

MAY 21

This is one of those days to celebrate. With today's reading, you have read the first nine books of the Old Testament.

1 Samuel 29-31

1 Samuel 29

Vs. 1-5 God saved David at the last minute. You know that David would not have fought against Saul and Israel. David must have discussed with his men what they would do if it came to a fight. The way that God was with David, in a fight, David would have torn the Philistines apart.

Notice that the other kings of the Philistines were well aware of David's reputation.

Vs. 6-11 David was sent home and threw a fake fit for Achish. This is all ironic, and David's lack of honesty, even in this situation, seems wrong to me.

I guess this is all to say for us as disciples, if God gets us in a jam, He will get us out, or show us what to do.

1 Samuel 30

Vs. 1-6 This looks like things going from bad to worse. It took three days to get back to Ziklag. They had been away for six days. Everyone had lost their wife and sons and daughters. The note says they were all taken alive, so there were no bodies lying around; and again, God engineered this so no one died. David thought he had known bad, but now the men were so bitter they wanted to kill him too.

But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God. Psalm 27 is a psalm of David, written sometime during all of his running. The last line is very instructive and deep, and there might be a slight qualifying phrase in it. It says, *Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.* (Ps. 27:14, KJV) That line, *be of good courage*, is important.

If we really believe God loves us and is sovereign, it gives us what we need to strengthen ourselves in the Lord. Being of good courage shows that our hope is set on God, that our treasure is in heaven and that Jesus is the one we are following in this life. Sometimes it takes suffering in the wilderness to strip away the things that we've acquired to support us and define us. The wilderness and suffering are used by the Lord to bring us back to reality. The reality is that we have been saved from judgment and hell by the blood and sacrifice of our Lord. The reality is that this world will end and that lost people desperately need to be presented with the gospel. We have been saved to be complete in Him and work in His harvest. Our strength is in Him.

Vs. 7-10 I wonder if David had also asked the Lord about going to the fight with the Philistines. Somehow I don't think he did. But here, pushed by personal tragedy, and at his wits' end, he went to the Lord. When will we ever learn? Disciples need to learn to pray desperately before they get pushed to desperation by circumstances.

Vs. 11-20 This was a miracle, complete with God leaving bread crumbs (Ok, *an Egyptian*) for David to follow. They not only regained all their families alive, but they won the lottery. They were suddenly rich. Imagine the happy reunions. Imagine 400 Jewish men singing, "If I were a rich man." Well, maybe not that last one.

Vs. 21-25 Notice how David dealt with these *worthless fellows*. Every group/church gets some of these complainers. Saul didn't have the gumption for dealing with them. David does a great job. David actually made it a *statute* - those who guarded the fort should get the same amount as those who fought.

Vs. 26-31 David apparently was protecting these Judean towns the same way he had been protecting Nabal's sheep. David had so much, that he sent gifts to these towns. More importantly, David understood that the Lord had blessed them and given them the victory.

With everything that happened here, there was a happy ending. Now, why did God allow this to happen? I think it was to keep David and his men occupied with a personal emergency so they wouldn't be wondering how the battle was going and if they should go rescue Saul. By the time David and his men returned with their families to Ziklag and then rebuilt the city enough to live in it, the fight was over. God had taken care of the situation without David. Having begun the rebuilding of Ziklag, unknown to them, they would soon be leaving.

1 Samuel 31

Vs. 1-7 This was a very sad day for Israel. If David had been there, no doubt, the battle would have been won, but the problem would have gone on too. The Lord took care of things.

I would feel bad for Jonathan, but then, what is to feel bad about? After those few minutes of pain, he was welcomed by God (I'll bet he got a bro-hug), given a new body, a place to sit and rest with something nice and cool to drink. Obviously God knew that if Jonathan had lived, there would be problems in establishing David's kingdom. I think Jonathan was OK with how this turned out.

V. 4 Notice that Saul's own *armor bearer* was afraid, even in these circumstances, to put his hand against God's anointed. Note this, because David will soon get news from someone who didn't have this same respect.

V. 5 Take note of what is said here. It clearly says in the text that Saul was dead. Remember that.

Vs. 8-13 The Philistines dishonored the bodies, but the men from Jabesh-gilead slipped in and brought the bodies to be buried. Do you remember what Jabesh-gilead has to do with Saul?

The running was finally over. God protected David and judged Saul and did things His way. David had no guilt for sinning to avenge himself. For ten years David lived the words that Paul/Spirit would write in Romans 12:19-21, *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."* Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

With God's help, David was able to do this. These words, however, are for us, Christ's disciples, as we follow Him in the harvest, reaching out to the sinning, and making disciples, who make disciples. As we work in the harvest we get battered and have lots to forgive, but the love of our Lord refreshes our hearts and we rest in Him, knowing He is in control.

John 11:54-12:19

John 11:54-57

After Jesus raised/recreated Lazarus, He and His disciples went about 15 miles north of Bethany and Jerusalem to stay away from the Jewish leaders. Being on the edge of the wilderness, it would have been easy for them to escape, if need be.

Since the Passover was a major event, people got there early and began looking for Jesus. He usually taught on the temple grounds.

John 12:1-19

This is the week that Jesus will die.

Vs. 1-8 There is a little difference of opinion regarding when Mary anointed Jesus. It could have been here, on Saturday when He arrived, or it could have been Wednesday evening. At this point, it isn't important when it happened, only that it happened.

V. 3 This Mary is not the woman who did this earlier in the house of Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7; but this Mary, a rich woman with a good reputation, humbled herself to imitate that woman, a sinner, and anoint Jesus' feet.

V. 4 We know that all of the disciples objected to Mary "wasting" this ointment, but Judas must have been the most vocal. In v. 6 John tells us why. It was probably as a result of this that Judas became enraged, allowed Satan into his heart, and went to betray Jesus. Judas probably went to the chief priests to betray Jesus on Wednesday evening or on Thursday.

Vs. 9-11 How irrational can you get? Sure, go and kill the guy raised from the dead and hide the evidence, for God's glory.

Vs. 12-19 One interesting addition here is that as Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people who had seen Lazarus raised were in the crowd bearing witness to Jesus. You don't get that from the other Gospels. Nor do you understand from the other Gospels that the reason that many of these people were there to greet Jesus is that they heard that Jesus had raised Lazarus.

Although the people were saying the right things, there was still no real recognition of who Jesus was. Even the disciples didn't understand this event until after Jesus was glorified. So, what were they really celebrating here? I think they thought that the kingdom would appear immediately.

Psalm 118:1-18

Doesn't this read like something David would have sung when the 10 years of running were over? It seems like he remembered all of the desperation and emotion; but what saved him was what he mentions four times at the beginning, *His steadfast love endures forever*.

We get the second part of this psalm tomorrow. In the second half, there are allusions to Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem and His rejection. Knowing that, read this portion today with the idea that some of what is written here could be a prophetic expression of how Jesus would feel, and as a man, how He would find strength in His Father.

Vs. 1-4 This is what David learned in the wilderness. Each day had its ups and downs, but the *steadfast love* of the Lord never failed him.

Vs. 5-9 David didn't even trust his own men. They would have killed Saul. But David was vindicated by the special deliverances God gave him.

Vs. 10-13 After David became king in Hebron, civil war raged for seven and a half more years. Then when he became the king of the entire nation, other nations came against him. He cried out to the Lord; God gave David victory and suddenly distant countries were paying tribute to David.

Vs. 14-16 In all of this, the Lord was David's salvation.

Vs. 17-18 There was discipline and "pruning" by the Lord to make David ready to be king.

Proverbs 15:24-26

Amen, amen, and amen! I would think that David was being taught all of this in the wilderness and while he was running. I know that hard times have been the only way I have learned some of these things on my journey as a disciple.