

SO MAY THE LORD VALUE MY LIFE

1 Samuel 26:1-25 (Key verse 24)

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

In today's passage, David spared the life of Saul, again. Saul arranged another ambush against David. He has forgotten how David saved his life in the cave, where David only cut off the corner of his robe. David is really troubled by Saul who wanted him dead without just cause. David cries out to Saul; "Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done, and what wrong am I guilty of (18)? He also laments due to Saul's actions; They have driven me today from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other gods.' Now do not let my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the LORD (19-20). Moreover the many other losses that David suffered, Saul's actions had driven David from the presence of the Lord. David could not enjoy fellowship with the Lord, and his people in Israel, as he was always on the run, and troubled in His heart. Many of us might say that the best way is for David to kill Saul and get rid of him. However, though David had another opportunity to kill Saul, he did not kill him, but rather appealed to Saul's conscience, and prayed to God. It is in this appeal to Saul and prayer to God, that David valued Saul's life. May God bless His word to understand, from David's faith, what it means to value someone's life, and what it means that the Lord values our lives.

Saul had been enjoying the fruits of David's kindness. David spared his life in the cave when he didn't take matters into his own hands but left it to God saying, "may the Lord be judge". Strangely now, there came the Ziphites who tempted him against David. They whispered into his ear, "Is not David hiding on the hill of Hakilah, which faces Jeshimon?"(1) . Saul listened to them, and therefore set up an ambush against David. So Saul went down to the Desert of Ziph, with his three thousand select Israelite troops, to search there for David. Saul made his camp beside the road on the hill of Hakilah facing Jeshimon (2-3). However, David outsmarted Saul. He stayed in the wilderness, and sent out scouts regarding Saul's whereabouts. He also knew where Saul and his men had lain down. 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(7). There was Saul and his men, sleeping, and unaware that David and Abishai were among them. Saul was sleeping, and next to his head was his spear and a water jug. So Abishai got excited and thought to himself that here was a chance to kill Saul who has been troubling his master David. Look at verse 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 the spear; I won't strike him twice." David however rebuked him sharply. "Don't destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?(9)

Why didn't David kill Saul right there in his sleep? I mean, Saul was defenceless. His army commander Abner, and a host of his bodyguards were all asleep. The Lord had put them into a deep sleep. Yet, David said 'Do not destroy him'. Why? Let us look at our key verse 24 today: As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble. David did not kill Saul because he valued his life. How did David value Saul's life?

David valued Saul's life by respecting God's election, and leaving it all to God. Look at verse 9-11 But David said to Abishai, "Don't destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the LORD's anointed and be guiltless? As surely as the LORD lives," he said, "the LORD himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. But the LORD forbid that I should lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. David referred to Saul as the Lord's anointed a couple of times. In the past, the Lord anointed Saul to be king over Israel, even though Saul would fail dismally. The Lord was grieved and regretted that He had anointed Saul. The Lord removed Saul from this office and appointed David who was after His heart to be king over Israel. We might not understand what God saw in Saul that He anointed and elected him as king. However, David respected the Lord's election, and left it all

for God. He did not take matters into his own hands, but trusted God who, in His great wisdom and power, would manage all. He did not lay a hand on Saul nor did he destroy him, but believed that God is in charge, and in one way or the other, whether Saul would perish in battle or the Lord striking him, the Lord Himself will act. It was not his portion to question God's authority and judge the things of God. No! that was the Lord's portion and right.

Furthermore, how did David value Saul's life? David valued Saul's life by, like a shepherd, drawing him to God. David instructed Abishai not to kill Saul, but rather take the spear and water jug, and leave with it. Then David did something strange. He crossed over to the other side of the camp, and started calling out to Abner in a loud voice at night. Look at verse 13-14. 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?". He began to rebuke Abner for not doing his job well; the job of protecting Saul from his enemies. David and Abishai walked in and took off with the king's spear and water jug that were on the head of the sleeping Saul. If it were the enemies of Saul, they would surely have killed Saul while his army was also sleeping. Look at verse 15-16 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 must 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?" Why is David embarrassing Abner like this? David was very much disappointed at why Abner did not protect Saul. His important duty was to watch out for any threat. However, he and his men were sleeping. This was sign that they did not value much the life of Saul. It for this reason that it was so easy for them to be sleeping. But, it is not that David wanted to judge them and kill them for their poor job, but it is so that he expose their sin, so that they be humble before God. Abner and his men might have felt embarrassed, and scared for their lives. However, it was not for their detriment, but for their salvation. Perhaps Abner and his men can put to bed this mission of pursuing David without any just cause. Perhaps they can be humbled, and their hearts changed to also value not only the life of Saul, but of everyone instead of being used as tools of wickedness. In this way, by shouting and creating a spectacle of a scene, David drew Abner and his men to God by exposing their sin.

David did the same for Saul. Saul's heart has become very stubborn and wicked. If David left Saul in this state, Saul would face the fierce judgement of God. If Saul is not convicted and repentant, much more worse consequences would follow him. But, David could not leave Saul in this state, but like a shepherd, he drew him close to God. He exposed Saul's sin so that his heart is humbled before God as well. Look at verse 18-20, 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, people have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD! They have driven me today 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. David trusted in God's authority, and did not take matters into his own hands. He revealed to Saul what would be of him if he continues on his ways. He would be cursed by the Lord! This is why David gathered evidence to show that even though he had another opportunity to kill him, he however spared his life despite his wickedness. Perhaps Saul would be touched by the kindness and mercy of David to think more about God and repent. Perhaps Saul would be shaken by God's righteousness and seek God's mercy. Perhaps Saul would for once have the fear of God, and change from being ruled by his own mind to being ruled by the Spirit and ways of God. To leave Saul in this state would surely not be in the cause of valuing his life. How can you say you love and care about someone and not bring them to God?

Is there any greater gift to give someone except drawing them to Jesus for the conviction of sin and the salvation of their souls? No! I therefore pray that we might be moved by the heart of David who, like a shepherd, wisely and carefully changed the focus of Saul and Abner to God. David taught Saul and Abner to be mindful about God's righteousness and most importantly God's mercy. When they sin against God, they can also come to God in humility and repentance to receive God's mercy. They can give a sincere prayer offering, and the Lord, out of His great riches of mercy, would pardon their sins and teach them to walk in His ways. What was the result of David drawing Saul to God? Look at verse 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 been terribly wrong." We might not know to what extent was Saul repentant, however we can clearly see that David's counsel touched Saul's heart that he admitted his sin as he said, "I have sinned". This is how we can be encouraged to value our brothers' and sisters' lives when they are drawn to God.

David returned Saul's spear. Look at verse 22 "Here is the king's spear," David answered. "Let one of your young men come over and get it. Can you see how graceful this was? Can you imagine what went in Saul's heart when David returned the spear? He wanted to kill David. However David returns his weapon without vengeance. Many would have thrust that spear into Saul's stomach. But David did not do that. This is the same spear that was taken when Saul and his men were sleeping. I am sure there are many spears we have against one another. We might have spears of hurt, spears of unforgiveness, and spears of vengeance. However, David teaches us not to use such spears, but rather return them back to their owner. Perhaps, the Lord will have mercy and touch the heart of that owner to see his/her wrongs and repent. This is another way of how we should value one another's lives; not to repay evil with evil, but to repay evil with good. And what does the bible say? In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you (Pr 25:22). David sought after a reward from God. He so much wanted to please God than himself, that he was careful not to sin against the Lord, nor cause any harm to Saul. With that, he continued to appeal to Saul's conscience to reconcile his evil ways to those of God. Look at verse 23 The LORD rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. The LORD delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. Yes, the Lord rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. It pleases God that everyone should make all attempts to live righteous and faithful lives before Him. It is also evident how God is displeased when we live our lives in wickedness and sinfulness. He indeed rewards such evil with His sure judgment, and such will perish in their sins. David did not want to go down this route, nor did he wish Saul to go there. He further encouraged Saul, let us read our key verse 24 once again. As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble. David encouraged Saul to repent from his evil ways and value people's lives; not only David's but all people's lives, especially that he was a leader. The Lord is watching, and see all of Saul's ways, even those hidden thoughts. How blessed will Saul be by the Lord when he treats with care and love, all the people of God? How much more will Saul be blessed by the Lord when he considers the lives of all the people as precious, not only in words nor only in thoughts, but most importantly in actions as well? This is how we should value each other's lives.

I am sure some of us might say 'David is way too righteous for my liking, I cannot do what he did'. Let us not forget; David was also as human as we are. We can rather ask ourselves this important question: what inspired David to spare Saul's life, and be so patient with him as though a shepherd and his sheep? Let us read our key verse once again. As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble. David could do this because he was inspired by who God is. Who is God? David found out that God is love, and merciful. Not only did David appeal to Saul, but most importantly so, David prayerfully appealed to God. David believed that as he valued Saul's life, SO may the Lord value his life. Yes, it was a prayer to God showing how much he was inspired and moved by God who also valued his life, including the life of Saul as well. Many of us seek for a purpose and meaning in our lives. We desire and yearn to be special; to be seen and treated as the most precious in this world. We then go out to seek for value; we go out looking for somethings through which we would feel good about

ourselves. Many might go out seeking affection from their boyfriends and girlfriends, many seeking for that special feeling from their careers, studies and being admired by people. Many like Saul derive that meaning and value from their own mind, and what benefit they can get from people. However, this is not where David found his value. He realised how important it is for God to be the definition of his value. What a blessing is it to derive our value from God? How much more special are we when we are affirmed by God Himself? David was drawn to this God, and so much wanted to be valued by Him. This is the faith of David, and that is what inspired him to act in the manner he did.

When we look back at today's passage, what do we see regarding who God is, and His nature? Can we say Saul's life was spared entirely because of David? No! Saul's life was spared because of God. And, David did all these, because of God. God inspired David to mercifully and prayerfully deal with Saul. It was all God. God gave David the wisdom to outfox Saul's ambush. Moreover, God helped David and Abishai enter the Saul's camp by putting into deep sleep Saul and his men. He freely moved in and out of camp without being caught. This was all because of God. So, what can we say? God valued the life of Saul so much! Even though Saul seemed like he was not deserving of God's kindness, God however spared him from the hand of David. Yes, God valued the life of David so much that he did not deliver him into the hands of Saul who had one of the best military soldiers to capture David. Yes! We are all precious in the eyes of the Lord. God values our lives so much, that He desires that we all be inspired by His nature, come to Him, and turn away from our evil ways.

In conclusion, we learn from David's faith how it is important to look at everyone, not with our own eyes, but with the eyes of God. Yes, according to David's human eyes, Saul deserved to be killed, so that he can rest from running away from him. Yes, according to Abishai's eyes, Saul was supposed to be destroyed at one stroke; plunging his head against the ground with his very own spear. Yet, according to God's eyes, Saul's life is precious to God that he is given once again another opportunity to repent and meet God. This is the nature of God that should fuel all our actions and dealings amongst each other and even all the people in the world. May the Holy Spirit touch our heart today and reveal the nature of God to melt our hearts into repentance. May the Holy Spirit reveal who God is, and how much He values all His people so that we can treat them with the same value as God's value. May God bless our ministry to welcome and prayerfully take care of each other with the heart of God unto Salvation. Amen!