

May the Lord Be Our Judge

1 Samuel 24:1-22 (Key verse 24:15)

"May the Lord be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand."

We all want justice one way or another when there is a wrong committed. Every nation has a judicial system, these are our courts where matters in the land are sent for judgement so there is justice and fairness. The highest court in the land within the judicial system is the constitutional court followed by the supreme court of appeal. Our judges have the final say in resolving disputes and making sure that the constitution of the land is rightfully implemented in order to protect and preserve the rights of everyone who lives in South Africa. However still who is righteous, which judge can stand up and say their hearts are absolutely pure before God to be a judge. That is why even the appointment of a judge is a tedious and complicated process. As mankind we have developed mechanism and processes in trying to make sure whoever is appointed is the right person. However no one can see anyone's heart. Even ourselves, however way we may feel justified to judge others, ultimately there is but one Judge, the creator of the heavens and the earth our heavenly father. In this passage David illustrates to all of us the practical meaning of trusting in God as our judge. May the Lord help all of us place our trust in His judgement and practically submit our lives to His word and promises. Amen.

We learned from last week message how the lord did not deliver David into Saul's hands from a report that the Philistines had attacked inland. On hearing those news Saul stopped pursuing David and went after the Philistines inland. However Saul had not given up on pursuing David, look at verse 1-2, *"After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, 'David is in the Desert of En Gedi.' So Saul took three thousand able young men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats."* The wilderness of En-gedi is an oasis in Israel, just westward of the Dead Sea. The area is somewhat attractive since it has a number of caves and a water fall. It was the best hiding place and so no wonder David and his men hid there. Saul on the other hand had formed a special army about three thousand men. These men were specially chosen by Saul from all Israel in order to capture David. Clearly David was a fugitive and seriously wanted by Saul. While Saul and his men were in the area, Saul was hit by a serious call of nature, what we call number 2, look at verse 3a, *"Soon Saul came to the sheepfolds along the road, where there was a cave, and he went in to relieve himself..."* Saul went into one of the caves in order to relieve himself, however amazingly, the cave he entered was the same cave David and his men were hiding in, verse 3b tells us that, *"...David and his men were hiding in the recesses of the cave."* What were the chances of this happening given that the area of En-gedi had a number of caves? The timing also was amazing because it was at this very moment near David's cave that number 2 called. I believe God was orchestrating these events and the timing. Saul had no cooking clue that he was subjecting himself into the hands of David. Look at verse 4a, *"So David's men said to him, 'This is the day about which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do with him as you wish.'"* David's men wasted no time in advising David to kill Saul immediately. Indeed this was the opportune time for David and his men to kill Saul.

What David's men said made perfect sense, it was absolutely logical. There was also moral justification to it, for example let us look carefully who Saul was, Saul disobeyed God's command many times, two times he tried to kill Jonathan, one time through his foolish oath, the other time because Jonathan was David's friend. We read in 1 Samuel 22:18-19, *"...That day he killed eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. He also put to the sword Nob, the town of the priests, with its men and women, its children and infants, and its cattle, donkeys and sheep."* Saul did many terrible things even to the servants of the almighty God, he killed innocent people just because of one priest, Ahimelek. David and his men were on the run for their lives because of Saul. Even David's family was in danger for he had to move them to Judah for hiding. Who will not feel justified to kill such a man when they have

a chance? David and his men had all the justification to end this unreasonable torment over their lives. Saul was right there before them, defenceless with no guard and fully vulnerable to be killed. Like an innocent animal about to be ambushed by a lioness. An opportunity of a lifetime for David to end his misery and those of his men had come. However what did David do, in verse 4b we read, "...Then David crept up secretly and cut off a corner of Saul's robe." The men must have been shocked to witness what just happened. They saw David nicely holding his knife for the kill but instead, David only cut off a corner of Saul's robe. David could not kill Saul, in fact something happened when he cut Saul's robe.

We read in verse 5, that David's conscience was stricken because he had cut off the corner of Saul's robe. What does that mean? I will use a short story in 2 Samuel 24:10a, to help us, it reads, "*After David had numbered the troops, his conscience was stricken and he said to the LORD, 'I have sinned greatly in what I have done...'*" in this story, for David to count the men, meant that he had placed his confidence in his military power to defeat his enemies instead of trusting in the Lord. So he was also conscience stricken which means he saw his sin before the Lord. Similarly, in our passage today, because he cut Saul's robe David realized his sin. He realized that his intentions were not right before God and so his conscience was stricken. This could mean that David did have the intention to kill Saul and now after cutting a piece of Saul's robe he became conscience stricken. Also the robe represented something of royalty which was established by God, and so cutting Saul's robe was as though David was undermining what God had established. Either way, because David had cut Saul's robe he realized his sin. That is why he could now afterwards boldly rebuke his men. Look at verse 6, "*He said to his men, 'The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the Lord.'*" David even called Saul his master and this is because Saul was the LORD's anointed. To David it was not about what he wanted or what his men wanted or what Saul had done, it was all about what God wanted. To the extent that to even come behind the LORD's anointed like that and cut his robe got David conscience stricken. It got David feeling guilty before God. Though David might have had many kinds of bad feelings for Saul, what was important was who Saul was before God. Saul was the Lord's anointed and as such David saw himself as Saul's servant. That is why he calls Saul, my master. This was the most practical way David could display his submission to God's authority and plan.

This is definitely a difficult thing to do, in fact it is painful actually. It can weigh the heart down. Especially when that person while we try to avoid them are persistent in pursuing us. Persistently trying by all means to destroy us, as though they don't like it when we are happy or have a bright future. David did not allow himself to cast judgement upon Saul by killing him when he had a chance, rather he surrendered the situation to God even his emotions. After Saul had left the cave, David got up and went out of the cave and called out to Saul, "...My lord the king!... why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you'? This day you have seen with your own eyes how the Lord delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, 'I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the Lord's anointed...'" [8-10] David even showed Saul the piece of robe he had cut from him as evidence to show Saul that even though Saul is after his life, David did not kill him even though he had the best chance [11]. How could David choose this difficult path of faith? Look at verse 12 and 15, "*May the Lord judge between you and me. And may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you.*" and in verse 15, "*May the Lord be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand*" one central conviction David had was that, the Lord is judge. David says, may the Lord judge between you and me. May it be the Lord who avenges the wrongs Saul had committed against him. David continues to say, may the Lord vindicate me by delivering him from the hands of Saul. David could have placed matters into his hands by killing Saul, however he chose to trust in God's judgement. David chose to reject his personal feelings of what needed to be done to Saul, but rather trust and believe in the Lord's judgement. David got conscience stricken, which made him realize that though Saul was terrorizing his life, there was actually the third person in their lives, the ruler and judge of the universe, our creator

God. This does not mean David was a robot without emotions or feelings, look at verse 14, *“Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Who are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea?”* David was human like all of us for he shows some frustration here, however he made a decision of faith that it is God who is judge between them. By not killing Saul when he had the chance, in this way David matured his faith before God.

Looking at what David said once again, we can see David was actually making a prayer request because he himself knows that he is a sinner before God. Look once again at verse 15, David says *“May the Lord be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand.”* Indeed God is judge, as David wrote in the Psalms 75:5, *“But God is the Judge, He puts down one and exalts another.”* and also in James 4:12, *“There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?”* David understood that he was a sinner before God, and that only God is righteous to be judge. How then can I as a sinner think or feel justified to judge anyone if I myself am a wretched sinner. It does not matter how bad or wrong done to me or others, ultimately, to cast judgement upon others is to claim that I am righteous and all-knowing like God. Romans 3:9-10 clearly tells us, *“What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one.”* Our righteousness is Jesus Christ, what Jesus did for us on the cross. Without Jesus we are all under the power of sin. We depend on God for righteousness, which means we also depend on God for judgement. Because to assume a position of judgement, is actually self-righteousness, a rejection of Christ Jesus as Lord and Saviour, thus a rejection of the cross. Usually at a heated moment when someone has made us upset or frustrates our lives, when we get chance we immediately wish the worst for those people, or we decide to take matters into our hands by responding with either harsh words of cursing and judgement. It is not easy to take the path David took, the path of waiting upon the Lord’s judgement. That path requires us to trust in God’s judgement and believe that it is the Lord who will clear anyone of any blame or suspicion.

We may also wonder then, if God is judge, does it mean when I see wrong been done I cannot say it is wrong. That is not so, David did not sugar coat what Saul was doing to him, he knew that Saul was in the wrong, look at verse 12b and 15b again, *“And may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me”* and *“...may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand.”* So having faith in God as judge does not mean we see no wrong doing. We acknowledge the wrong but the consequences thereof is of the Lord. All we can do sometimes is pray and have faith that God is righteous and thus judges righteously. We face all kinds of things in our lives, many times students may feel that lecturers were not fair in their assessments or that the lecturer is out to fail them. We may also be upset with the way we were raised by our parents or even under immense frustration by someone at the present moment in our lives. Someone has taken something that belongs to you by tricking you and making you feel stupid. You have committed a sin that makes you want to punish yourself. We are usually hungry for justice and we want it now. What do we do in many of these situations of which some I did not even mention. May we exercise the patience of David that comes from trusting in the Lord as our righteous judge and not take matters into our hands. To genuinely believe that God is in control. I believe the Lord was also testing David by bringing Saul into that cave for number 2. To mature David’s faith as a man after His own heart. In 1 Peter 1:6-7 we read, *“In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.”* In the end David proved the genuineness of his faith so it may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. May the Lord give us strength to place our trust in His judgement, fully believing that he will do what is right.

In conclusion, our judgement of others is not the absolute truth because we ourselves are not righteous. We are but sinners yet we judge others as though we have a righteousness of our own. We assume this righteousness

because we feel wronged or taken advantage of. And then because of our hot feelings and emotions we see their wrongs as worse than ours. However, before God we are all sinners whether my wrong is smaller and theirs is bigger. We could either be wronged or we have wronged someone, we could have an unresolved past of either wrongs we committed against others or wrongs committed against us. Either way, may we give it all to God to be our judge because only God is right. May we trust in His judgement by placing our faith in His ways and laws. I pray that we may live in this peace, by handing it all over to God to judge while we try by all means to live according to God's word by faith. Yes it is not a nice path, it can be the most painful path, however I know that God sees it all and He is our judge. Ultimately as we shall see in this book of Samuel, though David suffered much by trusting in God's faithfulness as our judge, in the end God's promises for David's life were fulfilled. The God of David is our God today, he is our God, our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. May we place our full trust in Him as our Judge. Amen.