**Send the Man Back**

**1 Samuel 29:1-11**

**Key Verse 4**

**But the Philistine commanders were angry with Achish and said, “Send the man back,” that he may return to the place you assigned him.**

**This short passage reminds me of Proverbs 19:21, “Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.” Also there is a saying. “Man proposes, God disposes” Human beings make their own plans, but God determines if they succeed or not. Also “Just do it” may be the best 3 word summary of David’s dark life on this passage. It means, “Don’t bother consulting others. Don’t waste much time on planning. Just do it now. It will be ok. If not, you can always fix it later, or leave it for someone else to deal with. Today’s passage shows that David seems to manage his life well with his own plan and just do it without consulting the Lord. But he is stuck in between a rock and hard place. But our merciful God who doesn’t show his name directly, yet faithfully intervenes to help him out with his unfailing love.**

**Before starting this short passage, I would like to recap the previous 2 passages as a background. Chap. 27:1, “But David thought to himself, “One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand.”  He was driven by inner fear of Saul and then he had taken refuge among the Philistines. Maybe he was tired of running away with 600 men and their family members. His men might’ve asked him to settle down for it was hard. He might be sorry for them and came up with his seemingly best idea. So David and his men ended up settling down in Gath. They were given their own territory called Ziklag. Achish was fooled by David and he trusted David. Everything seemed to be going well as they’d planned. In 27:8, David had been conducting secret raids on three desert tribes and accumulated many assets. The word, “raid” means to enter into another’s territory for the purpose of seizing goods or valuables. He might have gained a nick name “old rough and ready” like Zachary Taylor, the 12th U.S. President through tough battle-after-battle in the Indian and Mexican Wars. David lied to Achish by saying that he raided the Israelites. Achish said to David, “A plus! Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for good.” Achish trusted David more. David could be a top honored student of the acting class in Jerusalem community college. Now he made him as his personal bodyguard(28:2). This position was a secured and permanent position. In this way David procured real estate in Ziklag with a six digit salary under the sponsorship of Philistine king and he did not have to run away as a fugitive. Indeed Saul did not chase after him any longer. Outwardly life was good for a change to settle down with second best job as a bodyguard. He may rationalize or compromise with the idea that for a while until Saul may step down at God’s time and he would like to stay with the Philistines and live peacefully. Everything would be ok and his men could be happy. So David seems to be free from any troubles and his hard training. But the end can’t justify the means. A day of reckoning came for David.**

**Look at v 1. The Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek, and Israel camped by the spring in Jezreel. One day the five rulers of the Philistines (Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza) gathered and reach their agreement to gather all their forces at Aphek to fight Israel. Achish planned in his heart without consulting other rulers to bring his trustworthy David by his right side to have a victory against Israel to glorify himself. According to their plan, the Philistine rulers, began their march with their forces to go to war. David and his men were following Achish at the rear (2). As they left Aphek and marched toward the Jezreel Valley, what do you think was on David’s mind? Would he and his men really go to war against his own people? Would they really fight against his own fathers and brothers on the side of the Philistines whom he had once called those “uncircumcised fellows” and the “enemies of the living God?” By now troubled David probably ran out of excuse and regretted seeking a refuge under Achish. He had done so without asking God from the beginning. He hated his situation now. Likewise, we sometimes make our decisions without asking God first, thinking we know what is best for us. But the truth is that our views and understanding of our situations are often narrow, near-sighted, short-term, and self-centered. We cannot see our future and its ramification clearly. The bottom line here is that we have to admit the fact that God knows us better and it is best for us to ask him first. But David had put himself in a terrible situation. How could he get out it this time? What could he do? Well, he had no good answer, except for marching behind the Philistine force. Maybe he had a couple of options. He just fight against Israel, give up God’s anointing, and betrayed his own people. Or he turned around and fight against the Philistines like a suicide attack. It was a rock and hard place. Only our living God can intervene at such a sticky situation to rescue him.**

**Look at v3-4. The Philistine commanders did not like the picture here. They remembered who David was. How could they forget the one who had defeated their champion Goliath? They asked, “What about these Hebrews?” Achish tried to defend David. He told his fellow rulers that even though David had been an officer of King Saul, he had proved himself loyal to him since he joined him over a year ago. But the problem was that the Philistine commanders did not buy it. They became angry with Achish saying there was no way they would allow David to go with them into battle. They argued that David would have an excellent chance to betray the Philistines. They added, “Isn't this the David they sang about in their dances: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands’?” (5) I think that this song could be very sensational or popular those days like gangnam style hitting a record in utube in our times. Achish had to admit that they had a good point in their argument. Achish came to David and said, “I am sorry, David. I trust you and more than happy to fight together. But the others don’t approve you. So go back home in peace.” (6, 7) So David ended up not having to fight against his own people. Now some people might say that David was extremely lucky to get out of the spot. But it wasn’t luck. No doubt, It was God’s hand working through the Philistine commanders. God protected David. He helped David not to fight his own people of Israel. We should also know that what appears to be coincidence on the surface is actually what God is doing. We often cannot see it at the moment. God protects him and this is a God’s pure grace for God’s covenant people. What a privilege we have in God to be his covenant people! David must’ve been thankful. 1 Kings 15:5 reads, “For David had done what was right in the eyes of the Lord and had not failed to keep any of the Lord’s commands all the days of his life—except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.” What if he ended up joining the battle. It could’ve read differently. But thank God for his mercy and his unfailing love for him.**

**But being a natural actor, he kept a straight face when he protested, “But what have I done? What have you found against your servant from the day I came to you until now? Why can't I go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?” (8) That year David should have been nominated for an Academy Award for his acting. Achish answered, “I know that you have been as pleasing in my eyes as an angel of God; nevertheless, the Philistine commanders have said, ‘He must not go up with us into battle.’ So get up early and go home” (9, 10). Of course, David and his men were happy to say goodbye to Achish and go back to their temporary hometown of Ziklag while the Philistines went up to Jezreel (11).  He must have sang a song, (Psalm 103:10) “he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.” Praise the Lord for the Lord who is protecting him without fail. David must’ve repented of his way so far and returned to the Lord with all his heart.**

**What would be a practical message for us through today’s short episode? David is a great servant of God. Don’t get me wrong in that I tried to undermine his credibility. But when I examine his life at this passage with a x-ray doctor’s eye, still I can learn something from his mistake. Due to David’s own ideal idea to choose the seemingly best place, David was out of place and ended up being in between a rock and hard place. But praise the Lord God who really cares him. Through this event God helps him to draw the line of demarcation as the chosen king of God from unbelieving or worldly kings. Especially the Philistine rulers were saying, “What about these Hebrews?” Likewise have you ever heard, “What are you doing here?” Due to our lost identity and purpose in the Lord, we ended up finding ourselves in the wrong camp along with wrong company? Have you ever downgraded your standard in order to fit in? Even they rebuked us by saying, “Send the man back, that they may return to the place you assigned him.”**

**These days many believers being influenced by the world live disgraceful and dirty lives and are constantly criticized by non-believers. According to a study, the 65% of 18-42 year olds in America say that they are committed to Jesus. It seems to be encouraging. But we need to differentiate who are merely enthusiastic admirers from who are committed real followers. Most of them aren’t committed to Jesus in every area of their life. But in reality it comes to certain people or places or practices, then they refuse to follow Jesus. So God means business to raise up his holy people. So I revisited America’s Christian heritage by tracing back to our Christian forefathers such as pilgrims who came to this land for religious freedom to worship God despite great sacrifice. So this land had been blessed by God from the beginning as the land of refugee for his living words. However, as time passed by, we went astray from God’s good, pleasing and perfect will for us. Now the voice of the people has become the voice of God in our society. The ultimate authority in our society is to be found in the consensus of the average people. Most people regard religious experience and practice as nothing but a private matter of personal preference. Looking deeper, it appears that in our generation the real “god” is the individual. Even many religious people try to get God to revolve around them, rather than adjusting their lives to center on Him and seek first His will. People want to believe that anything is possible through individual effort without conferring with God. I used to be the same. A similar idea is found in the saying, “God helps those who help themselves.” Like David who tried to survive using all ways and means without any direct communication with the Lord God, we have almost limitless faith in our own ability to change things for the better in the future. When we seem to succeed for a while like David, we want to claim most of the credit for ourselves. But the bottom line is that as the recent daily bread from Jeremiah says, our hearts are deceptive and by relying on our hearts apart from God, we are gradually drifting away from the authentic truth written in the Bible. Now human’s own ideas have become the standard of justice.  Thankfully in our nation, 1983 was designated as the national Year of the Bible by Congress and approved as a joint resolution on Oct 4, 1982. It pointed out that the Bible "has made a unique contribution in shaping the United States as a distinctive and blessed nation and people" and that, the Bible is "the rock on which our Republic rests". It also acknowledged a “national need to study and apply the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.” I personally believe that God answered this prayer and sent msn Isaac Kim to this west coast with a vision of pioneering all west coast campuses in 1982.**

**The title of today’s passage “Send the man back” helps me to think about what we should do also. God has chosen our meeting, University Bible Fellowship through late Dr. Samuel C Lee and Mother Barry who prayed earnestly to raise up young college students with God’s words of absolute principle no matter what inner sin problems or social issues they might have. Through devoting their lives to study the Bible wholeheartedly and teach the Bible, they found key verse from Exodus 19:5-6a, “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Practically it’s possible through going back to the Bible through one to one Bible study among campus students and obeying Jesus’ command to go make disciples of all nations. About 1700 self supporting, life giving layman missionaries are raised scattered throughout the world. We simply go out to campus, believing the word of God, obeying it, and desperately struggling to experience its intrinsic power. God blessed their commitment, sacrifice, and faith to live according to God’s living word. But as time passed by, we have gradually lost such absolute confidence to make disciples whatever reasons they might’ve been. Maybe until 1990, it was possible but now it’s very challenging. In the same way when we backslide and compromise here and there, and like David we just settle down with our own comfortable life and sometimes suffer from identity crisis as a shepherd, Bible teacher, or missionary. But this passage behooves us to go back to our original spirit and world mission command and making disciples by absolute faith in God. Looking back on what happens in the past, we can not deny the fact that God chose us a kingdom of priests and a holy nation in our own generation and put a demarcation line from unbelievers and even wishwash, commitment lacking Christians. Simply speaking God called us to be visionary history makers and disciple makers. Then our victory will continue, be fruitful and increase in number and subdue it in Him. May the Lord help us to renew our vision and faith through 2013 international Bible conference and give our hearts to the Lord and his perfect will.  America may be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. May the Lord bless each of us to to serve colleges students as Bible teachers and disciple makers for God’s name.**

**Through this passage I also learned that I must live a life of faith rather than a life of compromise. When I came here as a missionary, I had a vision to make disciples based on Romans 1:5. God trained me like David to be a Bible teacher for this glorious task. But when I’d realized that it’s never easy job at all and seemed to be tedious way without visible result, I began to have negative thoughts.  I went astrary like other immigrants and I was driven by my subconscious desire to be successful to achieve American dream. I quickly figured out that success is probably one of the highest values in American life. This is the "American Dream" which has attracted millions of immigrants and has been taught to generations of American children. Everyone wants to be a man of success at something. If you do not think that way, you may be considered as a loser. Indeed it is almost impossible to criticize success. I was engaged in money making through business, such as real estate investment. I was deceived to buying the properties through glamous internet advertisement as well as inflated income figures(proforma). And then I was in deep trouble with great loss. So I had to lie to other investors to get out of that mess. It was a viscious cycle for a while especially in a dog eat dog survival of the fittest. In the real estate balloon burst out from 2007, I had lost my properties through foreclosure and ended up ruining my credit. II was absolutely devastated by such loss. Then I found my identity crisis and my deviated life purpose before God and came back to my senses. Since then God helped me to see through what keeps me from truly following Jesus and repent of my success oriented life goal and renew my heart to live for the clear purpose in the Lord my God. Often times I am sensitive to money making and success. Indeed these two are major gods in my heart that are always at war with the will of God. Most of the time I complain about these worldly things. They often times disappoint me. I worry about them. These two became my secret Sanctuary that they are my real priority over my living God. In this way I became a really bad example to my three sons. But give my thanks to my gracious God who rescued me from a sin of greed and help me to go back to my original tract and resume my blessed identity as a Bible teacher to serve campus students as my higher priority. One of my biggest problem is my lack of faith in the living words of God to wait long enough to see their intrinsic authority and power. May the Lord help me to give my whole heart to Jesus and His holy command to make disciples in my transient life especially with a great vision to see them grow according to the power of the gospel message. I am supposed to have only a bit more than a decade to be physically active, I mean, true valuable time is remained very little. And I must consider it to be the one and only chance on earth. From this eternal perspective and real reality my answer is obvious. 1 Peter 3:22 reads, “who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him” When Jesus suffered and died with absolute obedience to the end, God exalted him to the King of kings and the Lord of the lords. So I am thankful to the Lord in that I have the role model and it is more than obvious to give my all out effort to focus on raising disciples through teaching the Bible diligently. May the Lord help me to live for the glory of God only. Let’s read Philippians 1:6, “…he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”**

**One word: Send the man back!**