

The Cast Off Egyptian

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[0 : 00] Now in this passage that we read this evening we see a pattern of the condition of the sinner and his or her relationship to the Lord.

We see it in two particular characters. We see it first of all in David but we see it also in the Egyptian whom his men come across. And these two represent what we might call different aspects of the condition people find themselves in.

We might describe David as one who knew the Lord to an extent, had been brought up with the knowledge of the God of Israel. And he was in a sad state, a sad case at this stage because his wife, his children, all those of his men as well, their families had all been captured, taken away.

Their city that had been given to them was burned to a crisp. There was nothing left. And the condition in which David finds himself is in one sense, as I think we've looked at when we've touched on this particular passage in the past, is in one sense a symptom of his own actions.

David, you will remember at this stage, has been away fighting for the Philistines. And on the very verge of fighting for the Philistines against the lawful king of Israel.

[1 : 25] So it is only through the distrust of the Philistines that David and his men were not actually taking part in the battle against Saul and Jonathan and the armies of Israel.

The Lord preserved him from that potential disaster and a disaster for his own position in regard to the rest of Israel, had he fought with the Philistines against the king of Israel, but he is kept from that.

Nevertheless, it is because he and his men are away that they are not there to defend St. Clyde against these marauding Amalekites. Remember that the Lord has said way back, I think it's in the book of Exodus, that he said that he would have war with Amalek, time without end.

Always through the ages he would be at war with the Amalekites. And here we find them again being troubled for the people of Israel, attacking here against David and his city.

And of course attacking the Philistines at the same time. The devil is quite happy to treat with contempt those who are, you know, not nominally even the Lord's, but those who are as well.

[2 : 34] He'll quite happily attack and make life difficult for those who are not Christians, just as he will for those who are. He's not discriminating in that sense. He's quite happy to give everybody a rotten time in that sense.

But it is because David has been away. And he has not been in this city with this people that they are defending. And so they've all been taken off and captured. And he finds himself in this condition.

They have, in a sense, lost everything. They have been cast off by their new masters, their new friends who have given them a place to stay, the Philistines. Their city is now burnt asunder.

There's nothing left of it. They have no home now. They've got no wives, no families, because they've all been captured and taken away. And David is at the end of his tether. And we read of how David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept until they had no more power to weep.

David's two wives were taken away. David was greatly distressed. Everybody's ready to turn in it. And David said to Abiathar, the priest, to him and I said, I prayed, he'd bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought hither the ephod to David.

[3 : 42] And David inquired at the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them? And he answered, Pursue, for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.

Now we see the situation David is in here. He is one who has known the Lord through his life. And yet here he is at the very end of his tether. There is nowhere for him to go.

There is nowhere for him to turn. Now yes, read at verse 6, David encouraged himself in the Lord. But, first of all, we see that in a sense it takes the emptying out of David and his people before he is prepared to finally go and inquire of the Lord.

It's not a case that we come back, oh, the city's all been burned. All our wives and families have been taken. Let's consult the Lord and see what he says. No, first of all, there is grief. First of all, there is the outpouring of hopelessness.

And only when they have no strength left to weep and there is that exhaustion, that complete emptying out. Then finally, does he say, right, what does the Lord say?

[4 : 52] What must I do about this? In a sense, there are many times in those who maybe have known the Lord, who maybe have been brought up with the Lord, who have known something of his presence in their lives or at least of his worship in their practice, when they are brought to that condition where there is nothing left or there seems to be nothing left in their lives.

And sometimes God brings us down to that absolute rock bottom where everything is burned up, everything is gone. We've completely crashed and burned and there is nothing left to hope for, nowhere left to turn.

Some people might just turn their face to the wall and give up. Some people might, as we read here, weep till they have no strength left to weep. But what do you do then when all the tears are gone, when all the soul is emptied out, where do you go?

What do you do? Finally, David said to Abiyah the priest, I pray thee, bring thee hither the ephod. David inquired at the Lord, shall I pursue after this truth? Shall I overtake them?

And he said, pursue, for thou shalt surely overtake them. Now, for those who have reached the end of the line, in a sense this is, if I can say it reverently, this is the choice they don't want.

[6 : 15] Because there is a certain, how can I put it, comfort almost in thinking, well that's it, there's nothing I can do. It's all finished, I'm wept out, I've no tears left.

It's hopeless, woe is me. And perhaps we've all been there to an extent. Perhaps we have all been at some point in our lives where we are completely exhausted with the grief and with the hopelessness and with everything going against you.

And when everything is against you, there is one part of you that doesn't want to be told, yes, get up, get on, go after it and I will be with you.

He says the Lord, because we might turn around and say, but Lord, come on, if you were with us before, why is the city burned? Why have all our wives and kids been captured by these pagans? Why have we been turned away by the people who we were trying to help?

Why are we in this situation? What have we done to deserve this? If you were really with us, Lord, then why didn't you help us before? There's part of us that doesn't want to do anything than just wallowing on exhaustion and hopelessness.

[7 : 22] Because we think we've done everything we can do. And you go to the Lord and he says, well, actually, no. There's still something you can do. And I will help you to do it. But you have to get up and you have to go on and you have to pursue after this goal whilst there is still some hope.

Because having asked the Lord's advice and counsel, yes, of course, we have two options. We can say, I'm going to do what the Lord says. We can say, no, I don't like that advice.

No, I want to just wallow. I want to just be in my misery. And I want to just say, there's no hope. There's no way to go. It's just hopeless. I've tried and there's nothing else I can do.

Maybe up till now, you have been trying in your own strength. Maybe up till now, like David, you've been making the best of a bad situation. That has involved a measure of treason.

A measure of treason against the Lord and his cause and his people and his kingdom. And to an extent, David has been siding with the enemy. Yes, you can say, oh, that's only because the king of Israel was hunting him down.

[8 : 29] Yes, the king of Israel was hunting him down, but the Lord always kept him one step ahead. He always preserved him. He didn't need to go and join forces with the Philistines, but he had done it.

He'd gone in with the Lord's enemies. And he was on their side for a time, and now this had befallen him. And there's a sense in which part of our strength to pick up and go on requires us first to recognize, I am in this case partly because of my own actions.

Yes, I didn't make the Amalekites come. Yes, I didn't burn my own city to the ground, of course. I didn't. But some of this has happened because of my own actions. I am not guiltless before the Lord.

I am the Lord's. I've always been the Lord's, perhaps, as David has always been. We're one of the Lord's people, perhaps. And look at this disaster that has come to us. Surely the Lord doesn't love us at all.

Yes, he does. But it is only when we go and inquire at the Lord's mouth that we are given the option to do as he says, or to just say, well, I don't like that advice.

[9 : 42] I'd rather just do my own thing. Well, you can do your own thing. You're free to do your own thing. But you can't expect the Lord's blessing of it once you know what his guidance and direction and advice is.

And those who have known something of the Lord always will come to a stage, that fork in the road in their lives, when God is requiring us something that we would rather not do.

The last thing David and his men probably want is to be told, right, you've got to get up. You've got to go after these people. You've got to hunt them down. And you will get everything back. You've got to trust the Lord that you'll have the victory.

When really that is the last thing you feel like. Really, you're all in. You're done in. I don't think you've got any strength left. But pick up and go on as the Lord has commanded and he will supply the strength.

That is the option before us. Oh, you can sit there and wallow in your own sorrow and misery as David and his men could have done. But having sought the Lord's counsel, there are then the two options.

[10 : 44] We either do what God says or we do what we ourselves want. And you know what the outcome is going to be. But God says, pursue. Go after this objective.

For thou shalt surely overtake them. And without fail recover all. So David went. He and the 600 men that were with him. And came to the brook baser were those that were left behind staying.

But David pursued. He and 400 men for 200 abode behind which were so faint that they could not go over the brook baser. Now the brook baser is down in the very south of the Holy Land.

It's almost sort of at the corner. Just south of Gaza. Almost where the Holy begins to turn the corner. Round towards Egypt. It's not quite at the brook or the river of Egypt which is generally taken as being the border between Egypt and the Holy Land as such.

But it's the last sort of river before that is the brook baser. So they're heading south and they're chasing after the Amalekites who have headed into the southern desert there. And they found an Egyptian in the field.

[11 : 52] And brought him to David. And gave him bread and he did eat and they made him drink water. How long does this Egyptian represent our situation at all?

Well we can maybe see how David does. But so also does this Egyptian. He is an Egyptian who illustrates the condition or the place of the sinner in relation to God.

He is one who is by race and nationality an enemy against the Lord's people. The Egyptians were those who had oppressed the Israelites in Egypt 400 years.

They were those who pursued after them much to their own disaster and hurt. They had been the enemies of Israel for centuries. And here is one of their enemy race.

But this is not a powerful pharaoh or a great master of chariots. This is a humble slave. A young man of Egypt who is the slave of an Amalekite.

[12 : 51] Another race that God has said he will have war with for all time. So here we've got the slave individual belonging to one race against the Lord's people and the Lord.

Who is the slave of another nationality. Pagan against the Lord and his people with whom the Lord has war. He himself has participated in all the destruction of the southern part of the Philistines and the southern part of Judah.

He was part of that group that bound Ziklag and carted off all David's wives and families and all those of his men. He is a complete and total enemy not only to the Lord but also to David's men here.

By rights to earth he found them in the desert there. He's just killing. And say well that's one less to worry about. But they found them in the field and they brought them to David and they gave him bread and he did eat and they made him drink water.

And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. These sweet kind of dried fruits which would have the sugar energy in them that would begin to revive him back.

[14 : 03] Give him a wee boost sort of thing. We could perhaps make a wee bit of mileage out of the fact that they found an Egyptian and brought him to David and gave him bread.

It only seems to me perhaps the water and the food after he's brought to David. Perhaps you could make a wee bit out of that. Rather than the mercy and kindness of the men himself.

They bring this half dead captive. Drop him at David's feet. David could have him killed. He had killed the Malachites and Egyptians before but this time he treats him with kindness.

Perhaps only for the information that he could get out of it. But the fact is he is an enemy. He is one who is guilty. Who is up to his neck in the very crime that they are seeking to avenge.

But instead of simply killing him out of hand, David shows him kindness. Brings him back from the very verge of death. Because he has been literally left to die in the wilderness.

[15 : 02] I am a young man of Egypt. Verse 13. Servant means slave to an Amalekite. And my master left me because three days ago I fell sick.

Now isn't this just a condition of the sinner? We are in enmity with God. We serve a people, a nation. We serve a false god, the devil, who is in enmity with God.

And yet the devil has no interest in those who serve him other than to make sure their souls are lost. When we are no further used to him, he will cast us aside.

It would have been the easiest thing in the world for the Amalekite just to kill his servant or kill his slave. Or perhaps he could have fed him and looked after him and said, well after all he is my servant. We have just taken a huge amount of spoil from the Philistines and the south of Judah.

We have got plenty of money, plenty of food, plenty of water. I can just look after him. I can bring him along in our entourage. And once he is better again he can go back to being my servant. But no.

[16 : 03] And instead he thinks, I have got plenty of new slaves now. I have plenty of servants. We will leave this one. Chuck him away. We don't have to kill him. I might just drop him. Like that. Leave him in the desert. And he can die of starvation, die of dehydration.

Or the beasts of the field can eat him. Whatever they want. But they don't care. It's a throwaway life. Just as your soul is disposable in the eyes of the evil one.

It is a complete fallacy for people to think, oh yeah, if I serve the devil and I give myself to the world, then I'll get a good time out of it and he'll be good to me. No, he won't.

He has no interest in you whatsoever. Except in so far as you can be a useful idiot to work against the kingdom of God.

If you can do some damage. If you can discourage a Christian here or there. If you can be a little sort of influence to undermine something of the gospel. Or maybe somebody in your family or somebody at your work or whatever who's a Christian or trying to be a Christian.

[17 : 06] If you can be of some use to the devil. Then, yes, he will allow you to keep going. But the minute you stop being a useful one. There's no interest in you at all. Just drop it. Just let you go.

That's what's happened to this Egyptian here. Who is the enmity. The enemy of the Lord and of David's people. But what happens when they bring him to David?

What happens when the enemies of the Lord are brought to the true son of David? They are given that which they need to resuscitate them.

To revive them. To bring them back to life a little. They brought him to David. That's what they do first. And gave him bread. And he did eat. And they made him drink water.

As long as the sense of him being semi-conscious and not able to drink for himself. They made him drink water. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins.

[18 : 03] And then when he had eaten his spirit came again to breathe. He had eaten no bread. No drunk any water. Three days and three nights. And you can imagine. Three days and three nights in the desert. Without any shelter.

Without any water. He must have been extremely near death. Because you don't last that length of time. Under normal circumstances. Without water in the desert at all.

And so with all the midday heat. And then the coldness of the night. Which would follow. And that the sense of gradually being dehydrated more and more.

He must have been very, very near the point of death. But not quite dead. And this is the condition in which, yes. Even those who have complete enmity to the Lord.

May be brought back from. We may be just completely wiped out from our own strength. We've been dumped. We've been left. If we are enmity with the Lord.

[19 : 02] But when the devil is finished with us. He'll just drop us. No interest whatsoever in us. He doesn't bother to kill us properly. As the master didn't bother to kill his slave.

He could have been kind to him. But he didn't bother. Just dropped him. To die in the wilderness. Where he would have died. Unless David's men had intervened. Our soul would have perished.

Except the Lord. In his providence. And by his servants. Or his people. Or bringing along a Christian at a key moment. Or whatever. And intervened and brought us.

At least within. As it were. A touching distance. Of the only one who can save us. And little by little. We are given a little bit of the water of life. We're given a little bit of bread to eat.

We're brought round a wee bit. We're not necessarily converted at that point. But we're able now. To converse with one. Who so far is keeping us alive. To whom belongest thou?

[19 : 59] Whence art thou? At least there am a young man of Egypt. Servant to an Amalekite. My master left me. Three days are gone. Because I fell asleep. We made an invasion. Up on the south of the Carathites.

And up on the coast. Which belonged to Judah. And up on the south of Caleb. And we burned Ziklag with fire. Now he doesn't know at this stage. That these are the men of Ziklag. Who have come to seek revenge.

He doesn't know. That they have every reason. To want to kill him. Or maybe he does. But he's acknowledging right off. Exactly what they've done. And exactly who he belongs to. This is who I was.

This is what we've done. This is what I've been part of. And this is part of what is necessary to us. There's no pulling the wool over David's eyes. At this stage. There's no pulling the wool over the Lord's eyes either.

Whether we come as those who have known him. For some time in our lives. As David did. Or whether we come as those who are complete enemies. To the Lord and his cause and his people.

[20 : 55] Part of our being restored. Is to acknowledge this is who I am. This is what I've done. This is what I'm guilty of. It didn't cause them to kill him before.

It's not going to cause them to kill him now. It's something they probably already suspected. Now this is one of the party that we are chasing. They've dropped them along the way. Oh this one's still alive.

Let's see if he can be of any benefit to us. And David said to him. Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said. Swear unto me by God. That thou wilt neither kill me.

Nor deliver me into the hands of my master. And I will bring thee down to this company. And this indicates to us. First of all. His desire to live. Most people.

When they are at the end of their telling. Even if they are feeling suicidal. With misery. It's usually. Not really that they want to actually end their lives.

[21 : 51] It's not that they don't want any more life. It's just that they cannot bear to think of more life. With the level of pain and misery and suffering.

That they have endured up to that point. And they don't see any way out of it. They don't see how it's going to be better. So in the first instance. He says. Don't. If you promised in the first instance.

That you won't kill me. He wants. To actually live. But he doesn't want to go back to life. As the slave of his Amalekite master. Now.

You could say there's two reasons about this. On the one hand. This is the guy who just dumped him in the desert. He left him to die. Literally. So he's not exactly a caring. Or loving master in any way.

Secondly. It also implies. That he was probably a cruel master. If he was one. Who's just prepared to abandon it. Alive. In the desert. One who may have been his servant. For some considerable time.

[22 : 48] Was a slave. To whom at least he had a responsibility. Means that clearly. To this Amalekite master. This man was of no more use to him. Than a robot would be.

Or just the work he can get out of it. When he's no longer able to work. And you know. If it was something that would mean. He could still go about. He could still use his arms and legs and feet.

Then they would probably get him still to work. Still to wait on his master. Still to do the jobs. But he's obviously laid low. Maybe with some kind of fever. Or some kind of debilitating illness. That means he cannot work.

So. Not for the moment anyway. So. He's no use to it. This is the kind of cruel master. And just in case we're thinking. In which case. You know. Might be tempted to think.

Oh yeah. But the Amalekites. They can't have been that bad. You know. Because. They were just innocently. You know. Eating and drinking and dancing. They weren't doing anything bad to the captives. They didn't kill any of them. They just carted off all the women and children.

[23 : 45] You know. What do you imagine they were going to do with them? They weren't going to treat them as pets. They weren't going to take them home. And be nice to them. Children would fetch a good market.

A slave market price. The women. Well you know what they would want to do with themselves. Some of them keep the best of them for themselves perhaps. But you can guarantee that their intentions would neither have been kind nor honourable.

The ultimate end for all of these women and children was probably a fate worse than death. And certainly the master who owned this Amalekite.

He would rather die probably than be taken back to his master. But what he wants to do is live. And not go back to his master. Swear to me by God.

That thou would neither kill me. Nor deliver me into the hands of my master. And I will bring thee down to this company. Now that suggests either that he has been with them long enough to know how they plan out their camp.

[24 : 47] He is likely to know where the sentries are. And how their defences are arranged. Either that or. Maybe it's a both and. That if he appears again in the camp.

Then any sentries or any gods will just say. Oh yeah it's so and so servant. Oh we thought you'd been left out in the desert. Okay his tent's just over there. I'll have you go back and join your master. That he wouldn't arouse suspicion necessarily.

If he enters the camp. Himself. First of all. Because he is known to be the servant. The slave. Of one of the Amalekites. And it may mean that he can enter the camp.

Fair enough. Easily enough. Or it may mean that he knows the layout of it. And how he can bring David and his men down. Without arousing suspicion. Perhaps a little bit of both. When he had brought them down.

Behold they were spread abroad upon all the earth. Eating and drinking and dancing. Because of all the great spoil. That they had taken out of the land of the Philistines. And out of the land of Judah. And David smote down from the twilight.

[25 : 48] Even unto the evening of the next day. And they escaped not a man of them. There's almost a little bit of sense of humour here. Not a single one. Except 400. They escaped on camels.

400 is a lot. But obviously it is those who are the best equipped. With the best means to get away. David and his men are on foot. And you don't think of camels as being necessarily like race horses.

But at the same time. If a whole bunch of people have got camels to escape on. And you've been pursuing so faint. And so weary. And so tired. That you've had to leave a third of your force behind.

To guard the baggage. You're not in a position to chase after camels. Any more than you would to chase after horses. 400 get away. That's quite a considerable number.

But everybody else gets pretty sore. And the implication is almost that they're taking their time. Or else that it's a huge camp. To get through. From the twilight.

[26 : 45] Just as it's beginning to get toward dusk. Until the evening. Which in Jewish terms probably means late afternoon. You know. Of the next day. So almost like 24 hours.

They've been consistently working through. Slaughtering everybody. And freeing all the captives. They escaped not in Manifel. Apart from those. They escaped in the camels. And fled.

David recovered all. That the Amalekites had carried away. And David rescued his two wives. There was nothing lacking to them. Neither small. Nor great. Neither sons.

Nor daughters. Neither spoil. Nor anything. That they had taken to them. David recovered all. If we were to read the next verse. It would say. David took all the flocks. And the herds.

Which they draved. Before those other cattle. And said. This is David's spoil. In other words. By having the courage. And the driving of themselves. To do as the Lord had required of them.

[27 : 40] They ended up. Not only recovering all their wives and children. But they came away an awful lot richer. Than they had been before. Now admittedly. They don't have a city to go back to. It's all burned up.

But. They have everybody recovered. They have all the spoil. Of the Amalekites. They have exacted. Not only recovery. But also revenge.

And as far as this. Egyptian slave is concerned. He will go off into the sunset. A free man. He will have escaped with his life. Free to go home.

Free to be back united again. With his family. Because. He has been brought to David. And treated with mercy. And all he has done. Is shown him where to find his enemies.

Who have shown themselves. The enemy of himself. As well. The devil is not anyone's friend. He is your enemy. Even if you be in his control.

[28 : 36] If we are at enmity with the Lord. The Lord still will deal kindly with us. He will still feed us. Clothe us. Look after us. Revive us.

To the extent where we have the choice. To either work for him. Or turn against him. Just as David had the choice before. To act on the Lord's counsel. Or to ignore it.

And wallow in his own grief. So this Egyptian has the choice. Of either giving David the information. And help that he wants. In which case he'll live and go free. Or they'll say. Well I'm not going to help you.

Why would I want to help you? You're Israelites. You know. He's. Either one way or the other. He's been a slave all his life. Now he's got a chance to be free. He's got a chance to be the person.

That he was always hoping he could be. That's part of what Christ does for us. He gives us the opportunity. Not to make a move. I have to do this. I'm not allowed to do that. I have to keep this commandment.

[29 : 32] What a bore it is. It's such a burden. No. What the Lord does for us. When he sets us free. Is that he enables us. To find our true home.

He enables us to be the person. That we always were intended. By the Lord to be. The man. The woman. That we could have been. But were never able to be.

Because we were in bondage. Because we were a slave. And maybe we hadn't known any different. But still we knew. Life isn't meant to be like this.

Surely we are meant to be free. Surely we are meant to be fulfilled. Surely we are meant to be able to find our true home.

When those who are the Lord's. Follow his guidance. And his direction. It may be the last thing that the flesh wants to do. David probably.

[30 : 29] He just wanted to collapse in a heap. And didn't want to go pursue these Amalekites. But. That was God's counsel and guidance. And he came away with victory. And with blessing.

And with great and retreat. And the one who had always been the enemy. Against the Lord and his people. He is enabled to be free. And to find his true home.

And to be all that he could have been before. Because he is restored. Whatever our condition. Whether we have been brought up to know something of the Lord.

Or whether we have been complete strangers. Or an enmity with the Lord. Coming to the son of David. Means that we will have a chance. We will have an option of life.

In all its fullness. And we may be in a condition where we are so struck down with grief. We just can't bring ourselves to go on. And that's true. You can't bring yourself to go on.

[31 : 28] But the Lord can give you the strength. To pick up. And to go on. And to obey. His guidance and his command. The Lord will never command anything.

That he is not able to give us the strength to fulfill. He never commands the impossible. Because even that which seems to be impossible with us. The Bible says that things which are impossible with men.

Are possible with God. Wherever you have come from. When you come to the Lord. Only he knows. All that you might be.

And all that you might go. But you will never do it. Until you are brought first to heaven. Let us pray.