

David the King 5 - Encouraged in the Lord

1. Surrounded by humanity.

Last week we read of the deep friendship of David and Jonathan. Jonathan couldn't imagine that anyone could have a problem with David, even though it should have been obvious. He finally came to understand that his Father was intent on killing David and arranged for David to be able to flee. After David departed from Jonathan, Saul began to hunt him down. We should remember that David only sought to be a blessing to Saul and never took advantage of any moment when he could have destroyed his enemy. During this time, a company of 400 men took up with David. Later, the number would grow to 600.

1Sam 22:1-2 David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard *it*, they went down thither to him.

2And every one *that was* in distress, and every one *that was* in debt, and every one *that was* discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.

It would make for a great story if all the men who followed David formed a righteous army. The fact of the matter is that people are human. This is good to keep in mind when you see rioting protestors rising up in what they want you to think is righteous indignation. They are human, too, just like the people they are intimidating and attacking. And *also* at the same time, we have to remember that we, too, are human. The 400 men who gathered around David included not only men of his father's house, but also those that were in distress, had debt, and discontented. The Bible was not written as a mythology to elevate and support cultural heroes. The Bible is a book that deals with men in all their human indignity as *well* as in their struggle against sin. The victories that they achieve are not one according to the excellence of their character but oftentimes in spite of their character.

We last read of David in I Samuel chapters 20 and 22. Over the course of the next eight chapters we find David fleeing from Saul and finally finding refuge in the land of the Philistines. Achish, the King of Gath, gave David and his men Ziklag.

1Sam 27:5-7 And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell

in the royal city with thee?

6Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day.

7And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months.

It was from Ziklag that David carried out attacks against enemies of the Philistines, but never against Israel. As what happens in the time of war, David did not reveal to Achish that he was moving against neighboring countries but kept it secret from him that he was not attacking Israel. Achish assumed from David's reports that he had David's support, even against Israel.

1Sam 27:8-12 And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those *nations were* of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt.

9And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish.

10And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to day? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites.

11And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring *tidings* to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so *will be* his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines.

12And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.

This brings us to chapter 30 where a horrific event takes place that brought David down to the lowest point in his life so far.

2. Abandoned.

First, in chapter 29, Achish is ready to lead the Philistines in an attack against Israel. The princes of the Philistines are very nervous about David and the presence of his Jewish army.

1Sam 29:4-5 And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him [Achish]; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an

adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? *should it not be* with the heads of these men?

5Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

Achish had to relent and dismissed David.

1Sam 29:11 So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

And now we come to chapter 30. While David and his men had been away, the Amalekites came up from the south for an attack.

1Sam 30:1-6 And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;

2And had taken the women captives, that *were* therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried *them* away, and went on their way.

3So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, *it was* burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives.

4Then David and the people that *were* with him lifted up their voice and wept, **until they had no more power to weep.**

5And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.

6And David was greatly distressed; **for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters...**

We pause here for a moment to understand what David was experiencing. There will be other times in the future for David that will be devastating, but this was about the lowest he could get at this point in his life. He had experienced people turning on him and this was about the last straw. He had to have felt so totally abandoned in life. He had probably written Psalm 12 already when he had been chased by Saul, but now it would apply to his own people who were turning on him.

Ps 12:1-8 Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.

2They speak vanity every one

with his neighbour: *with* flattering lips *and* with a double heart do they speak.

3The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, *and* the tongue that speaketh proud things:

4Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips *are* our own: who *is* lord over us?

5For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set *him* in safety *from him that* puffeth at him.

6The words of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

7Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

8The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

Saul had chased after David, but he was not the only one who was against him. Doeg, the Edomite, had tried to turn David in when David had gotten help from Ahimelech the priest. Doeg, himself, slew Ahimelech. Rich Nabal treated David spitefully when David had protected him. He might have thought he had some consolation that he was somewhat secure finally in the land of the Philistines, but Achish had to turn him away. And now his family, possessions, and his men's families and possessions were taken captive and his city burnt to the ground. Things couldn't get much worse...specifically because he wasn't going to live much longer since his men were going to stone him. There are times when we might have felt left in the lurch, out on a limb, or hung out to dry. I am sure that nothing we have gone through could compare to what David experienced. I'm not saying it couldn't happen; there are many tragic modern stories of those who have experienced terrible abandonment.

Where could David turn to find strength and support?

3. Encouraged in the Lord.

What did David have to encourage him? He had no way to call out to his best friend, Jonathan, because he was with Saul. Samuel, who had anointed him, was dead. The high priest who he might have turned to was killed because of him. There were only a handful of Scriptures that he could read. He couldn't turn to the Psalms, where so many find comfort, because he was in the process of writing them, often out of the anguish of his soul. He couldn't turn the dial to hear his favorite preacher, he couldn't download their sermons, he didn't have a monthly devotional guide, he couldn't turn to his wife, he couldn't go to the Christian book display at the Stop and Shop supermarket and pick up some challenging literature, he couldn't call up

a friend to pray with him, he couldn't go out to the Tabernacle, there was no chaplain to call on.

The only one David could turn to was the Lord.

1Sam 30:6 And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

The Bible doesn't say exactly how he encouraged himself in the Lord, but knowing that he had a great foundation in the time he spent out in the fields tending sheep and singing to the Lord, I suspect that he leaned heavily on the experience that he had in his time of devotion with God.

In the greatest time of despair, the only one left to go to is the person you should have gone to in the first place. In the greatest time of despair, the only one left to go to is the only one to go to.

There is a famous hymn, *Where Could I Go but to the Lord*.

Living below, in this old sinful world
Hardly a comfort can afford
Striving alone, to face temptation's sword
Where could I go but to the Lord?

Where could I go, oh where could I go?
Seeking a refuge for my soul
Needing a friend, to help me in the end
Where could I go, but to the Lord?

Life here is grand, with friends I love so dear
Comfort I get from God's own Word
Yet when I face this chilling hand of death
Where could I go but to the Lord?

When I was checking out the words of this hymn to consider using it in this message, my attention was caught by those words, "Yet when I face this chilling hand of death, Where could I go but to the Lord?" Perhaps this is the most revealing thing about one's faith. David was facing death. What could he do? What would his last words be? Where was his mind? His mind was stayed on the Lord. Isaiah would write many years later:

Isa 26:3-4 Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose* mind *is* stayed *on thee*: because he trusteth in thee.

4Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH *is* everlasting strength:

After all is said and done in our life, where will our mind be? These last words of men as they faced death are

very telling¹:

Voltaire, the most influential atheist of Europe in his day, cried out with his dying breath: "I am abandoned by God and man; I shall go to hell! I will give you half of what I am worth, if you will give me six months of life."

Sir Francis Newport, the head of an English infidel club to those gathered around his deathbed: "You need not tell me there is no God for I know there is one, and that I am in His presence! You need not tell me there is no hell. I feel myself already slipping. Wretches, cease your idle talk about there being hope for me! I know I am lost forever! Oh, that fire! Oh, the insufferable pangs of hell!"

David Strauss, leading representative of German rationalism, after spending a lifetime erasing belief in God from the minds of others: "My philosophy leaves me utterly forlorn! I feel like one caught in the merciless jaws of an automatic machine, not knowing at what time one of its great hammers may crush me!"

Some 15 years before his death, Mohandas K. Gandhi wrote: "I must tell you in all humility that Hinduism, as I know it, entirely satisfies my soul, fills my whole being, and I find a solace in the Bhagavad and Upanishads." However, just before his death, Gandhi wrote: "My days are numbered. I am not likely to live very long-perhaps a year or a little more. For the first time in fifty years I find myself in the slough of despond. All about me is darkness; I am praying for light."

Thomas Paine, the leading atheistic writer in American colonies: "I would give worlds if I had them, that The Age of Reason had never been published. O Lord, help me! Christ, help me! . . . No, don't leave; stay with me! Send even a child to stay with me; for I am on the edge of Hell here alone. If ever the Devil had an agent, I have been that one."

Caesar Borgia: "I have provided, in the course of my life, for everything except death; and now, alas! I am to die, although entirely unprepared!"

Pancho Villa, Mexican revolutionary, d. 1923 Don't let it end like this. Tell them I said something.

Sigmund Freud This is

¹http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=8555&forum=35

absurd! This is absurd!

Compare this to such men of faith:

Daniel Webster (1852), the well-known orator and legislator, had William Cowper's hymn read to him:

There is a fountain filled
with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's
veins.

Then he read the last stanza:

Then in a nobler, sweeter
song,
I'll sing Thy power to
save.
When this poor lisping,
stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave.

At this, Webster, one of the most powerful speakers in American history, replied, "Amen! Amen! Amen!"

Susanna Wesley, mother of John and Charles Wesley: "Children, when I am gone, sing a song of praise to God."

George Whitefield, English evangelist: "Lord Jesus, I am weary in Thy work, but not of Thy work. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for Thee once more in the fields, seal the truth, and come home to die."

Samuel Rutherford (1615): "Mine eyes shall see my Redeemer. He has pardoned, loved, and washed me, and given me joy unspeakable and full of glory. I feed on manna. Glory, glory, glory to my Creator and Redeemer forever!"

Adoniram Judson: American missionary to Burma: "I go with the gladness of a boy bounding away from school. I feel so strong in Christ."

William Wilberforce (1833), member of Parliament who helped eliminate slavery in England: "My affections are so much in heaven that I can leave you all without a regret; yet I do not love you less, but God more."

Augustus Toplady (1778), preacher and author of the hymn, "Rock of Ages": "The consolations of God to such an unworthy wretch are so abundant that He leaves me nothing to pray for but a continuance of them. I enjoy heaven already in my soul."

Charles Wesley, author of over 4,000 published hymns: "I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness. Satisfied!"

Our peace comes most easily not because we find ourselves in the deepest moment of desperation. It *can* come at that time. It comes most easily from a lifetime of knowing God. It comes from the fact that we have known Him Who was from the beginning:

1John 1:1-4 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

2(For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

3That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

4And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

In one region of Africa, the first converts to Christianity were very diligent about praying. In fact, the believers each had their own special place outside the village where they went to pray in solitude. The villagers reached these “prayer rooms” by using their own private footpaths through the brush. When grass began to grow over one of these trails, it was evident that the person to whom it belonged was not praying very much.

Because these new Christians were concerned for each other’s spiritual welfare, a unique custom sprang up. When ever anyone noticed an overgrown “Prayer path,” he or she would go to the person and lovingly warn, “Friend, there’s grass on your path!”

– Our Daily Bread, November 18, 1996

God is there to be found. He might put you through your paces to learn of Him, so don't give up. After all is said and done, you *will* find Him. If you do not, it is only because you will not have been honest with yourself when He showed Himself to you through His Word and the Holy Spirit.

Heb 11:1-6 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2For by it the elders obtained a good report.

...

5By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

6But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

God will not forsake you:

Heb 13:5 *Let your* conversation be without covetousness; *and be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Josh 1:5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, *so* I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Deut 31:6 Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he *it is* that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Heb 13:5-6 *Let your* conversation be without covetousness; *and be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

6So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Ps 27:1-14 *A Psalm* of David. The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

2When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

3Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this *will I be* confident.

4One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

5For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

6And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

7Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

8*When thou saidst*, Seek ye my

face; my heart said unto thee,
Thy face, LORD, will I seek.
9Hide not thy face *far* from me;
put not thy servant away in
anger: thou hast been my help;
leave me not, neither forsake me,
O God of my salvation.
10When my father and my
mother forsake me, then the
LORD will take me up.
11Teach me thy way, O LORD,
and lead me in a plain path,
because of mine enemies.
12Deliver me not over unto the
will of mine enemies: for false
witnesses are risen up against
me, and such as breathe out
cruelty.
13*I had fainted*, unless I had
believed to see the goodness of
the LORD in the land of the
living.
14Wait on the LORD: be of good
courage, and he shall strengthen
thine heart: wait, I say, on the
LORD.

How do you get your head clear? Solomon, at the end of the book of Ecclesiastes, after he had examined life on earth from top to bottom, gave this conclusion:

Ecc1 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man.

Go to church and serve God. This will put things in perspective. On occasion, some of us have done more than put door hangers on doors or hand out tracts. They have been engaged in dealing with people at their doors or in their homes. They have been consistently surprised by the suffering in people's lives, often brought on by themselves and their decisions. When people have been engaged in visitation, they have discovered that the grass is not greener on the other side. They gain a new perspective on how blessed they are. Sometimes when people are on visitation, they see those who are successful in the Lord, and are challenged to move closer to him. Sometimes the person being visited is in the hospital. Very often the patient, in his suffering, is a bigger blessing to those who visit them than the patient who is being visited. Regularly people, including me, talk about how they are challenged by the testimony of those who are going through such times. When going through hard times, that is precisely when you should be going to church singing praises to God and discovering ways to appreciate him through His Word.

David called for Abiathar to enquire of God what he should do next. God let him know that he was to go up after the Amalekites. David didn't hang back in

defeat. After he encouraged himself in the Lord, he got busy about the business of the Lord and God blessed.

The first encouragement one can have in the Lord is the encouragement that comes from knowing you have made peace with God, that your sins are forgiven and that the worst thing that could happen to you would be the best thing that could happen to you: death holds no power over those who know Jesus Christ. Meet with God and then go out and serve Him.

1. Surrounded by humanity. 1Sam 22:1-2, 1Sam 27:5-12
2. Abandoned. 1Sam 29:4-11, 1Sam 30:1-6, Ps 12:1-8
3. Encouraged in the Lord. 1Sam 30:6, Isa 26:3-4, 1John 1:1-4, Heb 11:1-6, 13:5, Josh 1:5, Deut 31:6, Heb 13:5-6, Ps 27:1-14, Eccl 12:13