

“The Grace Effect”
1 Samuel 29:1-30:31

November 12, 2017

SI: On a historical level, the book of 1 Samuel is about the establishment of Israel’s monarchy, and about how David became God’s chosen king. On a spiritual level, 1 Samuel is about what it means to live by faith.

INTRO: The title of my sermon this morning is “The Grace Effect.”

I got that from Larry Taunton’s book by the same title.

Many of you have read Larry’s book.

It’s about the adoption of their daughter Sasha from Ukraine.

It’s also about the effect the Gospel or the absence of the Gospel can have on a nation. So Larry compares and contrasts Ukraine with the United States and the effects of 70 years of Soviet atheism versus our Judeo-Christian foundations.

That title, the grace effect, kept coming to my mind as I was studying this episode in David’s life because that’s what it shows so vividly.

David experiences God’s grace in a number of wonderful ways—

and then that grace shapes his values and the way he responds to people.

So what I want to do with this story is look at it under two simple headings.

First, the experience of God’s grace. How David experienced it, how we do too.

Second, the effect of God’s grace. Once again, in David’s life and our own lives.

MP#1 The experience of God's grace

As believers we receive forgiveness and eternal life through Christ.

By grace we are adopted and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God. Those blessings occur in the spiritual realm.

Ephesians speaks of blessings in the heavenly realms with Christ Jesus. What this passage shows so vividly is how we actually experience God's grace in this present life, in our temporal existence in this world.

Five ways:

1. God's grace mitigates the consequences of our sins.

Jesus Christ paid the eternal consequences of sins on cross.

In this present life, however, there are still consequences for sinful actions. The Bible says whatever a man sows, that will he also reap. Even true for believers.

But God is so gracious that he often doesn't make us reap what we've sown.

He mitigates the consequences.

A Christian friend of mine once lost his temper and did something that should have cost him his job and it could have had long-term negative consequences.

But the person who could have brought charges decided only to warn him.

This friend told me the story 15 years later, and he attributed it to God's grace.

As we saw earlier, David made a decision based on fear rather than faith.

He left the land of Israel and sought protection from the Philistines.

That decision led David to do deceptive, treacherous, and shameful things.

So David found himself in terrible situation of his own making.

Achish expected him to fight for the Philistines and against his fellow Israelites.

If that had happened, it would have ruined him as a future king of Israel.

But God's grace mitigated the consequences of his sin.

Other Philistine commanders said no way. They didn't want Hebrews in ranks.

Didn't trust David. Remembered old song—David tens of thousands.

So the Lord got David off the hook so that he didn't have to reap what he had sown.

The Lord does this for us over and over through our lives.

He often saves relationships that would have been destroyed by the faithless and shameful things we've done, preserves our reputation and witness instead of exposing our secret sins, continue in work and calling when sins could close door.

2. God's grace doesn't allow us to continue in sin.

Did you notice what David did when the Lord graciously got him off the hook?

He argued with Achish.

What have I done? You know I've been loyal. I want to fight against enemies.

What on earth was David doing?

He was wanting to keep up the charade with Achish, charade of his loyalty, so he could go back to his town in Philistia, back to Lachish, and keep up the lucrative raids.

God mitigated the consequences of his sin, but David was still comfortable with it.

So what did the Lord do? He ruined David's deceptive arrangement.

When David and his men returned, they found town burned and their families and property carried off by the Amalekites.

This was harsh but gracious, because by doing this, God did not allow David to continue in sin. And sometimes we experience the same grace from God.

He wrecks, exposes, even ruins things to push us toward change and repentance.

Someone in our church told me how he once got a pocket dial from one of his children, and he heard some things, heard some conversation not intended for parents' ears and knew he had to address it.

But the way he opened that hard and embarrassing conversation was to say:

Let me tell you how much the Lord loves you.

It's God's love and grace when our deceptive arrangements get burned.

3. God's grace restores faith.

This bad period of David's life started in chapter 27, and it started with him saying something in his heart. Do you remember what David said?

Some day I'm going to die at the hand of King Saul.

His faith in God's promises failed. God's promise to deliver him and make king.

Over and over the Lord had been true, but David's faith failed.

And he started from that point to make decisions based on fear.

Moved out of Israel into the land of the Philistines.

Started lying and sneaking around and killing people.

He comes back to Ziklag. It's burned, families gone and his life really is in danger.

His men start talking about stoning him. They blame him.

And it was his fault that they were there and that they had been antagonizing the Amalekites with their raids into that territory.

How did David respond? Look again at 30:6.

"But David found strength in the LORD his God."

He found strength by remembering the promises of God once again.

And he remembered promises because pushed there by God's grace in crisis.

Just this week talking to someone in our church who told me about a crisis, a loss.

It was a few years ago so he's had time to analyze it.

Says that without a doubt, it pushed him into a deeper faith the with Lord.
He knows it, because it's enabled him to face other things since with faith.

4. God's grace gives guidance.

David didn't know what to do, so he asked the Lord for guidance and he got it.

He asked Abiathar the priest to bring the ephod and inquire of the Lord.

We've encountered this before. Form of guidance unique to OT, where basic yes and no questions are asked. Should we pursue Amalekites?

Somebody in our Covenant Group compared it to the Magic 8 ball.

I'm not sure I would describe it that way, but God did provide direct answers.

We the same God, although he now guides us by his word and Spirit.

He does so by impressing on us particular words and promises of Scripture.

It's not the yes or no answer of the ephod, but it does give us answers that enable us to move ahead in faith.

One time I was dealing with someone criticizing me. God led me to Psalm 141:5

Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil on my head.

My head will not refuse it. That's as clear as the ephod.

5. God's grace redeems losses.

The final outcome of this episode is that the Lord restores David's loved ones.

All the women and children of Ziklag are rescued.

David and his men get their possessions back and also enemy's plunder.

But it goes farther than that. The story ends with a long list of all the places, the towns and villages and clans where David sent presents.

These were all people who had supported him and allowed him to pass through their land and camp when he was on the run from King Saul.

And through the loss David experienced, and God's grace in restoring that loss—he was able to be a blessing to other people who loved Israel and Yahweh.

The Lord doesn't always restore lost things this way.

Sometimes believers lose loved ones to death, or suffer permanent rupture of relationships and God allows that. But what he always does is redeem the loss.

Provides a way for his faithfulness, your testimony, to extend to other Christians, and to be like a present of God's grace to them.

Next Sunday evening Thanksgiving Supper & Service. Pass the mic. Testimonies.

Inevitably, story of a loss God has redeemed. Some of the sweetest presents.

I hope you see that even though this episode is quite unique—having raiders burn your village and make off with your family, chasing them down—the experience of God's grace is common to all believers.

These experiences of God's grace bring us to the second half of the story . . .
What happened after David won the battle and had everything restored?

MP#2 The effect of God's grace

Here's the effect. It made him a gracious person.
The effect of God's grace is to make you gracious to other people.
You need to know that so that you can cultivate and express grace.

After the battle, an enormous amount of plunder was taken.
There were large flocks and herds of animals, the currency of the day.
And by rights, this belonged to David since he was the chief.
His men recognized this and as they drove all these animals back they made sure everybody else knew it. This is David's plunder.

Then something ugly happened.
David's 400 fighters got back to the ravine where they had left 200 of their comrades who were too exhausted to go on. Remember that from the reading.
David had told them they could stay and guard the supplies.
So when all the men who did the fighting saw them they said—
Give them their wives and children and tell them to get out of here
Because they did not go out with us, we will not share with them the plunder we recovered.
These 200 slackers didn't fight with us. They were "too tired."
We risked our lives and now here they are two days later all rested.
They don't deserve anything. Not a penny of the plunder we have recovered.
Notice how quickly they go from rightly calling it David's plunder to our plunder.

How did David respond?

This is the theological highpoint of this story. Verse 23

No, my brothers, you must not do that with what the LORD has given us.
He has protected us and handed over to us the forces that came against us.
Do you hear contrast? The plunder we recovered vs. what the LORD has given us

David deflects all the credit for their victory from himself and the men,
and he gives all credit to the Lord.

We got the victory and we got all this stuff because of what the Lord did.

David's eyes are looking up.
Psalm says: I lift up my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.
His 400 fighters are looking at themselves, at their hard work.
And what they said makes sense if you don't know and appreciate God's grace.

If I had been one of the 400, I would have been nodding my head in agreement. If you don't work you don't eat. It's in the Bible.

But David said: Grace not works. Worship not idolatry. And then look at what David did next.

He's the chief. The plunder belongs ultimately to him. This is David's plunder. He says

The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All will share alike.

Right then and there David made that a statute and ordinance for Israel's army.

And there is this interesting comment by the writer of 1 Samuel that it's still in effect to this day. In other words, whenever 1 Samuel written. Years later.

So David gives grace to those who did not work, who did not fight, who were too exhausted. He did not mock their need for rest, he provided for it.

He did not even mention their weakness, instead he honored their service.

These men stayed with the supplies. They guarded the supplies.

He lifts them up and he lets them participate in his victory as if on battlefield.

If that's not salvation by grace, I don't know what is!

There's something else gracious that David did.

Do you remember what happened when they first arrived at Ziklag and found it burned and all their families missing?

Remember what the men wanted to do to David?

They wanted to stone him to death. They were openly talking about it.

This was a cruel group. They could be malicious in a heartbeat.

These 400 turned on the weaker 200 without a hesitation.

Those 200 would have done same if shoe on the other foot.

The writer of 1 Samuel calls them evil men and troublemakers.

But what did David call them? "My brothers." Did you catch that? Appealed:

No, my brothers, you must not do that with what the Lord has given us.

Men who days before talked about killing him?

Men without a gracious bone in their bodies?

He calls them brothers and appeals to their hearts and points them to God's grace.

What a king! Who is David foreshadowing in this moment?

He's an advance echo of King Jesus.

Hebrew 2 says Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers.

Think about that. When we claim glory for ourselves, ignore God's grace, when we're mean and ungrateful—just like these 400—

Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers.

There was a Christian contemporary song that came out about 10 years ago.

Chorus goes:

There is hope for the helpless, Rest for the weary,
And love for the broken heart.
And there is grace and forgiveness, Mercy and healing,
He'll meet you wherever you are.
Cry out to Jesus, Cry out to Jesus

That's what David did.

He gave hope to the helpless—those captive women and children, brought home.
He gave rest to the weary—his weary 200 who couldn't go on.
And he gave mercy and healing to that abandoned Egyptian slave.
And he gave grace and forgiveness to his own hardhearted men who talked
about stoning him by calling them brothers and sharing spoils with him.

That's what David did. And that foreshadowed Jesus doing it perfectly and savingly.

And that's what you can do and what I can do by God's grace.
Hope for the helpless, rest for the weary, love for the broken heart
grace and forgiveness, mercy and healing—
There are people in your life who need those things from you,
starting with those under your same roof. Your spouse, your children.
And then your friends, your church family here at Christ Covenant—others.
Fill them up with the grace you've received.
Be gracious to the weak. Be gracious to the mean.
Be gracious to those who understand God's grace and those who don't.
Because that's how the Lord treats you.

The Apostle Paul asks two questions in 1 Corinthians 4.

What do you have that you did not receive?
And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?
What do you have that you did not receive? Nothing. All from Jesus.
So if that's the case, don't boast, but be a conduit of his grace to everyone.