

David's Return

Text: 1 Samuel 30

Beloved Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Amalekites were a people who troubled Israel on their way to Canaan, first attacking them at Rephidim, but also striking at the weak and elderly who were walking at the end of the caravan(驼队, 旅行队). The Amalekites were a miserable curse. Saul was commanded to wipe them out but did not. In ch. 28, David makes raids on the Amalekites, wiping out the entire village each time, leaving no survivors.

In this chapter, the Amalekites rise up again. It is clear that they are enemies of God and His people because of their rebellion against God. But there have been other things in David's life that were not clear.

David had decided his life had been in too much danger from King Saul, who had been chasing him. He had decided it would be better for him to go to Philistia--and off he went with his 600 men. But then the kings of the Philistine cities decided it was time to attack Israel again. David decided he had better go with the Philistines. But God did not let that happen. So David and his men must leave Aphek and head back home to Ziklag. This is the story about David's return.

1. Returning Home

A terrible tragedy awaits David and his men. David and his men ride into Ziklag. No children or wives ran to meet them. Rather, what met their eyes was smoking ruins. The Amalekites took everything.

There is enough evidence for us to conclude that this happened because David compromised. Lack of faith often leads to compromise (妥协), which often leads to confusion. David had been raiding the Amalekites, as well as other tribes. He had undoubtedly provoked (惹怒) them, and perhaps they had found out who had done these raids. David had also been lying to Achish about these raids. He had not been truthful. He had been compromising--sinning against God. Now came the consequence.

They were now alone against whoever this enemy was. What do they do? Vs. 4: "Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep." Then, to add to the loss, David was greatly distressed because the men spoke of stoning him (6).

What ugly tragedies happen to people here in this world! How can it be that such a thing can happen? David is alone. He has alienated (使疏远) himself from Israelite, Philistine, and now his own men turn on him. (Ps. 25:19) Consider my enemies, for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred. At times, the Lord lets us hit rock-bottom, but for a purpose. He lets us experience distress, sorrow, and tragedy.

Sometimes it is because our hearts have wandered from their resting place in the Lord. When we have turned from Him, we do not want to confess it. Like David, we harden ourselves against the Lord. We even engage in acts of worship to ease our consciences.

To David the Lord added sorrow to sorrow until a great sorrow knocked him down. When this happens, there will be only darkness and separation, unless we return to the Lord, in whom there is mercy and grace. Remember at such at times, that though you may have wandered far, the Lord is not so far that He cannot hear when you cry out to Him.

2. Returning to the Lord

(6) "...David encouraged himself in the LORD his God." These words tells us that David did not just

cry. Indeed, there is a time to weep. But weeping does nothing for the heart. It might be a way of processing emotions and grief, but how does it give light and life to the heart that is filled with sorrow, discouragement, depression, and perhaps filled with sin and distrust?

If David had only wept, he would have been no different than Saul. Saul also expressed his distress. He wept when Samuel declared that God had rejected him as king since he had rejected the Lord. In ch. 28, after he went to a witch and asked her to bring up the dead prophet Samuel to help him in his distress, he laid himself out on the ground in hopelessness. He had no desire left to live. But yet, he would not repent of his sins and so he found no encouragement in the Lord.

David encouraged himself in the Lord. He not only cried out to the Lord, but by his psalms we can be sure he confessed his sin. Repentance, a hatred of his sin, would have marked his return to the Lord: Ps. 38:1-5 O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, nor chasten (惩罚) me in Your hot displeasure! ...There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger, nor any health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds are foul (恶臭的) and festering (溃烂的) because of my foolishness. Is the Lord allowing you to suffer because you have wandered from Him? Turn to Him and confess your sins and repent (悔改) .

These words also speak of the Lord's response. God is gracious and forgiving. He will pardon (原谅) a thousand sins. Ps. 86:5 For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.

It tells us too, of the fact that David's faith is restored in the Lord. David encouraged himself in the Jehovah his God. It is not the god of the Philistines, but the God who has made a relationship with His people and promised salvation and life. God had promised David that He would give the kingdom of Israel to him and his children. As David before had confidence that God would fulfill His Word as desperate as the present situation was, so now he looks to the Lord as his God. By this we see that David is a true child of God. Only one who has faith in God would be encouraged in the Lord. God is faithful!

You might be discouraged by griefs or disappointments. You might wonder how it can be that the Lord, who is good, allows such things to happen to you. But in turning to Him with all your heart, have you then yielded yourself to His Word? Do you look to Him as YOUR God? the God who has saved you? Do you trust that He is faithful, that to those who delight themselves in Him, He will give them the desires of their heart? That He will withhold no good things from those who walk uprightly?

David believes the Lord and so he then inquires of the Lord. "Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them?" (8) And the Lord says "Go, you shall!" David believes the Lord and so he is courageous. He obeys, and the rest of the chapter tells us of how the Lord makes him strong and victorious.

Through severe sorrows, the Lord has brought back his servant. We see that though sorrows may overwhelm us, the goodness of the Lord will be seen by those who seek after Him. He is a God who can work through these things, using them for your good.

He is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lay dead and forsaken (被抛弃) , almost forgotten in the grave. But He rose and brought life and salvation through His death. Through the severe sorrows and tragedies of Jesus Christ, He has given us life and hope! Encourage yourselves then in the Lord, like David did. Amen.