

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic.,
3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 20A

FIRST SAMUEL

CHAPTER 30

INTRODUCTION

This chapter struck a wonderful note. David's trust in the LORD was severely tested and he passed the test with flying colours.

In God's dealings with David, his anointed successor to king Saul (whom He rejected because of his disobedience and stubbornness), the LORD showed His providential care and protection. All who look to Him and remember His promises and His covenant (which He reveals in His Word) should trust and obey Him completely. God's people are not exempted from trials and tribulations -- sometimes our own brethren can be the source of these trials. Sometimes troubles come one after another, each one more intense than the previous one -- causing us to doubt whether God knows or cares. What should we do when we find ourselves in such a situation? Who do we turn to? The answers to these questions can be found in this lesson.

The study falls naturally into two sections: (1) David's despair over Ziklag and (2) his eventual recovery as related in chapter 30. Apart from the main lesson of knowing more about God and His relationship with

His people, there are many other practical lessons for us concerning our relationship with others.

COMMENTARY

**David Encouraged Himself in the
LORD—30:1-6**

David and his men were not allowed to join the Philistines in their battle against Israel. The Philistines did not trust David and feared that he might turn against them in the midst of the battle. It was a providential deliverance insofar as David was concerned for it saved him from a very difficult dilemma. David must be elated and relieved that he was able to get out of a near impossible situation without a scratch. He and his men rejoiced as they made their way back to their families and loved ones in Ziklag.

David and his men travelled back to Ziklag from Aphek, a journey of about 60 miles (96 kilometres). It took them three days. It was a tiresome and long journey, marching to Aphek and then back to Ziklag.

When they finally arrived in Ziklag, they found to their horror that their wives and children were gone and their city completely destroyed. Apparently, David had taken all the men with him leaving the women folk and children unprotected. Their enemies had taken advantage of the situation and invaded the city, burning the houses and taking with them all the women, children, cattle and sheep. They did not kill the women and children as they could be sold as slaves. All of them were taken captives.

David and his men were overwhelmed with grief. David's two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, had

also been taken as captives. David too was in great distress. The men spoke of stoning him -- they held him responsible for the disaster. He had made the decision to take all the men leaving none to protect the place. From a mountain top experience of joy, the men were suddenly plunged into the deepest despair. One moment they were praising the LORD for their deliverance. The next moment they were faced with the loss of all their dear ones. They could not accept it so they lashed out at their leader.

But David encouraged himself in the LORD *his* God (30:6b). It is significant that he called the LORD (YAHWEH) as his personal God. The word "encouraged" in Hebrew is the same word which Jonathan had used when he went to David in the woods and "strengthened his hand in God" (23:16). Exactly, how did David encourage himself in the LORD his God? Jonathan helped us to understand this when he strengthened David's hand in God. He directed David to the promises of God. He reminded him that his father Saul would never be able to find him and kill him because the LORD has promised that he would be king over Israel. So, David encouraged himself in the LORD his God by remembering the promises of the LORD, the covenant made with Him, and the numerous occasions when the LORD had providentially delivered him. The LORD his God was very personal to him because of his vital personal experiential knowledge.

It is the best encouragement a Christian can ever hope for. No matter how strong our love, we cannot be there for our loved ones 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and

every second of the day. But the LORD can. He was there for David. This was the final and most extreme test for David. He had been cast out of Israel, his beloved homeland. His parents had to be sent to Moab for their own protection. His first wife was given to another man. His families and wives had all been captured. His loyal men who had shared his "fate" as fugitives had turned against him. David was truly alone for the very first time in his life without a single soul to help him. But he had God. That was the priceless lesson David needed to learn and the test he needed to pass before he become the next king of Israel. As king, his office would require him to be alone in many of the decision making. But David needed to realize that he would not be truly alone. The LORD God would always be there to guide, protect and comfort him. The LORD will never be too early or too late. His timing will always be perfect.

David Recovered All—30:7-20

David summoned Abiathar, the priest, who had the ephod. David enquired of the LORD whether he should pursue the invaders, and whether he could overtake them, "*And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.*" (30:8) The LORD gave him the green light and assured him that he would surely overtake the invaders and recover all!

This matter of rescuing one's family seemed to be a no brainer and yet David asked the LORD before he went. In other words, if the LORD had said no, David was prepared to live without his family members.

Thus no matter how much we want something, we must bring it before God's presence to seek His will before acting. David did not take anything for granted. This act would help him avoid a very difficult situation at the end of the chapter. He was not aware of this "situation" but what he did here come in very handy in getting out of an ugly problem among his own men.

David took his 600 men with him. They must have heard what the LORD had said through the ephod. They obeyed David. At this point, David did not know that it was the Amalekites who had invaded Ziklag.

At the brook Besor, 200 of his men could not continue because they were utterly exhausted. The long journey back from Aphek and the rapid pace to overtake the invaders had taken their toll. The 200 soldiers remained in Besor while David continued with the remaining 400 men. It was not that they did not wish to go but they were utterly exhausted.

On the way, the men found an Egyptian whom they brought to David. It was a good thing that they did not kill him. He was half dead anyway for he had not eaten or drunk for three days. They gave him food, water, a piece of a cake made of figs and two clusters of raisins. The Egyptian revived and was able to talk. He was a young man from Egypt, a slave of an Amalekite. His master had left him to die because he was sick. He testified that the Amalekites had invaded the southern region, the western coastal area which belonged to Judah, and further inland which belonged to Caleb, and burned Ziklag. David asked him whether he could lead them to the

Amalekites. The Egyptian agreed to do so on the condition that they do not kill him or return him to his Amalekite master.

Led by the Egyptian slave, David and his men came to where the Amalekites were camping. They saw that the Amalekites were indulging themselves in merry-making — eating, drinking, and dancing because of the great booty that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines and the land of Judah (30:16). David waited until twilight giving his men some rest.¹ The attack on the Amalekites lasted until the evening of the next day (past three o'clock in the afternoon before six). The inspired writer described David's victory in a most emphatic way: "David smote them . . . David recovered all . . . David rescued . . . David recovered . . . David took . . ." (30:17-20). David not only rescued and recovered all the women, children and livestock that had been carried away, he also took over the possessions of the Amalekites! It was David's spoil -- the honour belonged to him just had the earlier blame for the destruction of their city.

God gave David the victory. It was a total victory with no casualty or loss on the part of David and his men. They recovered all that they had lost and more.

¹ Twilight is translated "dawn" in Job 7:4 (*When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day.*) and Psalm 119:147 (*I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.*)

David's Principle of Sharing— 30:21-31

On their return, the 200 men who rested at the brook Besor came out to welcome David and his men. David greeted them and ordered that the spoils be shared with them too. There were elements among David's men who were "wicked and worthless [*men of Belial*]" (30:22). They protested that these 200 men who did not participate in the battle should not receive any of the spoils. But David reasoned that the spoils had been given by the LORD who had preserved them and given them the victory over the Amalekites. He instructed that all the 600 men should receive the same portion. David's principle became law in Israel. If David had not prayed and consulted the LORD, he would be hard pressed to reply to the argument of these men of Belial. Why should the 200 men who did not fight have a part of the spoils? Why should the 400 men who risked their lives share their spoils? If they had obtained the victory themselves with their own strength without the LORD, then they would have a very good case. But since the victory belonged to God, David had an indefensible argument. David simply stated that it was God who gave them the victory. They did not achieve it on their own strength and abilities. This stopped all their arguments immediately.

Upon his return to Ziklag, David divided his spoils and sent portions to the elders in Judah, even to his friends, saying, "Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD" (30:26). He also sent portions to the people of Bethel, to those who were in south Ramoth, to those who were in Jattir, in Aroer, in Siphmoth, in Eshtemoa, in Rachal, in the cities

of the Jerahmeelites, and to the Kenites, to those in Hormah, in Choraschan, and in Athach; and to those in Hebron, and all the places where he himself and his men had gone in their fugitive days. It must have been a great plunder to be able to share with so many. His spoils must have included camels, sheep, oxen and other animals, gold and silver, clothing and other personal property. David's gesture created a strong bond with these people who were his supporters and friends in his time of need. He remembered them for the kindness which they had showed to him. In return he won their continued friendship and support. Some of these people probably lost some of their goods to the Amalekites. "*We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which belongeth to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire.*" (30:14)

There were a few reasons for David's gesture. First, it was perhaps justice meted out by the future king to return what really belonged to the Jews. Second, it was probably diplomacy as the future king needed to win the hearts of the Jews. Third, it might be due to David's heritage as he too came from the tribe of Judah.

PRACTICAL VALUE

It is true that nothing "terrible" will ever happen to God's people. God is sovereign and even the wrath of wicked men will be turned around for God's glory and the good of God's children. This is also the promise of Roman 8:28. The events by themselves may be onerous but when combined with the grace and mercies of God, they may turn out for the best in the believer's life.

In preparing David for the throne, God put him through severe testing. David showed us that we are in dire straits, it is best to turn to the LORD. We need to know the Almighty God and Creator of the universe as our personal God and remember His goodness and greatness in our personal lives -- the times when He had provided for us and protected us from our enemies. In this way, we can encourage and strengthen ourselves in the LORD.

We see how God had providentially sent David the Egyptian slave who was able to tell him who had destroyed their city, and where they had gone. It was not a matter of chance or luck. The Amalekites did not kill the Egyptian slave because they thought that he was as good as dead. David's men found him not by chance.

David argued that the spoils were the gifts of God because they had prayed for God's help from the very beginning of their campaign. If they had not done so, the knowledge that the spoils belonged to God would be hard to accept. Every Christian should imbibe the importance and necessity of prayer. Without prayer it is impossible for the Christian to acknowledge that every good and perfect gift comes from the LORD. We ought to share what we have with those who are in need. The LORD has bestowed upon us and made us stewards of His riches. Each of us has been blessed differently. We ought to share and build one another up.

AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 1 Samuel 30:1-10; Hebrews 4:16.

Tuesday: 1 Samuel 30:11-20; Proverbs 3:3-8.

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 30:21-31; 1 Peter 4:9-10.

Thursday: 1 Samuel 30:1-31.

Friday: 1 Samuel 30:1-31.

Analysis

Text	Practical Value
1 Samuel 30:1-10	
1 Samuel 30:11-20	
1 Samuel 30:21-31	

Discussion Questions

1. Why did God allow the "calamity" to occur in David's and his men's life?

2. To be rejected by your enemy is one thing but to be rejected by your own men is an entirely different matter. Have you been betrayed before in your life? How did you deal with it?

3. Was it surprising that David's men wanted to stone him?

4. What can we learn about spiritual guidance and Christian living from David?

5. What principles can we glean from the sharing of the "spoils" of war? How can this be applied in the context of the church?

6. What can we learn about God in chapter 30?
