

ZIKLAG

It was dark, and late at night. The young man was weary. Circumstances beyond his control had forced him into a corner, and he had to make a decision, or at least those were his thoughts.

The older man who used to like him, and had even made him captain over a thousand of his men, was now chasing him, trying to kill him. “Why me?” he thought. “Things used to be so simple just a few years ago, when I was 10 and 12.” Now in his late teens, life had become unbelievably complex. The young man made a decision to run. There seemed to be no one to talk to or anyone who seemed to care. Besides, who would understand all that had happened?

So the young man ran to the south, past the edge of his own homeland, to just inside what had historically been enemy territory. It was a province of people that had always been against him and his people.

There he made an agreement with the leader of that part of the country, who in turn gave him and his men a place to stay. It was a shell of a dusty little town, of dilapidated huts and unused buildings. Nonetheless, the young man along with his men, settled in this little town called Ziklag.

For the next several months, the young man and his men made raid after raid on the neighboring countryside. Often they were out for weeks at a time. There was the sense they were living on borrowed time, for it was dangerous to be living in an enemy country outside the boundaries of the protection of their own government and kinfolk.

Finally things caught up with them; returning to Ziklag after several weeks out, they topped a hill only to see Ziklag burned to the ground. Shock and horror swept through them as wildfire; all that was dear to them was gone before their eyes. Rushing quickly down the dusty trail, they found no trace of their wives or children, nor any of their belongings. Their houses were smoldering ashes. The men wept and wept, until they could weep no more. At last, anger and resentment welled up within them, as they looked for someone to blame for their loss and pain.

Their leader came quickly into focus. He was the one who was to blame. As they began accusing him, more and more, tempers began to flare, and reason flew out the window. They began picking up rocks as they talked of stoning him to death, somehow to relieve them of their misery and pain.

At long last the young leader came to grips with where he was and how he had gotten there. “Why me?” he asked. “I didn’t intend for this to turn out this way; it just did.” Running here away from trouble seemed to be the right thing to do at the time; what a mess!

In an instant of time, his youth flashed before him, and he remembered how good life was when he was younger. He recalled how sweet the times were when he was alone with the Lord in the fields and pastures tending sheep. He remembered how victorious those times were when lions and bear would try to kill his sheep and he would kill them instead. A cold wave of shame swept over him as he realized why he was there. He had done it on his own, never bothering to ask the Lord or anyone else if he should or should not have fled to Ziklag in the first place.

Immediately, the young man summoned one of the priests that had joined this ragged bunch of men. He would *now* inquire of the Lord what he should do. Equally quick the Lord answered, “Pursue the lost, and you will recover everything.” The young man did this promptly, and according to the promise, recovered all their wives and children and belongings. Then they returned to their homeland.

The time is 1025 B.C. The place is in southern Israel, in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula. The young man’s name is David, son of Jesse. The story is in I Samuel 27 and 30.

Ziklag literally means “winding.” The implication is that of endless turning around, no conclusion to anything, a wandering of purpose, of fruitlessness, of frustration.

The story of Ziklag was written for us as an example to keep us out of trouble, to help us overcome problems and to detect danger.

In a nutshell, *Ziklag is our place of misery and pain, having gone where God did not send us.*

Waking up in Ziklag is usually a result of ignorance, or at best, careless innocence. We rarely intend for things to wind up this badly, they just happen. And God simply lets things happen to teach us, that we may see He is needed and wants to be a part of our lives in every decision and move. For, you see, like it or not, every decision *is* life changing and potentially life-threatening. It’s not that we need *permission*, but simply counsel; there’s a big difference.

So my friend, whether you find yourself in a Ziklag of an unwanted pregnancy, or drug addiction and related problems, or an abortion trauma, or involved in cults, jail or whatever, chances are they were not intentional; they just “happened.”

The mess in which David found himself just “happened”; there is no question he ignored all counsel in the decision to run to Ziklag. Equally so, all of us ignore everyone else in decisions every day of our lives, and suffer the consequences just as David did.

But note the response and ready answer David received *as soon as he humbled himself and asked!!* There was none of this, “I told you so!” There was no upbraiding nor guilt-tripping. And so it will be with any of you, no matter what the problem, no matter how awful the consequences; there will be a merciful answer to a broken and contrite heart. But there must be a desire to turn your life around.

As this was being written, I was sitting early one morning in my truck at the ranch, waiting for the men to come to work. Suddenly a beautiful bluebird lit outside my window, not two feet away. When he finally saw me, he flew away quickly. It occurred to me that our Maker equipped birds and other animals with an inborn sense of danger, as instincts. Not so with us. That inborn mechanism is long ago made dormant, and as such we *need* that one-on-one relationship, not just to protect us, but to bless us.

But true love never forces anyone, nor backs them into a corner; it’s our choice.

Ziklag is a result of our choice, not His.....

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