

WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 44

CLOUDY DAYS ... DARK NIGHTS

1 Samuel 27: 1-30

Introduction

There are some really low points in the career of David. One of them came towards the end of how outlaw period. The long pursuit of Saul was wearing him down and looking after a growing band of men who were already discontented or in some kind of distress was taking its toll. Despite David's vindication over Nabal, life wasn't all tranquillity and joy. Unending demands. Constant tension. Increasing danger. How long was God going to keep David on the run? We can understand how he might have slipped into a pit of despair, crying wearily to God. Read Psalm 13: 1-2

- Is there anything ethically, morally or spiritually wrong with those feelings of despair that chill us like an unexpected down-pour?
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Read 1 Samuel 27: 1-12

- What usually happens when we take matters into our own hands and flee to a cover of our own choosing—a course of action that David took in 1 Samuel 27?
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- Given King Achish's latest encounter with David (1 Samuel 21: 10-15), how do you think Achish felt about David's arrival and settlement in Gath?

- Fleeing to Philistia was like running into a lion's den to escape a bear. What are some unwise places we run to in order to escape our fears and troubles?

- David could remain in Judah, trusting in the One who had been a constant shield around him. At the very least, he could wait on the Lord for direction. How easy it is for us to justify our actions by saying "But I had no other choice?"

At critical times in the past, David usually consulted the Lord. (see 23: 2,4). It seems out of character for him to look within for direction. Where is the prophet Gad (see 22:5)? Has David forgotten Abiathar's ephod that helped him make a decision before (see 23:9-12)?

- What was David's motive for totally annihilating those whom he raided? Was David justified in raiding the out-lying towns?

- When we feed our fears like David did, they grow until they consume our faith in God. In what ways can we keep our fears under control?
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Read 1 Samuel 29: 1-11

- David's lies worked well - too well. David has Achish so convinced that he was loyal to the Philistines that Achish enlisted him in the fight against Israel. For David to fight with the Philistines against Saul would have jeopardised his chances of becoming king. How did God save David from his own foolish mistakes (29: 3-11)??
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- Why do you think God intervened?
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Meyer vividly pictures the moment of truth in David's life:

"In that dread hour, with the charred embers smoking at his feet ... anxiety for the fate of his wives ...; with the sense of duplicity and deceit which he had been practising, and which had alienated him from God, on his conscience; with this threat of stoning in his ears, his heart suddenly sprang back into its old resting-place in the bosom of God."

- What was God teaching David through the Ziiklag experience?
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- How do you think “David found strength in the Lord?” (v.6b)

- What is the lesson in God teaching you through David’s example?

The Way Back

“David strengthened himself in the Lord, his God (verse 6). He turned right around to what he had long known but recently ignored. He opened heart, mind, soul and strength to God. There was no one else to whom he could go but to the Lord, and he was humble enough to go. We do not have the exact prayer he used, but its elements must be scattered throughout the Psalms.

Whatever the words David used, the effect was immediate. He called the priest who had served him in earlier days and urged him to ask the Lord whether or not he should go after the raiders.

This was a great change! He was ready to pursue and recover what had been taken, or if the Lord wished, to accept his loss - and along with it, perhaps even the threat of death by stoning. If the mark of true repentance is the willingness to face and accept the consequences of our actions, David was repentant that day at Ziklag, for he was ready to bear with meekness the hand of God. He did not struggle to assert himself and move heaven and earth to get back to where he had been.”

Tom Houston