THE LORD WILL DO WHAT IS GOOD IN HIS SIGHT

2 Samuel 10:1-19

“Be strong, and let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The Lord will do what is good in his sight.”

—2 Samuel 10:12

Today’s passage gives us the details of how the Ammonites became subject to David and how the kingdom expanded. The Israelites suffered humiliations and faced a large number of very strong soldiers in battle.

Joab’s words in verse 12 tell us of their trust in God to do what is good in his sight. At the heart of their service, in their humiliations and fighting, they trusted in God to do what is good in his sight. There was a deep conviction of this trust in God. So because of this trust in God, Joab could encourage the soldiers to fight bravely.

Let us consider this trust in God to do what is good in his sight. In the first place, God does what is good. So, he himself is good and does what is good. And what “is good” is qualified by the words, “in his sight.” This is very assuring when you think about it. For example, if someone told you, “Charles will do what is good in his sight,” you may not know the outcome and may feel uneasy. What is good in my sight might not be good in your sight. In the same way, to know that God does what is good in his sight is very assuring. He doesn’t do what is good in someone else’s sight, but in his sight. It is not random nor questionable. Who has such a high standard of what is good, except God? Because God alone is good, the good he does in his sight is truly good.

With this trust in God, David and his servants gained the wisdom and the strength to serve the Lord in a right way and successfully. It means that when we trust him to do what is good in his sight, then we also can do what is good in his sight, without worrying about what others are doing.

Let’s look at the passage. David’s enemies had major trust problems. First, they didn’t trust and only followed suspicions and doubts. Secondly, they trusted in physical strength and military power.

Look at verses 1-4.

[1] In the course of time, the king of the Ammonites died, and his son Hanun succeeded him as king. [2] David thought, “I will show kindness to Hanun son of Nahash, just as his father showed kindness to me.” So David sent a delegation to express his sympathy to Hanun concerning his father.

When David’s men came to the land of the Ammonites, [3] the Ammonite commanders said to Hanun their lord, “Do you think David is honoring your father by sending envoys to you to express sympathy? Hasn’t David sent them to you only to explore the city and spy it out and overthrow it?” [4] So Hanun seized David’s envoys, shaved off half of each man’s beard, cut off their garments at the buttocks, and sent them away.

David showed them kindness and sent a delegation. But they doubted his kindness. They thought it was very suspicious and that David had ulterior motives to harm them. Look at verse 3. The commanders said, “Do you think David is honoring your father by sending envoys to you to express sympathy?” That was exactly what David was doing! The Bible even tells us that this was David’s thought in sending a delegation. How often do we get to know the very thoughts of a person? Yet the Bible tells us his thoughts here so that we would know clearly what is going on without a doubt. But they doubted. They trusted in their doubting and suspicious attitude and ending up humiliating David’s servants, and therefore David too, paying back evil for good.

Paying back evil for good proved to be a very bad thing for the Ammonites. It was foolish. Proverbs 17:13 says, “Evil will never leave the house of the one who pays back evil for good.”

When we follow our doubts and suspicions it might lead us to do what we should not do. What I mean is that it is not a good source for gaining wisdom and to know what is right. I don’t mean to just trust everyone, but I mean that doubt should not lead our actions.

In one article I read, someone was asked what the big difference is, if any, between big cities, such as LA and New York. The person replied, in LA everyone is suspicious of ulterior motives. If you’re walking down the street and someone looks at your and smiles and says, “Hi, how are you?” LA people will think, “Why do you want to know how I am? Are you going to mug me?” But in New York, the people are more honest straight forward so that you know you are going to get mugged. Because of this, people are less likely to be kind and to respond to kindness in LA.

Such doubt is also detrimental to a person knowing the kindness of God. In the garden of Eden, God gave to Adam and Eve all that was good. After he made them, the Bible says that God saw that all he had made was “very good.” Yet, she doubted God as she listened to the serpent, saying that God was keeping good things from them. So she was deceived and ate from the tree that God commanded them not to eat from. She was deceived because of a lack of trust in God who is good and does what is good in his sight.

Look at verse 5.

When David was told about this, he sent messengers to meet the men, for they were greatly humiliated. The king said, “Stay at Jericho till your beards have grown, and then come back.”

David protected his men, had them stay in a nearby city, and then return. They were “greatly humiliated.” A beard can be a man’s pride. It’s not just an ancient thing, but even now. I’m half white and half Filipino. I have the facial hair genes of my Filipino side. So, I don’t really grow much. I didn’t really start shaving till college. Filipino men in my family just have a kind of catfish-like facial hair pattern. I was always envious of those who can grow full beards. But whatever kind of facial hair a man has, to have it cut off and only half showing is a major embarrassment. And then their butts were exposed and they were sent away. They weren’t just turned away, but they were humiliated and ridiculed.

But what stands out is that David didn’t retaliate. He had always been quick to attack. He had a righteous anger. It showed itself first when he fought Goliath. He resisted to attack king Saul. That he resisted showed that he wanted to. He had a history of this. But this time he didn’t retaliate. He bore the shame which was directed towards him because those servants represented him. It was his own humiliation to bear.

It is not easy to be publicly humiliated and ashamed, especially when you didn’t do wrong. In David’s case, he was humiliated for what they assumed he was thinking, but they were wrong. In such a case, you might want to clear your name as quickly as possible and to retaliate. How dare they! You might think to yourself. How can you bear to be humiliated publicly?

At times we might think that we are good at knowing what is in a person’s heart or what they are thinking. And in this way we judge others, even humiliating them. I’ve heard it many times. It’s been done to me, and I’ve also done it to others.

But David didn’t fight back. He didn’t fight for his own name and honor. He suffered the insult and he took care of his people. Beards grow again. Their reputation and honor could be restored. So he didn’t need to fight.

Look at verses 6-8.

[6] When the Ammonites realized that they had become obnoxious to David, they hired twenty thousand Aramean foot soldiers from Beth Rehob and Zobah, as well as the king of Maakah with a thousand men, and also twelve thousand men from Tob.

[7] On hearing this, David sent Joab out with the entire army of fighting men. [8] The Ammonites came out and drew up in battle formation at the entrance of their city gate, while the Arameans of Zobah and Rehob and the men of Tob and Maakah were by themselves in the open country.

First, we see that the Ammonites hired soldiers to fight against David, although David had not threatened them. When they realized they made a mistake, they could have apologized. But they didn’t. Instead, they put their money up and hired some muscle. But this only instigated David’s attack against them because it looked like they were getting ready to attack Israel after ridiculing them. They relied on their money and physical strength. It made them proud, obstinate, quick to fight.

Second, we see David’s people relying in God. Look at verses 11-12.

[11] Joab said, “If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you are to come to my rescue; but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will come to rescue you. [12] Be strong, and let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The Lord will do what is good in his sight.”

Joab based their strategy on what the Lord would do. When he considered what the Lord would do, they could be brave and strong for the sake of the Lord and his people and cities. They trusted in God and relied on him.

What God sees as good is independent of how strong the Ammonites or the Arameans were. God is attentive to his people. He does what is good in his sight. He became their strength. What a contrast between the Israelites and their enemies. One was strong in money and muscle, and the other was strong in the Lord who will do what is good in his sight.

The strength of the Israelites was stronger than the Ammonites and Arameans.

Look at verse 13-14.

[13] Then Joab and the troops with him advanced to fight the Arameans, and they fled before him. [14] When the Ammonites realized that the Arameans were fleeing, they fled before Abishai and went inside the city. So Joab returned from fighting the Ammonites and came to Jerusalem.

One side fled, and then the other side got scared and fled. Their strength and courage were gone.

But then they tried the same tactic again. Look at verses 15-16.

[15] After the Arameans saw that they had been routed by Israel, they regrouped. [16] Hadadezer had Arameans brought from beyond the Euphrates River; they went to Helam, with Shobak the commander of Hadadezer’s army leading them.

The Arameans must have been proud about their muscle power, so they regrouped and wanted to trie again. Hadadezer got more Arameans from distant locations. They were calling all the gang to the fight. At this point David came out to fight against them. And verses 17-19 tell us how David defeated them with a crushing victory so that the Arameans were afraid to help the Ammonites anymore. Even those who had pledged allegiance to the Arameans and Ammonites made peace with Israel and became subject to them. In this way, God gave David and the Israelites peace on all sides from all their enemies, just as he had promised, and extended their borders all the way to the Euphrates River.

We see through their example how trusting in God who does what is good in his sight made them wise and strong, even in humiliations and conflicts with others. On the other hand, trusting in suspicions and doubts, in judging people’s thoughts, in money and muscle turned out to be foolish and failing. David didn’t foresee the result that would come out from the beginning of the passage. But God fulfilled his word as he promised. He helped them and did what was good in his sight. That is the power of trust. You don’t need to know everything the other person will do. You just trust them to do what they should do and then you do what you should do. And the results are good. Many times we don’t know the details of what God is doing or will do. But that is okay because we trust in him to do what is good in his sight.

Trusting in God, who does what is good in his sight, makes us strong and wise to serve him. And this trust in him sets us free from the burden of being bound by what others think about us, say about us, or even bring conflict against us.

How do we know that God is good and that he does what is good in his sight?

The proof is in Jesus Christ. God sent Jesus to this world to save sinners. He loved us and gave his life for us to take away our sins.

While Jesus was here, he did what was good in God’s sight. He helped the needy. He went to those no one wanted to go to and he gave them new life.

Who here has been participating in the Seek and Save program? We can see the good Jesus did, even for such despised people.

He called Zacchaeus down from the tree. Jesus said to him, “I must stay at your house to today.” Everyone was surprised because Zacchaeus was a “sinner.” How could Jesus be his guest?

He travelled to Samaria, a no man’s land for Jews, and gave the gift of living water to a thirsty Samaritan woman, a woman even the Samaritans didn’t want to associate with.

Jesus did not condemn the woman caught in adultery when everyone else around her was ready to condemn her.

Jesus welcomed and taught the proud Nicodemus about the love of God and being born again.

And Jesus himself trusted in God who does what is good in his sight. On the night Jesus was to be arrested and then crucified, he went to a garden and prayed.

Matthew 26:39 says,

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

and,

Matthew 26:42 says,

He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

Jesus also suffered much humiliation and conflict from others. It was so agonizing that he prayed in this way. When he was arrested, they treated him like a criminal and a terrorist. They gave him a pseudo trial with false witnesses and condemned him to death. They mocked him, dressed him up in a robe, gave him a crown of thorns. They blindfolded him and beat him saying, “prophesy, who hit you?” Even on the cross they continued to hurl insults at him and mock him, saying, “If you’re the Christ save yourself!” and, “He saved others, but he can’t save himself.”

Jesus submitted himself to God’s will. It shows that he trusted in God who is good and does what is good in his sight. He knew the shame and the agony and death to come, which is the cup he had to drink. But he accepted it because he trusted in God to do good, to raise him back to life and to forgive sinners and bring salvation. He showed that God does what is good in his sight. So he said, “May your will be done.”

Jesus did what was good in God’s sight. He showed God’s kindness to everyone. He gave the word of God and loved them. Yet this was how his kindness was received. And Jesus suffered humiliation during his whole ministry, not just on the cross.

When Jesus met the Samaritan woman, he offered her the gift of God, living water. But she said, “The well is deep and you don’t even have a bucket to draw water.” That’s a humiliating response.

Jesus was also called a Samaritan and demon-possessed by the Jews (John 8:48). To call someone a Samaritan was humiliating. It was very insulting. And then they said he had a demon.

Even Jesus’ family humiliated him publicly.

Mark 3:20-21 say,

[20] Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. [21] When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”

Then, verses 31-32 say,

[31] Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. [32] A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”

I think we’ve all been embarrassed by our parents or family members, but even Jesus was in front of a large crowd that came to see him.

One unique aspect about the Seek and Save program that I really appreciate is learning how Jesus helped different people who were not always so kind and receptive, or who were needy and shunned. So it’s put into perspective our service to Jesus in this world. Jesus warned his disciples, if they treated me like this, they will treat you this way also (John 15:18-25). So, those who who are participating in the Seek and Save program are being equipped by learning of Jesus who dealt with difficult people and even with being rejected when going out. You will have to experience this as well.

I say this to encourage you, not discourage you. No one likes to be humiliated or rejected. But Jesus set an example of trusting in God who does what is good in his sight. So he submitted to God’s will over his own. And he demonstrated God’s love and goodness by giving up his life. God’s goodness wasn’t proven by killing others, but by sacrificing his life. He continued to do what God wanted him to do.

Because of Jesus’ sacrifice, the apostle Paul became convinced of God’s goodness and love. Paul had been a violent and unforgiving man before this.

Romans 5:8 says,

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

And he goes on to say that nothing, “in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39).

Consider 2 Corinthians 11:23-29.

[23] Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. [24] Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. [25] Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, [26] I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. [27] I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. [28] Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. [29] Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

Paul served Jesus and suffered a lot. As he suffered, he learned more of his weakness. But then he learned more of Jesus’ grace which made him strong. He himself was not strong, but Jesus’ grace, his love and goodness, made him strong. It made him wise to do endure because he saw beyond those present sufferings to the glory to come. God was doing good things so he continued.

He didn’t just apply this to himself. But he saw the good work that God was doing in others. He was confident in it and prayed for them.

Philippians 2:13 says,

for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Simply, he trusted in God who does what is good in his sight. And he encouraged the believers not according to their situation, financially or physically or otherwise, but all according to God who does what is good in his sight. He encouraged them to be faithful and to be strong and be wise in Jesus Christ by faith in him.

How we regard ourselves, others, our circumstances, should not be by worldly standards, but in view of God who is working out his good purpose. Sometimes what is before us does not look good, we have troubles. We mustn’t make the mistake of relying on what is not reliable, just as the Ammonites did. If we are negative all the time, saying, This bad thing happened, and this bad thing happened, and nothing’s going right, God is not doing anything good—if we think like that then we’re in trouble. We will be suspicious, negative, and harmful to others. It makes us confrontation, bitter, and divisive. The work of God does not arise out of doubt and unbelief. You may say, “Well, bad things are happening!” So be it, but God will do what is good in his sight. Joab and the army were surrounding on both sides by enemies. But he said, “Be strong and let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The Lord will do what is good in his sight” (12).

When we look at Jesus we see the proof of God who does what is good in his sight. And then we can know that we can be strong, brave, and continue to do the good he wants us to do according to his word. If we have any doubts about God’s goodness, then we can look to Jesus and find an answer. We can’t look at ourselves or others. But we can look at Jesus who loved us and died for us.

At the same time, relying just on our physical strength or money will not facilitate the work of God. We cannot buy victories from God or strong-arm him. Your muscles or money cannot buy salvation. You can buy a nice car, but money will not bring in new people to the church.

Actually, Jesus is the one who purchased people for God.

Revelation 5:9 says of Jesus,

And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

Despite all the troubles from the world because of serving Jesus, we can be strong and secure because we know that God will do what is good in his sight. And that is the most assuring thing.

As Jesus said, we will be persecuted and rejected like him. And some will obey our teaching, just as some obeyed Jesus. In both cases he is working out his good purpose. I know you have experienced humiliations and conflicts with others because of Jesus. How did you feel at that time? Were you ashamed or did you rejoice to suffer for Jesus because you see good things ahead?

I also experienced some humiliation and conflict because of Jesus. Not in some incredible ways, but just normal ways like most of you. We share these things in Jesus.

\* My mom and brother told me I was out of my mind. They had never seen me committed to something, out of the house, at church, and doing good for others. It was strange. She missed her son and wanted me to live at home again. I said no, and she disowned me. In fact, she disowned me three times in one year. This was during my college days.

\* Also, while in college, I invited students a lot. My goal was having three Bible studies a day with students. As a student, I saw it was a very reasonable goal to reach. Anyway, I was out a lot inviting. I met people who cussed at me, raised their fists to hit me, spit on me, laugh at me (some girls did this once and quite a few guys). When it’s your peers, it was both humiliating and felt good to challenge the status quo. Everyone else was so busy to be a college student, to party, to network, to build their career, but I didn’t join them for any of that.

\* That was just at school. There was also some people in church who claimed they knew my thoughts and said things about me which led to getting humiliated a few times. (They’re not with us anymore). I was called a mental patient, a chicken with his head cut off, poor looking. I was asked if I would leave (this happened more than once). Later, I saw this person at a UBF staff conference in Chicago. She saw me, was surprised and said, in front of everyone, “Oh Charlie, is that you?” (She didn’t even get my name right.) Then she said, “Why are you here? Do you think you’re someone special? And you look like a middle-aged man.”

What am I saying? That God has been my strength because Jesus convinced me that he is good and does what is good in his sight without fail. And God used all of those humiliating times further his kingdom and to further his kingdom and at the same time to show grace to me and help me. God is doing what is good in his sight. His servants do face these hardships when they go out and show God’s kindness and preach the gospel, we are misunderstood, but we testify about Jesus, just as Jesus commanded us. He is working out his good purpose in all these things for all who believe. We can be strong when we trust in him who does what is good in his sight. We can continue serving him, bearing humiliation if we have to, going through trials if they come our way, and so on.

Joab’s words also show how trusting in God’s goodness brings good coworking, in humility and unity. He said, “If I need help, you help me. And if you need help, I’ll help you.” They each didn’t think they were better than the other. They didn’t think that no one was stronger than them. But by trusting in God they worked together humbly and in unity.

We can help each other when we go out to the campus for Bible studies or to invite new students to Bible study. Young, old, male, female, husband, wife, all have a part to help each other. If you find that you need help on campus, go to someone and say, “Help me. And I will help you when you need it.”

When you’re young on the campus, there’s a certain kind of humiliation. There’s also another when you’re older, which I’m learning about it. Now, students are very polite to me. They call me sir, and they say, No, thank you, to the invitation to Bible study. No one is really rude or mean anymore. Some ask if I’m a teacher. I feel so out of place on a campus and inviting students that I don’t want to go oftentimes. I look so different from today’s students. So I need a new kind of help from you. So, I like to go out with James because he’s older than me and has gray hairs.

We’re not called to be like the lone ranger. God’s goodness does not call us to be divided or to criticize or attack each other, but to support each other and help each other. Coworking comes from trusting in God. We may have issues that we are working out with others. We may have had difficulties in the past and strained relationships. But by trusting in God we have to also trust each other. Joab trusted in Abishai to help him. And he asked Abishai to trust in him and come to his help. On the other hand, we see that the Arameans didn't help each other. When one was defeated, the other didn't help but ran away. They bound just by money. But the Israelites were bound by trust, in God and each other.

The practice way that God commanded us to love him to love our neighbor. We have to cowork well by trusting in God and by trusting each other.

Today’s passage encourages us to be brave and to work together well by trusting in God who does what is good in his sight. Trusting in God who does what is good in his sight teaches us then to keep doing what is good in his sight and to bear hardships with thanksgiving. Although we have troubles, although circumstances aren’t good, although others mistreat us, since he does what is good in his sight we also must keep doing what is good in his sight. We shouldn’t be ashamed or excuse ourselves for being weak. We thank God for proving his love and good in Jesus and in his grace to us.