

Sowing Kindness and Compassion

Call to Worship: Psalm 67

1st Scripture: Luke 18:15-17, 35-43

2nd Scripture: 1 Samuel 30:21-31

Hymn# (Supp.): *Give Thanks*

Hymn Insert- *In Christ Alone*

Hymn #27 (Supp.): *Be Thou My Vision*

Introduction:

Once again, David and his men have witnessed the great and glorious power of God, as they return home with everything that was taken by the Amalekites. All of their wives, all of their children, and all of their possessions...not a single thing was left missing! Everything about this military success, spoke loudly of the invisible God, who had supported them. David, when he was without any strength of his own; when both the circumstances and even his own men had begun to turn in on him, "David strengthened himself in the Lord his God!" He invested every bit of confidence he had, in God; he got up, inquired of God, pressed forward...and God delivered! God met David's faith with His glorious blessing!

This morning, we join David and his men, as they journey home, and most specifically, when they meet up with the two hundred, on the other side of the Brook Besor, who, because of great weariness, were unable to go to war with David and the four hundred men, who were with him. A great conflict arises, which Israel's future king must step in and resolve. And what virtuous quality might we expect to find, breaking out of the "man after God's own heart," as he seeks to resolve this conflict, in a "God-honoring" way? And furthermore, David makes a unique and wise decision, to use some of the surplus spoils for a purpose, that will later serve to help place him on the throne of Israel.

I. The Conflict [Read verses 21-22]

And so, what is the conflict that arises? David and the four hundred, meet back up with the two hundred, who were too weary to fight, and who wound up staying by the Brook Besor. Following David's greeting of the two hundred, we are told that some of the men, who went with David to fight, had refused to give any of the spoil to the two hundred, who did not fight. Obviously, they were upset, that the two hundred did not come with them, and so, they refused to give them anything more than their wives and children back. Even what they had lost, possession wise, would not be given back to them, since they did not fight to earn it back.

Clearly, there was a selfish attitude, and a deep lack of compassion and mercy, found within the heart of these men. And furthermore, they had already forgotten, that God was the One who gave them the victory, which they had just obtained.

Notice, the text tells us that these men were, "wicked and worthless fellows" (vs. 22). This is the precise way in which Eli's sons (Hophni and Phinehas--1 Sam. 2:12), and Nabal (1 Sam. 25:25) were described, as well. Clearly, we are meant to see here, that even among David's men, there were some, who had wicked and ill intentions all along. There were Judas Iscariots in the mix. This ought to caution us to realize, once again, that opposition does not always come from *outside* of the church. Often times, you will find the wicked on the *inside*, as well. But God has a way of drawing them out, doesn't He? Here, we find that one of the (probably many) purposes for which God had ordained to leave two hundred men behind (without strength), was to expose the hearts of the wicked and worthless men, among David's army. This situation presented a golden opportunity for testing the hearts of David's men, and the ungodly were drawn right to the bait. God desires mercy and not sacrifice, and clearly, these men, like the religious leaders of our Lord's time, had no mercy to offer the needy. An eye, which is fixed on self and self-interests alone, rather than God's interests, will always gravitate in that direction. Again, as I have stated often in the past, one of the key evidences of conversion; one of the true marks of the new birth, is an eye that looks outward toward the needs of others. Indeed, the soul which is drawn to Christ, will inevitably begin to die to self, adopting the interests of Christ as his own.

And so, here is the dilemma. All of the wicked and worthless men, come forward, refusing to restore any of the possessions belonging to the two hundred, giving them their wives and children alone, and bidding them farewell. And as these men would foolishly and carelessly rend the army asunder and drive a wedge between them and those who had stayed behind, we find David caught in the middle of this, having to resolve a new and delicate problem. What then does David do? How does he respond?

II. David's Response to the Conflict [Read verses 23-25]

What then is David's response here, and his main argument in support of this response? David brings forth an essential reminder, which these wicked men have failed to acknowledge, namely, that God was the One who delivered them; that God was the One who gave them the

victory over their enemies; that God was the One who preserved them, and therefore, that God was the One to whom, all of these possessions belonged. You see, the great sin of these men, which warrants the Scriptures harsh description of them as "wicked and worthless," was not merely their lack of compassion for their weary brothers. Indeed, that was a very serious problem. But furthermore, these men failed to consider the fact that God was the One who wholly owned the victory, which they had achieved. Their present attitudes manifested the fact, that they were convinced that they were the ones who had brought about this great victory, thereby meriting all of the possessions they had gained, for themselves. They failed to see God's hand in all of this, and that is the greatest problem, which has erupted in all of this. There is nothing worse than benefitting from God, in any fashion, and then attributing that benefit to anything else but God, especially one's self. Their view of the two hundred, only confirmed what was hidden in their hearts. These men were gross idolaters!

How does this great form of idolatry manifest itself today? Well, every human being is born in this state, for starters. When we boast in our own abilities, talents, looks, strength, intelligence...etc, rather than recognize that God is the One who has designed us for His glory; when we look down on others in any sense, or think that we are naturally better than anyone else in any sense, we evidence the same curse, do we not? All of these things carry the thick root of pride. However, we would be remiss to think that these types of things do not make their way into the church, in any sense, even among genuine believers. When we boast in the gifts which God has given us (as if they just somehow existed within us or as if we have invented or developed them on our own), when we look down upon our brethren in any sense, when we magnify the sins of others (as if they come from a uniquely fallen mold in Adam), when we consider ourselves as righteous (in any sense) apart from Christ, we likewise exhibit the remaining traces of that which filled these wicked men.

And so, David brings these men face to face with the truth. "Now, wait a minute here! Look fellas, I think we are forgetting something very important here. These things; these things were not gained by our own wisdom or strength. God has acted on our behalf. He has delivered our enemies into our hand, and He has returned these possessions to us. These are not "our" things, particularly the items, which used to belong to the two hundred men, who stayed back at the Brook Besor, out of exhaustion." "And because they are God's; because we have merited nothing in this battle; because this victory was clearly the Lords, all possessions will be restored

to their rightful owners. In fact, when we go out to war, from now on, those who wait back with the supplies, will obtain an equal share in whatever spoils, we gain from the battle." "We will show compassion to our brethren, and we will acknowledge our God, who gives us every victory, by doing this, as long as I am in charge." And we are further told, that this practice continued onward, right up to the present day, when the Book of 1 Samuel was written. It became a statute and an ordinance (a law) in Israel.

And brethren, what then is a key principle, which we can take from David's response here? Is it not that, those who consciously recognize how the sovereign grace of God has met them personally, will be very quick to be considerate of, and show compassion towards, others? David was well aware of the fact that he was an unworthy object of God's sovereign grace. He took a risk by casting all of his recent cares and anxieties upon God, and God met him, and delivered him, in the fullest sense. David knew that in whatever he did, he was merely an unprofitable servant. God is no man's debtor, and yet He graciously prospered David. Having gotten everything back (and then some), how could he dare keep back from anyone else, in light of God's abundant grace toward him? You see, those who find it most difficult to show compassion toward others, hardly grasp the reality of God's love and grace toward unworthy sinners like us! When we see ourselves in the position of the blind beggar, and Christ stops and gives us sight, we will be very slow to shush others, who find themselves in the same desperate predicament. When we truly and properly comprehend the time in which Christ invests in communing with us, we will be slow to hold back the mothers, who rush forth to have Jesus bless their little ones.

And so, David rightly responds to the present conflict by bringing the reality of "God" into the equation, and then calling forth an ordinance of compassion toward, and unity with, those who are part of the body, though not directly involved in the immediate battle. And in doing so; in sowing a seed of compassion here, we can presume that David reaped great respect and honor from the very men, who were just preparing to stone him at the outset of this most recent dilemma. David's base, which seemed to be collapsing, by God's good providence, was actually made stronger, as David persevered in his walk with the Lord!

III. Sowing Kindness [Read verses 26-31]

Here, we find that David sows another seed of virtue. This time, he sows acts of generosity and kindness. Rather than keep all of the spoils to himself, we are told that he sends portions to various cities in Judah, especially to those who have shown him favor throughout the times of his fleeing as a fugitive from Saul. Indeed, there were those who knew of David's innocence, and who willingly supported and helped David, at the risk of their own lives, as he and his men, passed through their lands, fleeing from one place to another. Here, David remembers them, and rewards their kindness, with his own kindness.

There are three points of interest that I want to note here, before moving on to consider a few final thoughts and applications:

1- Note, the names of the cities listed here; the cities of the Jerahmeelites and the Kenites, along with several cities of southern Judah. These were the very same places, which David had told Achish, he was raiding. [Read 1 Samuel 27:10]. Here we find that the very cities, which David pretended to raid all along, when he was really raiding the heathen lands of the Amalekites, the Girzites and the Geshurites, are the cities to whom he sends portions of the spoil, here in our present text. The irony itself is worth noting. Achish, king of Gath, thought that David was making himself a stench to the people of Israel, driving a deep wedge between him and them, so as to ensure that David would remain loyal to the Philistines forever. And here, we find David doing the very opposite, which brings us to a second, major point of interest.

2- By sending these gifts to his brethren throughout Southern Judah, David is further securing the favor of his people, which will all the more gain their support, when he is brought to the throne, at the soon appointed time. His reign begins in Judah, and he is specifically made king in Hebron (vs. 31 & 2 Samuel 2:1-4). And so, David, by sowing kindness here, will soon reap a great advantage, when he is made king later on.

3- In verse 16, we saw last time, that Ziklag was not the only place, which the Amalekites had raided. While we are not given specific locations, we are told that they had taken spoils from the land of Judah as well. And we would not be foolish to presume that these places were located in southern Judah, which is where the Amalekites would have been most strategically positioned to attack, nor would we be foolish to presume that at least some of the cities listed here, were the very cities attacked by the Amalekites. And so, David's acts of generosity and kindness, would further advance upon those cities, which have suffered loss to the Amalekites.

At the least, it is worth noting how God would have used the timing of all of this, as a means of bringing David back into the land, which he was forced to leave, because of Saul's madness.

[Note: David calls the Amalekites, "the enemies *of the Lord*"]

IV. Concluding Thoughts and Applications

Brethren, let us then conclude by considering three applications, taken from all that we have just gone over:

1) Notice again, brethren, another glorious display of the sovereignty of God, here! Who is running the show in history? God! All things are working right in accord with the glorious design of His perfect will. David is about as far away from the throne as possible. He is a fugitive in a foreign land, even in the land of Israel's greatest enemies; indeed, the very people who David himself had shown up, on numerous occasions. The Philistines knew who David was, the whole time. His reputation had gone before him, but in a negative way, to them. And David hits rock bottom at Ziklag, where everything is lost, and his foundation is about to crumble, as even his own men are turning on him, about to stone him to death. But, I believe we are given a climax in those glorious words; those words, which are meant to beam forth in bright neon lights, right into our own 21st century hearts; "But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God!" What a wonderful message for us, brethren! What a wonderful invitation given us, by God, to cast our lives into the center of His invisible reality, even upon the reality of our crucified, risen and presently reigning Savior! And David and his men, after providentially happening upon an abandoned Egyptian slave of an Amalekite, overcome the Amalekites, and regain everything that was lost, and more! Is God speaking to us here, brethren, or what!

And now David, by sowing an act of compassion to the two hundred, and an act of generous kindness to cities in Southern Judah, is by the grace of God, being drawn to obtain the promise! The promise, which seemed so far off, is on the horizon! Saul is at war with the Philistines, and he will be killed very soon. All of the pieces are being put in place, David is being elevated to the throne, and there is One Person who knew it all, who knows it all, right from the beginning, namely, the Living God. None of these things; not a single strand of history; not a sparrow falling to the ground or a hair falling from the head, is a surprise to God. And here, God's ordained time is pressing toward David, and what once seemed impossible from the standpoint of man, is merely carried forth according to the will of God! A divine promise is

reaching its fulfillment! Isaac is about to be born! The Israelites are about to enter Canaan! David is about to be king! The Messiah is about to arrive! The Messiah, though crucified and dead, is about to rise again! Brethren, carry all of this over to the promises, the many, many promises we have in Christ, and see that no created thing, can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus! Indeed, are we in Philistine territory? God will set a table right there for us! He will grant us rest, in the very presence of our enemies! The raven that fed Elijah will feed us! Behold yet again, the wisdom and sovereignty of God...and ascribe to Him His due and proper worship! Our tragedies are God's glorious opportunities for blaring forth the light of His glory!

2) Consider again the outward focus of David. In the midst of all of that spoil; surrounded by all manner of possessions and wealth...a man always living on the run; a man living in caves and foreign lands; a man who could easily covet health insurance and life insurance, does what? Gives to those who were too weary to fight! And sends gifts to several cities in Judah! Who is David thinking about often? Is it not others? And does this not reflect the greater glory of the coming Son of David!?

3) David sowed compassion; David sowed kindness and generosity, and in due time he will also reap from what he has sown. These will later work to his advantage, as we have already considered. [Read Galatians 6:7-10]

What does your "field of life" look like? Brethren, what are you sowing? At home, at work, amongst family members, here in church? To the unsaved: "Don't be deceived, God is not mocked..." your field will bring forth what you have sown!"

AMEN!!!

Jude 1:24-25