

1 Samuel 26:1-25 | “Round Two”
Preached on April 24, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to 1 Samuel 26. *[pause]*

Back in the early 1970’s, there was a well-known boxing rivalry between Muhammed Ali and Joe Frazier.

The first time they met to fight was most highly anticipated, and many people believe it was the most highly anticipated and publicized sporting event in history.¹ *[pause]*

Eventually, Frazier won the first meeting, but then there were fights two and three.

And when they met again those times, the intensity was high, everyone was on the edge of their seat, wondering, “Would Frazier once again get the best of Ali, or would Ali beat Frazier?”
[pause]

Ali won the next two fights, but that rivalry between the two as they met each round is kind of the feeling you get when you read the story in front of us this morning.

But instead of this great rivalry being between two boxers, it’s between two anointed kings.

One was currently reigning, the other was promised to reign. *[pause]*

“Round 1” of their meeting was when Saul went to use the bathroom in a cave, and David had the chance to kill him, but didn’t.

But now we find in our story that David has another chance to kill Saul, and so this is sort of like “Round 2”.

And like the anticipation of Ali-Frazier, we feel the intensity of this meeting once again.

Would David give in and finally kill Saul, or would David once again show restraint and let Saul live? *[pause]*

Let’s READ THE STORY. [read 1-12]

Here go the Ziphites again, trying to turn David into Saul.

And here goes Saul again, trying to kill David, even with the same number of men as before: 3,000. *[pause]*

But this time, it’s a little different.

Before, Saul had accidentally gone to the bathroom in the cave that David was hiding in.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joe_Frazier_vs._Muhammad_Ali.

But this time, David hears of him coming and is able to go on the offensive. *[pause]*

So Saul is sleeping in the middle of his men, while the men are sleeping, too, and David sees this as a good opportunity.

David takes with him his nephew, Abishai, to go down to the camp while they slept. *[pause]*

Just think of the courage and faith needed to walk into the enemy camp like this.

Any little noise and the men could have woken up, but we see that they don't because God had put them in a deep sleep.

Even in a situation like this, God was at work behind-the-scenes, working on David's behalf. *[pauseeee]*

So they come upon Saul, who always has his spear with him, for his spear is stuck in the ground near his head.

And Abishai sees this as a God-given opportunity to kill Saul, just like David's men thought back in the previous time that David had this chance.

But once again, David refuses to kill the Lord's anointed.

And David shows great confidence in God that in some way, God will deal with Saul. *[pause]*

So instead of killing Saul, David takes his spear and water jar and leaves. *[pauseeee]*

Stopping there at the first half of this story, what do we learn?

David did what was right, and that reminds us of the truth that: I can do the right thing as I relate to others because I know that...

A. God will deal with them righteously. (10)

There's a story about a man who was told by his physician, "Yes indeed, you do have rabies."

Upon hearing this, the patient immediately pulled out a pad and pencil and began to write.

Thinking the man was making out his will, the doctor said, "Listen, this doesn't mean you're going to die. There is a cure for rabies."

"Oh, I know that," the man said. "I'm just makin' a list of all the people I'm gonna bite."²
[pause]

Many of us are like that man, where we live by the rule of, "don't get mad, get even." *[pause]*

So often we want to get revenge.

² Source Unknown. Found at: <https://www.family-times.net/illustration/Vengeance/200923/>.

So often we want to deal with the person who hurt us.

There are some of you who may be currently thinking about someone who has hurt you and you have some bitterness in your heart, and you have even pondered ways to get back. *[pause]*

And David has now had a second chance to kill Saul and get revenge for all the times that he has tried to kill him. *[pauseeee]*

It's easy to forget what all Saul had done to David...

He promised his daughter to him, and then gave her to someone else.

He tried to have him killed in battle.

He threw his spear at him multiple times.

He tried to get other people to kill him and even tried to kill him in his sleep.

He sought to hunt him down regularly, so that David was constantly on the run and living in hiding.³ *[pause]*

I doubt many of us could say that an enemy of ours did all of that to us.

Yet some of us say, "I can't just NOT get revenge for all that they did!"

And yet here is David who is able to do it.

So it's possible, isn't it? *[pause]*

This is now the second chance that David had to kill Saul, and it may have been even more tempting...

...For sometimes the second temptation is harder because we feel like we did our part last time.

We think, "I held back last time, and I did so well, so why not give in now?" *[pause]*

David could have even thought, "Look, God must want me to kill him since this is the second time that Saul has been placed into my hands." *[pauseeee]*

But as you think deeply about what happens here with Saul, what is it that helped David not go ahead and get his revenge?

He knew that God would deal with Saul righteously. *[pause]*

Notice what he says in verse 10... "As the Lord lives, the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down to battle and perish." *[pause]*

³ For all of these things look at 1 Samuel 18:10-24:22.

Do you see what David's saying?

He's saying, "I don't need to kill Saul because the Lord will deal with him."

David had utter confidence in the justice and righteousness of God, and because he had such confidence in God, then he could *leave it* with God. *[pause]*

You see, refraining from revenge comes from a belief that God is just.

David knew that God wouldn't just let Saul's murderous attempts slide because it would go against His very character.

And this is something that you need to remember when you have people who do such horrible things to you.

God is just and He cannot let sin slide. *[pause]*

You think this is just an Old Testament thing? Listen to 2 Thessalonians 1:6...

"God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you." *[pauseeee]*

It's such a good thing that we have a just God.

Imagine having an unjust God.

Now that would be a scary thing, for you would never know how He would react to anything.

He could react well to sin and react with judgment to righteousness, but praise Him that He's not like that.

Instead, He's completely just - He will always do what's right and fair. *[pauseeee]*

And the thing that David knew about God was that God knew about Saul's evil.

You know, when you were growing up, your brother or sister did something to you, and sometimes you were worried that they wouldn't get justice because your parents didn't always see what happened, right?

Sometimes the parent is like, "They are telling me opposite stories, I wasn't there, and so I don't know who to believe or what to do."

And then you felt like justice wasn't served. *[pause]*

But the thing about God is that God knows all.

Even if something happens behind closed doors, it's not truly done behind closed doors. *[pauseee]*

So God is just and knows what goes on, but also, He has the power to do justice. *[pause]*

Sometimes people want to do justice, but don't have the power.

Imagine a just judge who couldn't sentence anyone to anything - that wouldn't be very helpful.

But when it comes to God, He is just and has the power, for look at how confident David is in the Lord's power to do what's right.

He gives all of these ways that Saul could die, but he knew God had the power to do each one.
[pause]

This helped David refrain from carrying out vengeance because he knew God had the power to do what he wanted with Saul. [pauseeee]

Christian, God is just and He has the power to carry out justice, so don't take matters into your own hands.

Since He is completely just and has the power, then never fret about the end result.

You can know that justice will be served in the righteous way that God deems best. [pause]

That's the key - knowing that God is just and will act justly in His way. [pause]

If we truly believe that then we realize that we don't need to take vengeance, but we can wait on Him.

We are simply called to do what's right and leave the results to God. [pauseeeee]

David knew that he shouldn't kill, even someone so against him and evil as Saul, he knew that he had to do what was right. [pause]

God tells us not to kill, and so we must value everyone's life, even our enemies.

You see, we aren't just pro-life when it comes to babies in the womb, we are to be pro-life for even our enemies. [pause]

Jesus tells us to love our enemies and to pray for them.⁴

And so we value their lives, just like David valued Saul's life.

We care about them and desire for them to repent and experience God's grace, but we can also trust that if they don't repent and seek God's forgiveness, that God will do what's right.

He will deal with them righteously. [pauseeeee]

David wasn't sure exactly how God would deal with Saul, but he knew He would.

⁴ See Matthew 5:44.

The Lord might strike him, or maybe he would die in battle, or his day would come - but it would happen. *[pause]*

What confidence in the Lord! May we have the same confidence!

As we go through times where people do mean and nasty things to us, may we say, “I don’t know how God will deal with this person, but I know what my responsibility is.”

Do what’s right and trust God with the outcome.

They will have to give an account before God, so we entrust our souls with our faithful Creator and do good.⁵ *[pauseeee]*

Are you dealing with someone who has been mean to you?

Has someone done some horrible things to you or maligned you?

Love them, pray for them, and don’t take vengeance.

Remember that God will deal with them righteously, and in that you can rest. *[pauseeee]*

Let’s move on to the second part of the story, as I pick up READING in verse 13. [read 13-25]

Here we see the conversation between Saul and David after David refrained from killing Saul.

But before he talks to Saul, he calls out Abner for his carelessness in protecting Saul.

It’s kind of like David was showing that he valued Saul’s life more than Saul’s right hand man. *[pause]*

So David shows Saul’s spear and water jar, and once again tries to get Saul to think about why he’s trying to kill someone who is innocent.

He’s just like a flea being chased down by the king.

And also, by pursuing him, they were essentially forcing him away from the Tabernacle and the rest of God’s people. *[pauseeee]*

In response to this, Saul admits that he had sinned and did wrong, for David’s valuing of his life pricked his heart.

And Saul wants David to return home with him, but David doesn’t trust Saul, and simply calls for him to send someone to get his spear. *[pause]*

That’s when David shows great confidence in God’s righteous dealings with him.

⁵ See 1 Peter 4:5,19.

Since he had acted in a good way with Saul, he knew that God wouldn't overlook that, but that the Lord would reward and deliver him in the future. *[pauseeee]*

That was a very quick summary, but what does this second half of the story teach us?

I can do the right thing as I relate to others because I know that...

B. God will deal with me righteously. (23-24)

So not only will God deal with my enemies righteously, but also with me. *[pause]*

Now at first, that may seem like a scary thing: God will deal with me righteously.

And if you have never turned in faith in what Jesus Christ did - that is a very scary thing "for our God is a consuming fire."⁶

And so for the person who has never repented of their sins and trusted in Christ alone, there is only the righteous judgment of eternal punishment for you.

Why? Because that is God acting righteously and justly towards you because you have sinned against a holy God.

And the punishment for sin is death, away from the blessing presence of God for eternity. [pauseeee]

So if we are all sinners, how can David be so confident that God would deal with him righteously and not fear judgment?

How could David say, "The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness," and not fear, remembering that he is not perfect? [pauseeee]

As people living after Christ's coming, we can't help but look to the rest of Scripture to help us fill out this truth.

If each and every sinner deserves Hell since that is God dealing righteously with us, is there any way out of that?

And if there's a way out of that judgment, how can God still deal with us righteously?

Wouldn't He be letting sin slide by not giving sinners what they deserve? [pause]

So what's the answer? Where's our hope?

How can we stand confident under the truth that God will deal with us righteously, like David did?

⁶ Hebrews 12:29.

Is it because of my good works being enough to merit my righteous standing?

No. We can only stand righteous and be confident in how God will treat us because of Christ. [pause]

We have all sinned and we all deserve eternal punishment.

But God sent Jesus Christ to come to this earth and die in our place. [pause]

So his death was actually taking the righteous judgment for my sin, as my sin was placed on Him.

This is why God can be said as being “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”⁷ [pause]

He justly deals with my sin, but he did it by putting forth Christ to take that judgment.

And then because of Christ’s perfect righteousness, and me being in union with him through faith, then that means that Christ’s perfect righteousness is credited to my account. [pause]

So get this: because of our simple faith in what He did, our sin’s penalty is taken care of because He bore it for us.

And because Jesus took my place, then when God looks at me, He sees Christ’s righteousness.

It’s not that I have become actually morally righteous, but that I am *declared* righteous because Jesus interceded for me. [pause]

Christ did the work, I simply receive it by faith - that’s it.

We don’t deserve it, but yet we get to receive it as a gift. [pauseeee]

David had faith in God, and he simply rested in God’s favor.

So David’s hope wasn’t in Saul changing, but in God’s unchangeable character of righteousness. [pauseeee]

This is important: God always deals righteously.

And since Jesus has paid the penalty for my sins and I have been declared righteous in God’s sight, then I will not be condemned.

God *must* and *will* deal righteously, and if I’m in Christ, then I cannot be condemned! [pause]

Praise Him!

⁷ Romans 3:26b.

This is why we can stand confident that God will deal righteously with us because we are eternally safe under Christ's shed blood!

The blood has been spread on our doorpost, and the judgment of death passes over us!⁸ *[pause]*

As you can see, it's not because of our amazingness, or our good works, but simply because of His *grace*.

And so David could stand confident in God's dealing with him because of grace, as the rest of Scripture fills out for us. *[pause]*

But also, David could know that his actions and his faithfulness would be rewarded. *[pause]*

Look again at verse 23...

"The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness *and his faithfulness*." *[pause]*

David knew that God would not overlook his faithfulness.

Isn't that such an encouraging thing?

If we faithfully serve God, God will not just decide to ignore it or forget it.

No way - for He is just and He loves faithfulness to Him.

Your devotion to Christ is never wasted. *[pause]*

This is not a teaching that is often emphasized, but Scripture does show us that our faithfulness to God will be rewarded.

Listen to Hebrews 6:10, "God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do."

Even Jesus says, "whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."⁹

And He says that we should lay up treasures in heaven.¹⁰

Think also of the parable of the talents where Jesus says, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master."¹¹
[pause]

⁸ I'm referring to the Passover here (see Exodus 12:1-13).

⁹ Matthew 10:42.

¹⁰ See Matthew 6:20.

¹¹ Matthew 25:21.

Someday as Christians, we must all stand before Christ and give account for what we have done for him.¹²

This won't be to determine our eternal destination as Christians, but to reward us based on our work for Him. *[pauseeee]*

God will reward our faithfulness.

This faithfulness doesn't gain our standing with God, but is an outworking of our salvation.

That's why Ephesians 2 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *for good works*, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."¹³ *[pauseeeee]*

Now you might think being motivated by getting a reward is wrong, but really, God *wants* to reward us.

And why do we live faithfully? For His glory!

And what's the only reason we can be faithful? Because he empowers us and enables us to do so!

Jesus says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."¹⁴ *[pause]*

So I'm rewarded for my faithfulness, but I'm faithful only because of Christ's work for me and in me!

It all goes back to Him! [pauseeeee]

David knew that God would reward his faithfulness, and we can be confident of the same thing.

Though no one else sees your faithfulness, God does.

Your labor is not in vain!¹⁵

He is just, so He won't overlook the good that you do.

He will deal righteously - always. *[pauseeeee]*

Like David, as we interact with those who do us wrong, we can be confident that God will deal with us righteously.

¹² See 2 Corinthians 5:10.

¹³ Ephesians 2:8-10.

¹⁴ John 15:5.

¹⁵ See 1 Corinthians 15:58.

If we believe in Christ, then He will deal with us righteously because of Christ's shed blood and because of His work, as we stand declared righteous in His sight.

But also, He will deal righteously with us when we respond to our enemies in good, right ways.

He won't overlook that love and kindness shown to them.

He won't forget about the times that you refrained from retaliation, but takes note of it, when we do it for His glory. *[pauseeee]*

So what we see in this story is that...

God will always do what's right, so trust Him!

As you face people who do hurtful and mean things to you, do you ever remember that truth?

Do you ever remember that God will always do what's right?

Leave the person in God's hands, don't seek out revenge.

Love them, pray for them, don't retaliate - and ultimately just give it to God.

He will do what's right, you can count on that. *[pause]*

Will you confidently believe that like David?

Say to God, "I don't know exactly how You will handle this person and when, but I know that You, the Judge of all the earth, will do what's right¹⁶ - and I'm trusting You with it." *[pause]*

Now I've talked about not retaliating, but let me be clear that even though we are called not to retaliate, if someone has committed a crime against you, God has set up governing authorities for the purpose of dealing with those things, so you can trust God and yet still go through the appropriate avenues to deal with crimes.

Going back to our passage, be thankful that God always does what's right because it means that if you believe in Jesus Christ, God sees Christ's righteousness on your account, and you will not be condemned.

This isn't because you are righteous in yourself, but that Christ is righteous for you. *[pause]*

If you have never turned from your sins, and turned in trust in Christ's work alone on your behalf - you can do that today and be forgiven of your sins and declared righteous in God's sight.

Don't delay, but do that this morning. *[pauseeee]*

¹⁶ See Genesis 18:25.

And Christian, don't lose heart as you interact with those against you, for He will reward you for your faithfulness to Him in not seeking revenge for His glory.

So don't lose heart, but live for God, the just One and the gracious One.