

David's Exile

Text: 1 Samuel 29

Beloved Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, in these chapters of 1 Samuel, there is a great mix-up! David had been running from Saul, who was king of Israel. Saul had rejected the Lord, and so the Lord told him he would be replaced by a new king. God commanded Samuel to anoint David to be king. Saul therefore hated David, and relentlessly 穷追不舍 pursued David in order to kill him.

David had displayed much faith in God. But in Ch. 27, David makes a compromise 妥协. He decides it would be better to go and live among the enemies of God so that he could be safe from Saul. But then comes a battle between the Philistines and Israel.

Moral compromise leads to much confusion. But despite the confusion God makes some things clear--so clear that even the enemies can see. The Lord reveals in a number of ways that He does not abandon His purpose to reveal Himself through His servant.

1. The Argument Reveals God's Power

Vs. 1 tells us that the Philistines were gathering their armies at Aphek. Aphek is in southwest Israel on the way to Shunness where the battle with Israel would occur. Here the five lords of Philistia from the five great cities of Philistia gather together with their armies. The Israelite armies prepare a fountain near Jezreel--close to where they would meet the Philistines in war.

The Philistine armies in organized fashion pass in front of each other. Achish, (a Philistine commander and king of the city of Gath) introduces his army, and they march 游行 in procession, with David and his men behind. Achish had made David his bodyguard. Achish had said to David: "You know assuredly that you and your men will go out with me to battle" (28:1). David had been telling Achish many lies to make Achish believe that he was now an enemy of Israel.

But as these Israelites come marching up, what is the reaction? (2-3) "What are these Hebrews doing here?...Make this fellow return, that he may go back to the place which you have appointed for him, and do not let him go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become our adversary 恐怕也在陣上反為我們的敵人. For with what could he reconcile himself to his master, if not with the heads of these men?"

They add: (5) "Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?" This is the chorus that the Israelite ladies sang, quite a while ago, when David and Saul returned from slaughtering 宰杀 the Philistines in battle. The Philistines are in fear of this man. They have an argument with Achish that tells us about God's power at work in David. Here it is the enemy that tells us about the great power of God—they fear.

The writer of 1 Samuel wants us to compare King Saul and David. Saul is the king that the people wanted in their sin. He is not a man of faith in God, and not a picture of Jesus Christ in His power. Saul fails in all that he does. He fails to arrest or kill David because God's protection surrounds David. In the previous chapter Saul still will not humble himself before God and repent of his sins, but yet he seeks to know God's will through one of God's prophets, Samuel. He goes to a witch in order to communicate 交流 with Samuel's spirit. But when God tells him he is rejected by God and he will the next day in battle, he falls on his face and he loses all strength.

Romans 5:6 describes the one apart from salvation: without strength. Every man who will not submit in repentance and faith to God is without power to stand before God. They will come to nothing but condemnation 定罪. But the one who trusts in the Lord is made strong, through Jesus Christ. In Christ, you are able to fight against temptation and sin. Even the enemies of God and His people see Christ's power in believers—that they are made able by God to continue in faith even in the most severe trials. This is because Jesus Christ, the great David, being God, conquered 克服 the powers of sin, death, and evil on the cross.

2. The Defence Reveals God's Grace

Achish did not simply give in to the Philistines objections. When the other Philistine soldiers ask, "Who are these Hebrews?" He answers: (3) "Is this not David, the servant of Saul king of Israel, who has been with me these days, or these years? And to this day I have found no fault in him since he defected to me."

Although David had been deceiving Achish by his lies, Achish also saw how he behaved before him every day. There must have been much concerning him that caused Achish to think so highly of him. In fact, when Achish returns to David to inform him that he will have to go back, he says to David: (6) "Surely, as the LORD lives, you have been upright, and your going out and your coming in with me in the army is good in my sight. For to this day I have not found evil in you since the day of your coming to me. Nevertheless the lords do not favor you."

Achish even used God's personal name: Yahweh. We have no reason to believe that Achish became a believer, but through David, he had come to know about the Lord. God's grace continues to work at the strangest of times. David was not right with the Lord in all things here. Yet, King Achish notices how righteous he is. We see God's grace at work in David.

There's a pattern here for us too. Achish came to learn about the Lord through David. What about us? Are we concerned for God's grace to be evident in us? Even those in your workplace should be able to see that you are one of Christ's because you are honest, you are not derisive 嘲弄, you are caring, diligent, you do not sit in the seat of the scoffers 嘲笑者. Do they see Christ in you?

3. The Resolution Reveals God's Sovereignty

David is upset that Achish has given in to the Philistines. Achish says he may not go. David says (8) "But what have I done? And to this day what have you found in your servant as long as I have been with you, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?"

There is a question of whether David is genuine. The author does not tell us what was going on in his heart and mind, nor do his words betray anything. Whatever the level of David's honesty, we can see that David has blacklidden 背道 deep. It is a sinful and messy situation. He now is at the point of battle against God and His people.

Compromise will bring you to the wrong side, into a pathetic 可悲 situation like David was, saying terrible things! If you make decisions apart from the truths of God's Word, apart from the principles of faith in Jesus Christ, you will find yourself fighting against the Lord.

But that's not how the story ends. Achish says: "I know that you are as good in my sight as an angel of God; nevertheless the princes of the Philistines have said, 'He shall not go up with us to the battle.'" (9-10) God turns around the situation., even though God's servant has wandered 游荡 and is about to disqualify himself forever from being king over Israel. He employs His power and control to set right the situation.

Believers see God's sovereignty 主权. God's sovereignty is His control over all things in all situations. He demonstrated 展示 His sovereignty by sending Jesus Christ into this world, who revealed His power over Satan and sin by conquering them on the cross. He demonstrates His sovereignty in our lives by delivering us from our sin through the Holy Spirit. He is able to save us from compromise! We must put our faith in the Lord and obey Him in the hardest situations.

Looking back, we see that it was the Lord who kept us. He even at times, in His covenant grace, has reached out and brought us back to the right side! He does so by means of breaking us down for our sin, bringing us to tears, by means of a kind friend in the Lord, or by means of the words of the enemy himself-- turn us around and bring us back, to fight the battle on the right side.

We must take to heart the warning to not compromise, but we also are comforted in God's sovereign and gracious reach in our lives. Amen.