fall under you / (they are) in the heart of the king's enemies. (*Verse 5*)
Arrows: In addition to using the sword to defend humility, truth and righteousness in hand-to-hand combat;
this ideal king can strike down God's enemies, and his, at a distance with arrows.

4. God, Your throne is forever and ever / the scepter of a level plain (fairness is) the scepter of Your kingdom //
You have loved righteousness and You have hated wickedness. (*Verses 6-7a*)
Fairness: The psalm moves from the messianic king to the God who sent him.
The metaphor for fairness is a level plain ('playing field'). When everything is 'on the level' no one has an advantage.
Character: The messianic king rode for righteousness. God's righteousness causes Him to love righteousness (in people)
AND it also requires that He must hate the opposite, namely wickedness. The sword and arrows are to kill all
who persist in wickedness so justice will roll down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream (Amos 5:24).

God's anointed king enforces justice on the wicked

5. Therefore God, your God has anointed you / with the oil of joy above your associates. (*Verses 7b-c*)
God anoints with joy: God's anointed king, anointed to be like Him on earth, will experience the greatest joy
that God gives to His faithful people.

Application: Putting it all together, we must use our God-given talents and gifts: physical, character qualities and spiritual; so, motivated by God's gracious blessings, we will do whatever His will is so that His justice is done and we will experience His joy!

Conclusion: When Ish-bosheth hears Abner was killed he becomes weak before two commanders and his lame nephew. The commanders come upon him at mid-day, slay him on his bed and take his head to David. The ruthless brothers are executed by David, just as was the Amalekite who claimed to kill Saul. A blessed Davidic king uses his weapons in righteous truth to enforce justice on the wicked.

Kings execute justice on ruthless assassins