

Encouragement in the Lord

Written by David Wise

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“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 daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” – 1 Samuel 30:6

This verse is given to us in the aftermath of an Amalekite raid upon David and his men’s camp, where their wives and children were all taken captive and their city of residence burned. In this midst of that traumatic situation for all of them, including David as his wives were taken too, the men turn on David and actually talked of stoning him to death. In the midst of such turmoil in his life at that time, nevertheless, “David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” Regardless, of what trying circumstances we encounter in our lives, our Lord can and should always be our greatest source of encouragement.

David made some very bad decisions that put him in this situation. He had fled to the land of his enemies and was actually taking refuge from Saul among the Philistines, the same people who years before David had killed their great champion, Goliath. He took refuge and dwelt in the land of the enemy instead of trusting God to protect him in his homeland of Israel. God had already chosen David to be king and anointed him, but apparently, that was far from the mind of David at this time. In fleeing to the land of his enemies, David seems to have more confidence in the Philistines ability to keep him safe than his belief in God's protecting power.

While David can be blamed for many of the problems that came his way among the Philistines, in this instance David and his men were out fighting other battles when this Amalekite raid occurred. The Amalekites had burned Ziklag, where David and his men had been residing, and had taken their wives, sons and daughters captive back to their land (v.1-3). Every man was affected by this kidnapping, even David who had two of his wives taken (v.5). They were so overwhelmed with grief due to their houses and possessions being burned and families taken

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captive that “David and the people...wept, until they had no more power to weep.” (v.4) They wept so much over this tragedy that they ran totally out of tears and came to the point of physical exhaustion because they had wept so much.

When people are in a heightened emotional state, particularly when they are dealing with great grief or loss, they tend to make rash decisions that they might not normally make under more normal circumstances. David’s men were so overwhelmed with grief that they blamed David for this event even occurring. Now, there’s a lot of problems in David’s life and during his times among the Philistines that were squarely his own fault. However, in this circumstance, he had no control over what occurred but yet he was being blamed by his men for what happened. Not only did they blame him, but they were ready to stone him because of it. Have you ever been blamed for something that wasn’t your fault? that you had nothing to do with but people lay the blame at your feet? I bet most of us have. (I certainly hope no one has tried to kill you for it though.) I believe we can all sympathize with others sometimes making a hasty decision to lay blame upon an innocent party, maybe even someone who is struggling and injured by the same situation, as David was in the case.

David is in the land of the enemy, away from his family and the people of God, his home and possessions had been burned and his wives kidnapped, he’s personally out of tears and exhausted from weeping, and now his men blame him for the bad things that occurred and are ready to kill him. That’s a pretty bad plight, I would say. What was David’s response to this internal and external turmoil? “But (in spite of his difficult, grievous, and trying circumstances) David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” David’s courage was strengthened ("encouraged") in the midst of this trial by the Lord his God. David was reminded of the unfailing love of God for him. We as well need to be reminded that no matter how difficult the trials or grief may become in our lives, that the Lord has promised to never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5) and find encouragement in the strength of God.

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It doesn't matter who might turn their backs on us in this life, even our close natural friends or immediate family, God will never leave us totally alone. There might be occasions that we are by ourselves, but the child of God is never alone. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." (Ps. 27:10, which was penned by David). Even when we fear that we have no one to rely on, no one to trust who will not turn against us, our friends have already turned against us, and we feel destitute and forsaken, Jesus Christ will be still near to us. "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend (Jesus Christ) that sticketh closer than a brother." (Prov. 18:24) "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Ps. 46:1) Even in the midst of some of the greatest calamities of life and anguish of soul that we might experience in this world (and which David encountered here), we can always encourage ourselves in the Lord who will never leave us nor forsake us.