

# Tank on an Anthill

The Rise of David Pt.5  
2 Samuel 4:1-12 7-19-2009

Summary: The house of Saul weakens and the collapses. Let the Lord fight your battles – He wins! Amid all the chaos of these opening chapters David ends up king right on schedule. The purpose of God is like a tank going through the anthill of all the various players. One of the ways God takes care of David is through vindication (a good thing to seek from God). But don't just let the Lord fight your battles – also fight His battles (David puts the brothers to death). Of all the characters, the only one who survives is the one guy who is gentle.

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The House of Saul...is a house of cards (because it opposes the true King).....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The house of David and the Strength of God 9-.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Letting the Lord fight your battles 9- 4	
<i>Rivals easily and sovereignly defeated 9-.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Trustworthy Savior - I'll wait for the Lord, thank you.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>A tank on the anthill.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Let go of the house of Saul.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Vindication.....</i>	<i>6</i>
Fighting the Lord's battles 7	
<i>Justice.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>The sword belongs to the state.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<b>Conclusion: The only one left standing.....</b>	<b>9</b>

**2 Samuel 4:1** When Ish-Bosheth son of Saul heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost courage, and all Israel became alarmed. **2** Now Saul's son had two men who were leaders of raiding bands. One was named Baanah and the other Recab; they were sons of Rimmon the Beerothite from the tribe of Benjamin--Beeroth is considered part of Benjamin, **3** because the people of Beeroth fled to Gittaim and have lived there as aliens to this day. **4** (Jonathan son of Saul had a son who was lame in both feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled, but as she hurried to leave, he fell and became crippled. His name was Mephibosheth.) **5** Now Recab and Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, set out for the house of Ish-Bosheth, and they arrived there in the heat of the day while he was taking his noonday rest. **6** They went into the inner part of the house as if to get some wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Recab and his brother Baanah slipped away. **7** They had gone into the house while he was lying on the bed in his bedroom. After they stabbed and killed him, they cut off his head. Taking it with them, they traveled all night by way of the Arabah. **8** They brought the head of Ish-Bosheth to David at Hebron and said to the king, "Here is the head of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, your enemy, who tried to take your life. This day the LORD has avenged my lord the king against Saul and his offspring." **9** David answered Recab and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, "As surely as the LORD lives, who has delivered me out of all trouble, **10** when a man told me, 'Saul is dead,' and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and put him to death in Ziklag. That was the reward I gave him for his news! **11** How much more--when wicked men have killed an innocent man in his own house and on his own bed--should I not now demand his blood from your hand and rid the earth of you!" **12** So David gave an order to his men, and they killed them. They cut off their hands and feet and hung the bodies by the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-Bosheth and buried it in Abner's tomb at Hebron.

## Introduction

The heart and soul of this chapter is verse 9.

**9 David answered ...**"As surely as the LORD lives, who has delivered me out of all trouble...

That little piece of theology – thinking of God as the one who delivers from all trouble – that simple truth can unlock doors of sanctification and godliness that in the past have seemed impossible to open. If you struggle with anger or vengeance or bitterness or selfishness or worry, or if no matter how hard you try you

just cannot find it in you to forgive someone, this principle can change your life. God is the God who delivers from all trouble. But first things first – let’s start with verse 1.

## **The House of Saul...is a house of cards (because it opposes the true King)**

We left off last week with the murder of Abner, who was the military commander of the north in Israel.

**4:1 When the son of Saul heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost courage, and all Israel became alarmed.**

When Abner died, King Ish-Bosheth’s already rickety kingdom lost the one last little bit of strength it had. Abner was the only remaining power propping up what was left of the house of Saul. And so when news of his death reaches Ish-Bosheth and the rest of Israel up north it is no surprise that they are alarmed and disheartened. That phrase translated “lost courage” is an idiom that means all his inner strength just went limp. Ish-Bosheth was already kind of a wimp and now he turns into a complete noodle and it says **all Israel became alarmed**. They lost their powerhouse general and now they are left with nothing but their noodle king.

And it is not just the loss of Abner that is so scary. What is really scary is that he died in Hebron. The last these people heard, Abner was headed down to Hebron to try to arrange a covenant with David. After years and years of trying to kill David, and then establishing a rival king against David, and then fighting against him in a civil war and killing his nephew, Abner goes down there to try to broker a deal with David. That is the last thing these people heard, and now the news comes - Abner’s dead. He went down to Hebron to see if he could broker some kind of peace deal with David and he never made it back alive. That is why they are alarmed. If David said no to the deal, and he is just out for blood, the northern tribes who have been fighting against David are in real trouble. They would have been in real trouble even with Abner, but without him – they are in big time danger.

The opening chapters of 1 Samuel chronicle the collapse of the house of Saul. And that is the way the writer wants us to think about this – that northern kingdom is the house of Saul. That is why almost every time you see the name Ish-Bosheth it is followed by “the son of Saul.”

**2 Samuel 2:8 Abner... the commander of Saul's army, had taken Ish-Bosheth son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim.**

**2 Samuel 2:10 Ish-Bosheth son of Saul was forty years old when he became king**

**2 Samuel 2:12 Abner son of Ner, together with the men of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, left Mahanaim and went to Gibeon.**

There it is not even referring to Ish-Bosheth – just to his men. Abner and the men of Ish-Bosheth (who, by the way, is the son of Saul)...

**2 Samuel 2:15 So they stood up and were counted off--twelve men for Benjamin and Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, and twelve for David.**

**2 Samuel 3:14 Then David sent messengers to Ish-Bosheth son of Saul,**

**2 Samuel 4:8 They ...said to the king, "Here is the head of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul**

The only times when his name is mentioned without the phrase “son of Saul” is when there is some other reference in the paragraph to the fact that Saul was his father. The writer wants you to think of the northern kingdom as being the remnant of the house of Saul. In fact, the name Ish-Bosheth is not in the Hebrew in verse 1. The translations just throw it in there so you don’t get confused. But the Hebrew just says, “Saul’s son.” And verse 2 starts the same way:

## **2 Now Saul's son had two men...**

The writer wants us to see what is happening to the house of Saul. And it is not a pretty picture.

It is about to collapse altogether, but before that happens the writer wants to introduce some new characters into this drama.

## **2 Now Saul's son had two men who were leaders of raiding bands. One was named Baanah and the other Recab; they were sons of Rimmon the Beerothite from the tribe of Benjamin**

They were brothers – Recab and Baanah. It says Ish-Bosheth “had” these men. They were his. They were from his tribe, serving as leaders in his army – they were his men.

OK, so Ish-Bosheth had these two leaders – so what? Well, before we get to that, the writer wants to introduce us to one other person.

## **4 (Jonathan son of Saul had a son who was lame in both feet.**

Again – he makes the connection with the house of Saul. Jonathan (who, by the way, was also a son of Saul) had a son. This little guy was healthy up to age 5. That day of the big battle with the Philistines Jonathan woke up early in the morning, gathered up all his gear, kissed his wife goodbye, and gathered up his little kindergartener son in his arms and hugged him like a man hugs a son that he knows he may never see again, and who may have to grow up without a father. And sure enough, late that afternoon a runner came with the heart-stopping news – Saul and Jonathan are dead – the Philistines routed our forces, they are on their way – run!!! And the babysitter taking care of little Johnny Jr. knew the Philistines would make a bee-line to the house of any male descendent of Saul, and so she scrambled as fast as she could move.

## **4 ...He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled, but as she hurried to leave, he fell and became crippled. His name was Mephibosheth.)**

Must have been quite a fall. My kids all took some terrible falls at that age – off rocks, swing sets, bicycle crashes, down the stairs – and they were always good as new the next day. But this fall made him permanently crippled for the rest of his life. He must have broken both feet or ankles and they did not set them properly and he never walked again.

Now that is the last we hear about little Mephibosheth in this chapter – nothing else is said about him. In fact, he does not surface in the story until chapter 9. That is part of the style of this writer. He likes to introduce things into the narrative early on as an indicator that he is going to come into play later. He did that with the death of Samuel in 1 Samuel 25 – mentioned it without any comment, and then three chapters later we saw the significance.

So it is part of his style, but I think there is another reason. The writer’s purpose in this section is to show us the pathetic picture of the weakness of the house of Saul. So in the middle of the description he lets us know about the one other remaining member of Saul’s house (besides Ish-Bosheth). And if Ish-Bosheth was weak, this Mephibosheth was *really* weak – a child and lame in both feet.

Ok, so what about these two leaders, Recab and Baanah?

## **5 Now Recab and Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, set out for the house of Ish-Bosheth, and they arrived there in the heat of the day while he was taking his noonday rest.**

So the weak, wimpy noodle-king is in bed sawing logs in the middle of the day.

Ish-Bosheth really is a pathetic character. The only recorded things that he accomplished in his life are...in chapter 3 he is afraid of Abner after a conflict. Then he instantly caves in to David’s demand for Michal. Then he is afraid when he hears of Abner’s death. Then he takes a nap in the middle of the day. Those are the exploits of King Ish-Bosheth. He is like the ultimate underachiever.

**6 They went into the inner part of the house as if to get some wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Recab and his brother Baanah slipped away. 7 They had gone into the house while he was lying on the bed in his bedroom. After they stabbed and killed him, they cut off his head.**

That is interesting – he tells us about the assassination twice. It is like he shows it in verse 6 and then gives an instant replay in slow motion. In verse 6 they stab him, then in verse 7 they stab him, kill him, and decapitate him.

**7 ...Taking [his head] with them, they traveled all night by way of the Arabah. 8 They brought the head of Ish-Bosheth to David at Hebron and said to the king, "Here is the head of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, your enemy, who tried to take your life."**

## **The house of David and the Strength of God 9-**

### **Letting the Lord fight your battles 9-**

#### ***Rivals easily and sovereignly defeated 9-***

Now every obstacle or rival to the throne is eliminated. Saul – dead. Saul's sons – dead. Abner – dead. The army of the northern kingdom – weakened and eliminated as a threat. King Ish-Bosheth – dead. And out of all those, how many did David eliminate? None. God did it all. In some cases He did it directly, in other cases He used the evil actions of sinful men, but it was all done by the hand of God.

#### ***Trustworthy Savior - I'll wait for the Lord, thank you***

So here these two brothers stand, holding Ish-Bosheth's head, thinking they are going to get a big reward for David for helping him gain control in the north. And it is at the point that David makes the statement in verse 9 where he refers to God as "The Lord who has delivered me from all trouble." That is not incidental. David never referred to God that way at any other time – why does he do it here? It seems to me that David is implying that the killing of Ish-Bosheth was a failure to recognize God as the one who delivers from all trouble. When you take matters into your own hands and violate God's Word in order to escape from trouble, you are failing to appreciate the fact that it is God alone who delivers from all trouble. Any time a person sins in order to avoid trouble or get out of trouble that person is looking to that sin as his deliverer and savior rather than God.

But David would not do that. No matter how many more years of delay it would add, David refused to look to anyone or anything other than God as his deliverer. And God rewarded that by delivering David from all his troubles. That is what happens when you let the Lord fight your battles instead of trying to fight them yourself. When the Lord fights your battles, He wins. The writer of Samuel makes it clear that the house of Saul is not really defeated by David. It just sort of evaporates. It is not that David goes up and conquers them. The power structures just fall away piece by piece and then the people willingly come over to David in chapter 5.

#### ***A tank on the anthill***

When you read the opening chapters of 2 Samuel you find yourself wondering - what are we to make of all this craziness going on in these chapters? What is the writer's point? The momentum keeps switching back and forth and back and forth and it all seems to be going in one direction and then in another, and pretty much every character in the whole story is a renegade wildcard. Abner is opposing David, but then joins David to suit his own ends, but then gets killed. Asahel runs into trouble. Joab defeats the enemy and then corners them, but then lets them go at the last minute. David works out a deal with Ish-Bosheth and Abner, but then Joab flares up and kills Abner completely against David's wishes. Then Ish-Bosheth is assassinated out of the blue. The whole story just seems to spin out of control. Things seem to be going the right way, then someone does something dumb and turns everything around, and then someone else goes off, and the whole thing is a mess.

And yet, with all the chaos and confusion and treachery and back-stabbing (and front-stabbing) and lying and fighting and killing and everything else - while all the characters involved are all doing their own crazy thing, the whole time the purposes of God move steadily ahead completely unhindered by all the chaos or craziness of the characters in the story. In one sense it is like David and Abner and Ish-Bosheth, and Joab and

all the others are like a bunch of ants scurrying around, and God's purpose is like a tank just steadily, slowly advancing to its destination without being pushed off course in the slightest by any of the ants. God's plan to bring David to the throne moves forward like a giant machine that cannot be stopped or slowed down or diverted in any way. From the human perspective the plan seems to have been derailed a hundred times, and yet when you arrive in chapter 5 David is crowned king with the support of all the people right on schedule. You can trust in the God who delivers from all troubles because His purposes cannot be hindered.

**Psalm 115:3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.**

In Psalm 2:4, when all the powerful kings of the earth pool all their might and power together to break free of God's sovereign rule, the One enthroned in heaven just laughs at them.

**Psalm 135:6 The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.**

**Isaiah 46:9 I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. 10 ... I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. 11 ... What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.**

**Daniel 4:35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"**

**Ephesians 1:11 [He] works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will**

Is somebody causing chaos in your life right now? Do you have some renegade wildcards running amuck and messing everything up? They are messing nothing up. They are ants banging against a tank.

Do they have you upset? Afraid? Worried? Angry? Let me ask you something – has God made any promises to you? He promised to put David on the throne of Israel; has He made any promises to you? Has He said to you, "I will be with you always – even to the end of the age"? Has He promised to be a Shepherd to you who will make you lie down in green pastures and lead you beside quiet waters and restore your soul and comfort you in the valley of the shadow of death? Hasn't He promised to use all the pain and sorrow in your life for your good - to conform you to the image of His Son? Hasn't He promised to supply you with the all the strength you need to handle what He gives you? Is He still a refuge and fortress and ever present help in trouble, so that even if the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea and your whole world collapses in a heap of rubble you can say, "I will not be afraid; the Lord is with me. What can man do to me"? Didn't He promise that the Father, who cares for the flowers of the field and the birds of the air and supplies food for them every single day will much more provide for and take care of you because you are much more valuable than they?

Every one of those promises is an unstoppable tank. And those people in your life who seem to be derailing everything are so many gnats banging against the side of the tank. He is the Lord, who delivers from all trouble.

***Let go of the house of Saul***

When you let the Lord fight your battles, the Lord wins big every time. And that is a wonderful comfort – most of the time. The one time when it is not a comfort is when God is fighting against you. Make sure you are not part of the house of Saul when it goes down. The house of Saul in the northern kingdom went the world's way and followed Abner and Ish-Bosheth and the south went God's way and followed David. They did that because at the beginning the world's way always seems so much better – stronger, more promising. And God's way just does not seem like it could possibly be as good. But before long the mirage disappears and the way of the world is shown to be the dead end that it is. But waiting until then to wake up to reality results in disaster – the time to jump ship on the house of Saul is right now.

Maybe there is something in your life right now that you know, deep down, is not what God wants you to be doing. It is not God's way. It is the house of Saul. And you know it is not God's way, but you just cannot

imagine giving it up. God's way just seems impossible. It seems like you would be so unhappy if you left the house of Saul and went over to God's way. It would cost you something you just cannot imagine giving up. Like a grudge. Or some security. Or your dignity. Or comfort. Or fun.

Learn from Israel – the house of Saul is a house of cards. There is nothing for you down that road. And if your plan is to go down that road just a little longer and then get back on track – don't kid yourself. Every step further down that road you go you makes it that much more unlikely that you will ever be willing to repent, and that much more painful it will be if you ever do. The price tag that comes along with knowingly disobeying God is never, ever worth it. Whatever you are getting from that sin will not be worth the damage you invite into your life, and the difficulty in restoring closeness to God. Trust the Lord, who delivers from all trouble, to fight your battles.

### ***Vindication***

If you do that God will take care of you. And one of the things he will take care of will be your reputation. I am convinced that one of the main purposes of the books of Samuel is to show that David was innocent in the way he rose to the throne. He was not guilty of treason, he was never unfaithful to Saul or Israel, he did not help the Philistines, he did not conduct raids against Israel, he had nothing to do with Saul's death, it was not his fault that he could not be there to help fight, he was enraged when the man claimed to be the one to kill Saul, he taught all of Judah to grieve over Saul's death, he did not start the civil war, he had nothing to do with Abner's death, or Ish-Bosheth's death, and he punished those who did. You get the impression that there were a lot of accusations floating around about David, and the writer of 1 and 2 Samuel is working hard to put them to rest.

But keep in mind – Samuel was not written until long after David was dead. It was written in the time of the divided kingdom – after Solomon's time. So during his lifetime David had to live with the fact that a lot of people believed he was guilty of things that he was not guilty of. That is why when you read his psalms, vindication is such big deal.

**Psalm 41:6 Whenever one comes to see me, he speaks falsely, while his heart gathers slander; then he goes out and spreads it abroad. 7 All my enemies whisper together against me**

**Psalm 26:1 Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have led a blameless life**

**Psalm 43:1 Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause**

**Psalm 54:1 Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might.**

**Psalm 7:2 or they will tear me like a lion and rip me to pieces with no one to rescue me. 3 O LORD my God, if I have done this and there is guilt on my hands-- 4 if I have done evil to him who is at peace with me or without cause have robbed my foe-- 5 then let my enemy pursue and overtake me; let him trample my life to the ground and make me sleep in the dust. Selah 6 Arise, O LORD, in your anger; rise up against the rage of my enemies. Awake, my God; decree justice. 7 Let the assembled peoples gather around you. Rule over them from on high; 8 let the LORD judge the peoples. Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity, O Most High. 9 O righteous God, who searches minds and hearts, bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure.**

**Psalm 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.**

That is only a very small sampling. There are many, many more.

Why is vindication so important? When you are wrongly accused, or someone else gets the credit for something you did, there is something inside you that just cries out for that to be made right. My first year of college I wrote a paper on Psalm 119, and I really worked hard on it. It was not supposed to be a major paper, but it was something I was really interested in so I put a lot of time and effort into it – probably 5 or 10 times as much time as would have been expected. And I developed what seemed to me to be a pretty good analysis of the psalm. And the professor gave me a failing grade because I did not cite the source. He assumed I must

have just taken it all from some book, and pretended it was my own work, and so he gave me a low grade. I did not get it from any book – it was all my own original research, but he did not believe me. I remember that bothered me so much. I still ended up doing fine in that class, but it just bothered me that my professor believed I was guilty of something I was not guilty of.

And that was just a paper in school. Some of you have suffered a lot worse injustices than that. And you know how when that happens everything in you just cries out for vindication. And that is good. Scripture teaches us to look to God for vindication. But why? Why is it important that my name be cleared? My name, and my glory, and my renown are of zero importance. So why do I need vindication? It is good that God gives it because it shows His love and mercy and justice. But why should I seek it?

As I said, there are scores and scores of passages in the Psalms that teach us to seek vindication. We do not have time to do a full-blown study of those, but I will just tell you what I found in studying them. In those psalms I see three reasons to seek vindication from God.

First, because we have made the Lord our refuge. If we put all our hope in Him and He does not come through, that would dishonor His name.

### **Psalms 71:1 In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame.**

A second reason it is good to seek vindication from God has to do with the way that God gives us vindication. The primary way God vindicates you is by associating Himself with you. Generally God does not vindicate you by just by making an announcement or sending out a memo that says you were in the right. He does it by drawing near to you in fellowship and honoring you by pouring out favor and blessing upon you in front of everyone. When God grants you His favor and blessing, what He is doing is placing His great hand on your shoulder and announcing to everyone: “She’s with Me! And I approve of her.”

Now, if being associated with Jesus Christ does not really mean all that much to you, then this is no big deal. But if you love God then nothing could make you happier. And if you are happy about being associated with Christ, that shows his favor to be supremely desirable, and that glorifies Him.

### **Psalm 86:17 Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame**

David just wanted God to give some indication that David had God’s favor – that was the only thing that mattered to David.

So it is good to seek vindication from God because we have made the Lord our refuge and His name is on the line. Secondly it is good to seek vindication from God because it honors Him when we desire His favor above all. And then a third reason – it is good to seek vindication from God because it is good to enjoy God’s blessings if you delight in God. God vindicates us because it is an expression of His love, mercy, and justice. All three of those are attributes of God, and it is always good to desire to experience attributes of God. Just as it honors Tracy when I look at her because I want to enjoy her beauty, or I spend time with her because I want to enjoy her personality, so it honors God when we desire to enjoy an experience of His presence.

But how do you know if you are seeking blessings from God out of desire for fellowship with God, or if you are just using God to get what you want? How do you know if you are seeking vindication because of concern for God’s name or if you are just worried about your name? The answer is this - when you seek your own glory you are never happy unless it comes on your terms in your timing. But when you crave God’s love and justice you are happy and content to receive it in God’s timing and in whatever form He sees fit to give it.

### **Fighting the Lord’s battles**

When David speaks to these two guys and refers to God as the one who delivers him from all troubles, what he is doing is refusing their method.

“No, I will not go the way of assassinations to claw my way to the throne. I will just wait for the Lord, thank you.”

You can see the deep lines of character cut in David by the years of waiting for the Lord and suffering. Especially the lessons God taught him through Abigail, where he learned about letting the Lord fight his battles. If God had not taught him that back then, can you imagine how many times David might have

shipwrecked himself? All the times when he had the opportunity to fight his own battles? But David learned to leave that to God, so he did. And God won.

But that is not the end of the story. We need to learn to let the Lord fight our battles, but that is not a license to sit around doing nothing. Remember what Abigail said to David? She reminded him to fight the Lord's battles. Let the Lord fight your battles and you fight the Lord's battles. And that is what David is about to do.

### *Justice*

The banana brothers murdered an innocent man in his sleep, and David is the only king left in Israel, so justice is his responsibility so he is going to punish these guys. But they think he is going to reward them. They obviously did not know David very well. Look what they say to him:

*Not everyone who claims to be from God is*

**8 ...This day the LORD has avenged my lord the king against Saul and his offspring."**

The Lord did it. Once again we see someone do a sinful action and then attribute it to the Lord. People do that all the time. They do not want to acknowledge their sin, but they still want to be a Christian, so they just imagine what they are doing is OK with God. I spoke with a man not long ago who was leaving his wife. I asked him if he had biblical grounds and he said no, but the Lord would understand. God doesn't want me to be unhappy, and this is what I need to be happy, therefore God will allow it – even if Scripture doesn't. That is folly in the extreme. God does not allow anything Scripture does not allow. But the heart of sinful man resists God's Word and then tries to morph God into his own image so that God approves of pretty much anything he thinks he needs to be happy.

It is an exceedingly evil thing to attribute something to God that God did not say or do. Some people attribute just about every thought that comes into their mind to God. "God told me this" and "God told me to tell you this." Be very careful what you attribute to God lest you be guilty of using His name in vain. And just because you have a strong feeling or sense that God is leading you to do or say something does not mean He is. God will definitely not lead you to do or say anything that is in conflict with His Word or with the principles of wisdom. And if it is God leading you He will do so by means of Scripture and wisdom, so you should be able to show the rest of us from Scripture why that path is the wise path.

Well, these guys try to say it was God, but David does not fall for that.

**9 David answered Recab and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, "As surely as the LORD lives, who has delivered me out of all trouble, 10 when a man told me, 'Saul is dead,' and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and put him to death in Ziklag. That was the reward I gave him for his news!**

So David says, "Hey, one thing you should know about me – I kill people who do that. If someone so much as thinks it is good news that Saul or someone in Saul's family has died – he's a dead man."

**11 How much more--when wicked men have killed an innocent man in his own house and on his own bed--should I not now demand his blood from your hand and rid the earth of you!"**

They were even more deserving of punishment than the Amalekite who claimed to have killed Saul. Saul was dying on the battlefield; Ish-Bosheth was just sleeping in his bed. They just murdered an innocent man. That is not to say he was innocent of all wrongdoing – just that he was innocent with respect to these two men. He had not harmed them, was not threatening them or anything like that. This was completely unprovoked.

**12 So David gave an order to his men, and they killed them. They cut off their hands and feet and hung the bodies by the pool in Hebron.**

David is getting tired of people murdering and then thinking they are doing him a favor. So he hangs these guys' bodies up as an example so everyone knows not to do this anymore.



Most leaders are zealous about punishing their opponents when they break the law. And some leaders are conscientious about punishing criminals in general. But very rarely is a leader zealous about punishing those who help him gain power. Every election cycle in our country you hear about some politician who gets elected with the help of some questionable organization, and the next thing you know legislation is being passed that directs a lot of public money toward that organization. That happens all the time in this country and it has happened in every country for thousands of years, but it did not happen in David's administration. If anything David was harsher in punishing those people who tried to help him gain power through illicit means than in punishing people for crime in general.

### ***The sword belongs to the state***

And if you are confused about why David will not kill his enemies, and he gets so upset about people killing Saul and Abner and Ish-Bosheth, but then on the other hand he does not hesitate to put these two men to death, you need to understand the difference between murder and execution. Not all killing is the same. According to Romans 13:4 the government has been given the sword. The sword is the instrument of execution. They have the right and responsibility to punish wrongdoers – even to the point of putting them to death if it is a capital crime. That is one of the first principles of human justice ever given.

### **Genesis 9:6 Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.**

If you murder you must die because murder is an assault on the image of God. So David not only puts these men to death, but he dishonors their bodies by hanging them up. But he honors Ish-Bosheth's body.

### **12 ...But they took the head of Ish-Bosheth and buried it in Abner's tomb at Hebron.**

Why did he do that? Was Ish-Bosheth a great warrior like Abner? No. Was he the Lord's anointed, like Saul? No. Was he a friend of David's like Jonathan? No. So why does David show him honor? One simple reason – remember when David cut off the corner of Saul's robe in the cave but let Saul go?

**1 Samuel 24:19 May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today. 20 I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. 21 Now swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's family." 22 So David gave his oath to Saul.**

David swore an oath to Saul that he would have mercy on Saul's descendants.

## **Conclusion: The only one left standing**

It struck me this week how out of this whole cast of characters – David, Saul, Abner, Joab, Ish-Bosheth, the Amalekite, Recab and Baanah – the only one who survives is the one guy who was gentle and kind to his enemies. The whole account is a story of killing and counter-killing. And in each case it ends up with David punishing the guilty party. Saul dies, and David punishes the Amalekite with death. Abner kills Asahel, and Joab kills Abner, and then David punishes Joab. Ish-Bosheth is killed, and David executes his killers.

So David always punishes those who harm his enemies, but it is never David attacking his enemies. As we saw last week – David is gentle. He is the only one in the whole drama who is gentle, and he is the only one of the group who survives. Everyone who fought to destroy his enemies ended up being destroyed, but the one person who let the Lord fight his battles ended up being the only one who survived.

The reason it is so hard to let the Lord fight our battles is because of fear. If I don't protect myself, if I don't punish the person, if I don't do something to make that person pay – I am going to just keep on getting hurt. If I don't do something, they will never learn their lesson. They will never change. Letting God fight your battles and taking the way of gentleness is scary. But God can be trusted. He wins His battles. The way of self-protection and anger and retaliation and vengeance and grudges – that is the house of Saul and it is a house of cards. It seems stronger and safer than the way of gentleness and humility and trust in God, but it is the way of Saul and Abner and Ish-Bosheth. God's purposes for you are a tank on an anthill. Your husband's foolishness

or harshness or laziness is not going to hinder it in the slightest. Your boss, your parents – whoever it is you are tempted to be angry with – you can afford to take the way of gentleness – the way of David – the way of Christ. You can afford to take the way of letting God fight your battles because He never loses. And that frees you up to stop worrying about protecting yourself and fix all your attention on fighting the Lord's battles, which will have eternal impact. When the evil one tempts you to fight your own battles and chain yourself to the house of Saul just remember verse 9. As surely as the LORD lives, who has delivered me out of all trouble, I do not have to resort to sinful means of self-protection.

**Benediction: 2 Thessalonians 3:16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.**