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The Folly of Unbelief

"And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand," 1 Samuel 27:1.

Based on a message preached at a special Saturday morning season of prayer attended by teachers, pupils, parents, Management Committee members and supporters of Kilskeery Independent Christian School, at the commencement of its 38th year.

The life of David provides us with many lessons for our pilgrimage here on earth. The trials and afflictions he endured present to us a true representation of what it is the Church of Christ may expect to encounter as it journeys to the "land that is fairer than day."

As our school launches into its 38th year, we may take instruction, warnings and encouragement from this passage.

In our text:

I. DAVID DRAWS A STRANGE CONCLUSION.

We readily acknowledge the strain and pressure that David, still a very young man, was under. He was surrounded by danger from Saul who sought his life to slay him, 1 Samuel 18:6-12. He was surrounded by treachery, as may be illustrated by the actions of the men of Keilah, 1 Samuel 23:1-12. Having saved the people of the city from the Philistines, despite the fear he had and also his men (verse 3), they turn round and were prepared to deliver David into the hands of Saul, verse 12.

We shall not therefore be too critical of David in the action he here takes, given the circumstances that surround him.

Nevertheless, we must say that he acted unwisely. He concluded that it was inevitable that he would die at the hands of Saul.

This he did despite:

1. The promise God had given him. "And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons," 1 Samuel 16:1. "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah," 1 Samuel 16:11-13.

The promise of God was sufficient to have sustained David, had he but lain back upon it. He could not perish while it was God's purpose to place him on the throne of Israel.

Likewise, as we commence the 38th year of our school, we need not fear since we have the promise of God, which has carried us successfully through the last 37 years with all their difficulties and trials, to rest upon once more. We shall NOT perish!

2. David had endorsements of God's purpose to make him king. "But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth," 1 Samuel 20:15. He repeated this confidence in David's future in 1 Samuel 23:17. "And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king



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over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.”

3. As Jonathan here says, even Saul had told David he would be king! “And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand,” 1 Samuel 24:17-20.

4. Furthermore, David had just had yet another wonderful deliverance from Saul. “Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.” 1 Samuel 26:25. (See also verses 1-24).

Yet, in the aftermath of this wonderful deliverance, David fell victim to unbelief. This is so often the case. Our greatest failings have come hard on the heels of our greatest blessings.

Let us beware!

II. UNBELIEF WILL LEADS US INTO FOOLISH ACTIONS

1. David sought refuge and safety amongst the ungodly. “There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines,” 1 Samuel 27:1. The name of Achish means “only a man”! Is that not significant? He forsook the safety of the Lord for “only a man”! Gath was the city of Goliath. What possible safety could David expect from such a place?

At the first, this foolish and sinful act seemed to be crowned with success. “And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no more again for him,” 1 Samuel 27:4.

How often wrong actions, at the first seem to be successful?

2. David’s folly endangered his men, their families and David’s own family. “And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal’s wife,” 1 Samuel 27:3.

What danger we place our families in when we forsake the path of God! Christian education is a honest and earnest attempt to provide for our children within the confines of Biblical Christianity rather than sending them to the camp of the enemy to be educated. What good can the enemy each our children? None at all. Rather, they can only inculcate in their minds that which is contrary to godliness and truth.

3. This decision by David ushered him on to a path of lies and deception. “And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt. And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish. And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to day? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites. And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring tidings to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so will be his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines. And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever,” 1 Samuel 27:8-12.

A life of deceit and falsehood is the outcome of departing from the Lord and leaving the paths of righteousness.

That is the path that those who send their children to the state school system have chosen. The state school teaches the lie of evolution, the depravities of modern morality which in truth is immorality. Sodomy and other perversions are presented as proper and right. Opposition to these wickednesses is condemned as sin



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and as crimes against the law of the land.

We thus compel our children to duplicity by requiring them to believe the Bible yet at the same time take instructions and render obedience to teachers of error and corruption.

What good can come of this?

4. David was nearly ruined by his following of this path. Please read the following verses. "And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire; and had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way. So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep. And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And David was greatly distressed," 1 Samuel 30:1-6.

Great distress is all that can come of such folly. I fear that many parents will in like manner find great distress as a result of failing their children in this matter. May God keep open the doors of our little school and make it as "the cave of Adullam."

III. EVEN IN OUR FOLLY GOD KINDLY HAS MERCY UPON US

1. David was visited by chastening. After the tragedy of the Amalekite invasion of Ziklag, David was humbled and caused to seek the Lord. "And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God," 1 Samuel 30:6. David had not acted so since deciding to seek refuge amongst the Philistines.

God in mercy had humbled him and turned him back again like the prodigal of old.

2. David and his people were greatly enriched following David's chastening. "And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all. And David took all the flocks and the herds, which they drove before those other cattle, and said, This is David's spoil," 1 Samuel 30:18-20. David recovered all and more. He was able to send gifts to those who had sheltered him and befriended him during his recent trials. "And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD," 1 Samuel 30:26. This was a most wise and kingly act which tightened the bonds between him and the people thus benefitted.

3. Furthermore, by the providential actions of God David was kept back from having any part in the slaying of Saul and his sons. What a black mark that would have been upon David's character and name? It has been to David's honour that he kept back his hand from slaying Saul when he had the opportunity.

How wonderfully God keeps us back from tragedy even when we go astray! But such a deliverance will not continue for those who take no warning from God and press on in their disobedience. "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," Proverbs 29:1. Many have been reprov'd in Ulster about sending their children to the state schools. What will yet be the outcome of such hardening of the neck?

4. What a lesson there is from the death of Jonathan. "And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons," 1 Samuel 31:2. That is not how Jonathan viewed the conclusion of his life. "And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee;



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and that also Saul my father knoweth," 1 Samuel 23:17.

Why did it not work out as Jonathan hoped it would? The answer is found in two very significant verses.

"And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city," 1 Samuel 20:42.

"And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house," 1 Samuel 23:18.

There can be no doubting of Jonathan's love to David but he was unwilling to share in David's reproach and abjuration. While David went into the woods and the wilderness to dwell during this time of exile, Jonathan went home to the city, to his own house.

If we are not prepared to stand with Christ and share in His reproach we will not share His glory.

So say the Scriptures.

"Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come," Hebrews 13:13-14.

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake," Matthew 5:11.

"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name," Acts 5:41.

"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified," 1 Peter 4:14.

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Revelation 2:10.

As we wait on God today, let us not shirk from the cross and its reproach but rather shoulder it gladly in the realm of Christian education knowing that thereby we shall enjoy the approval and blessing of heaven.

Ivan Foster.

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