

# S&L, Episode VI: The Comeback Kid

Reconnect – July 31, 2011

**Text:** I Samuel 30:1-27; Romans 8:9-14; Psalm 4

**Key Thought:** God still offers comfort and courage in our darkest times so that we can be faithful to Him.

When David and his men saw the ruins and realized what had happened to their families, they wept until they could weep no more. David's two wives, Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal from Carmel, were among those captured. David was now in great danger because all his men were very bitter about losing their sons and daughters, and they began to talk of stoning him. But David found strength in the Lord his God. (I Samuel 25, NLT)

## Pre-Intro: I am second – Bethany Hamilton

### Intro: Soul Surfer

- Bethany Hamilton – the real life person behind the movie “Soul Surfer” – at 13 as a competitive surfer, she was the victim of a shark attack and lost her arm
- But a month later, putting her faith in God, she was back on a surfboard – and two years later, she would win the US national student surfing championship
- To come back after such a horrible injury, after such a horrible event, and to do it with the sport so intertwined with what she had suffered – that's inspiring
- And in fact, inspiring literally means “breathes into us” – it brings new life into us, new motivation, a new attitude into our minds and hearts

### The worst moments and places of our lives

- Doing weddings, I'm generally involved with happy events, at different scenic locations around the city – beautiful backyards, restaurants, retreat centres, hotels, parks – the places where people want to make magic come alive, where they celebrate those foundational moments of life
- But there are other places that are not associated with joy or good times – the places that no-one wants to go – I was driving by the funeral home on Richmond a couple of nights ago, thinking about it
- Funeral homes and hospitals are two of them – but there are others – the places where the worst moments of our lives take place
- Think in your own mind – what's the worst event of your life? A parent leaving? A marriage breaking up? An accident? A conversation, a moment in time?
- Somehow, from that moment, you came back – or you're still coming back
- You found a way to move on, to go forward – somehow – or maybe you're still looking for that way
- If that's where you're at, then this morning is for you

### Read/Explain Text: I Samuel 30:1-27, NLT

Three days later, when David and his men arrived home at their town of Ziklag, they found that the Amalekites had made a raid into the Negev and Ziklag; they had crushed Ziklag and burned it to the ground. They had carried off the women and children and everyone else but without killing anyone.

When David and his men saw the ruins and realized what had happened to their families, they wept until they could weep no more. David's two wives, Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal from Carmel, were among those captured. David was now in great danger because all his men were very bitter about losing their sons and daughters, and they began to talk of stoning him. But David found strength in the Lord his God.

Then he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring me the ephod!" So Abiathar brought it. Then David asked the Lord, "Should I chase after this band of raiders? Will I catch them?" And the Lord told him, "Yes, go after them. You will surely recover everything that was taken from you!" So David and his 600 men set out, and they came to the brook Besor. But 200 of the men were too exhausted to cross the brook, so David continued the pursuit with 400 men.

Along the way they found an Egyptian man in a field and brought him to David. They gave him some bread to eat and water to drink. They also gave him part of a fig cake and two clusters of raisins, for he hadn't had anything to eat or drink for three days and nights. Before long his strength returned. "To whom do you belong, and where do you come from?" David asked him. "I am an Egyptian—the slave of an Amalekite," he replied. "My master abandoned me three days ago because I was sick. We were on our way back from raiding the Kerethites in the Negev, the territory of Judah, and the land of Caleb, and we had just burned Ziklag." "Will you lead me to this band of raiders?" David asked. The young man replied, "If you take an oath in God's name that you will not kill me or give me back to my master, then I will guide you to them."

So he led David to them, and they found the Amalekites spread out across the fields, eating and drinking and dancing with joy because of the vast amount of plunder they had taken from the Philistines and the land of Judah. David and his men rushed in among them and slaughtered them throughout that night and the entire next day until evening. None of the Amalekites escaped except 400 young men who fled on camels. David got back everything the Amalekites had taken, and he rescued his two wives. Nothing was missing: small or great, son or daughter, nor anything else that had been taken. David brought everything back. He also recovered all the flocks and herds, and his men drove them ahead of the other livestock. "This plunder belongs to David!" they said.

Then David returned to the brook Besor and met up with the 200 men who had been left behind because they were too exhausted to go with him. They went out to meet David and his men, and David greeted them joyfully. But some evil troublemakers among David's men said, "They didn't go with us, so they can't have any of the plunder we recovered. Give them their wives and children, and tell them to be gone."

But David said, “No, my brothers! Don’t be selfish with what the Lord has given us. He has kept us safe and helped us defeat the band of raiders that attacked us. Who will listen when you talk like this? We share and share alike—those who go to battle and those who guard the equipment.” From then on David made this a decree and regulation for Israel, and it is still followed today. When he arrived at Ziklag, David sent part of the plunder to the elders of Judah, who were his friends. “Here is a present for you, taken from the Lord’s enemies,” he said. I Samuel 30:1-27, NLT

### Coming back – the right way

- How we respond in our darkest hour is a direct correlation to the connection we have with God
- How do you choose to “come back”? What motivates you? Anger? Bitterness? The “I’ll show them”? Determination to succeed because you know you can do it? Pride?
- Those emotions – those motivations – can only take us so far in the right direction
- You may come back – BUT – you may come back for the worse, not for the better
- Somewhere on your way back you realize that your repair job for your life wasn’t quite what you wanted – something is still bent, something is still rusty, something is still stuck – and the limp you’re walking with isn’t from God, it’s from yourself
- It’s like playing a video game (warning – this illustration isn’t for everyone)
  - There are certain challenging places where you can get stuck – where nothing you do seems to move you forward, where everything brings you back to that same place – you don’t have the tools you need, or the reflexes, or the insight to move forward
- I find that to be very much like trying to get through one of these “darkest moments” without a connection to God, or without relying primarily on your connection with God
- Just giving God lip service is not enough – if he’s not foundational in your life, if your brokenness doesn’t lead you to the cross on your knees, then that’s not the path that your recovery will take
- David first finds strength in God, and then he operates out of that strength, out of that relationship with God – so that everything he does over the next days is done out of faith – first, leaving behind his 200 men rather than disciplining them or punishing them to continue, then rescuing the Egyptian slave, and then finally, after the battle and the army is reunited, ensuring fairness in redistributing what was taken between those who had made it all the way and those who had been left behind

## **Key Thought:**

**God still offers comfort and courage in our darkest times so that we can be faithful to Him.**

But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)... The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you. Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

**Romans 8:9-14, NLT**

## **Conclusion: the Norway massacre**

- The world has looked on in horror over the last week in Norway, as it experienced its worst loss since World War II – a peaceful nation, victimized by a bombing and assassination attempt on its prime minister and then a massacre of teenagers and young adults on an island retreat centre
- But the response has been inspiring – especially the initial remarks of the Norwegian Prime Minister directly in the aftermath of the tragedy – I wanted you to hear some of it:

Amidst all this tragedy, I am proud to live in a country that has managed to hold its head up high at a critical time. I have been impressed by the dignity, compassion and resolve I have met. We are a small country, but a proud people. We are still shocked by what has happened, but we will never give up our values.

Our response is more democracy, more openness, and more humanity. But never naivety. No one has said it better than the Labour Youth League girl who was interviewed by CNN: “If one man can create that much hate, you can only imagine how much love we as a togetherness can create.” **Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, July 24, 2011 memorial address to the victims**

- The answer in our worst moments and in their aftermath is not to just cope, is not to find some new way of managing, but rather to stick with the One who has been beside the us the whole time – to “believe our beliefs and doubt our doubts” – to reconnect with God and allow his strength and ways to motivate us and guide our responses, so that we can come back even stronger than before

## **Response: Psalm 4**

For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by stringed instruments.

Answer me when I call to you,

O God who declares me innocent.

Free me from my troubles.

Have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

How long will you people ruin my reputation?

How long will you make groundless accusations?

How long will you continue your lies?

<Interlude>

You can be sure of this:

The Lord set apart the godly for himself.

The Lord will answer when I call to him.

Don't sin by letting anger control you.

Think about it overnight and remain silent.

<Interlude>

Offer sacrifices in the right spirit,

and trust the Lord.

Many people say, "Who will show us better times?"

Let your face smile on us, Lord.

You have given me greater joy

than those who have abundant harvests of grain and new wine.

In peace I will lie down and sleep,

for you alone, O Lord, will keep me safe.