



Finding Courage in Distress (1 Samuel 30)

To say that we are living in distressful times is an understatement. It has been almost three years since the COVID plague invaded the earth. And it seems as if it's here to stay. The unprovoked war in Ukraine continues to devastate the country and displace thousands of Ukrainians from their home land. There have been over two-hundred mass shootings in the United States so far in 2022! This weekend the price of gas has skyrocketed to record levels that we have never seen. What about the many distresses that occur daily in other parts of the world of which we are oblivious? One thing we know is that these distresses of life will not cease. The good news is that we can find encouragement in God's Word as we read about the saints who found strength in the midst of distress. One such saint is King David.

David's story begins in 1 Samuel chapter 16. He was anointed king but had to wait nearly fifteen years before he was crowned Israel's second king. His first act of courageous faith was to kill Goliath with a sling and a stone, thus delivering Israel from their fierce enemies, the Philistines. After this he became the servant of the King Saul, Israel's first king. Moreover, after his victory over Goliath, David was successful in all his undertakings and loved by everyone including King Saul's son and daughter. Unfortunately, David's success aroused jealousy and enmity of Saul, who schemes to get rid of his perceived rival. From then on, David kept running and hiding from Saul (in caves).

Feeling that some day he might "fall into the hand of Saul," and that henceforth there was "no good for him," David resolved once more to seek shelter with the Philistine King Achish at the royal city, Gath (1 Sam. 27:1-4). His reception this time was vastly different from that on the former occasion (see 1 Sam. 21:10-16). Living in the city of Gath entails such restraints as would have proved most irksome, if not impossible, for David. Ziklag was given to him (1 Sam. 27:6). Ziklag suited David very well. From there he conducted raids against Israel's enemies (see 1 Sam. 27:8; note the Amalekites are mentioned). During this time, the Philistines decided to go to fight against Israel (1 Sam. 28:1). Achish, the Philistine king, appoints David as his bodyguard (1 Sam. 28:2)! The Philistine officers, however, mistrust David. So Achish orders him back to Ziklag (1 Sam. 29). Therefore, David and his men returned to Ziklag (1 Sam. 30:1).

When David returned to his Ziklag, he was met with a severe problem. In his absence, the Amalekites raided Ziklag, taking captives and spoils. 1 Samuel 3:3 says, "When David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive." Not only did David's family was taken captive. His own men sought to kill him! (1 Sam. 30:6a). Regardless of the fact that David suffered the same loss as his men! Trials make us bitter or better!

David's response to the situation is far different from his comrades. He sought to overcome the problem not by blaming others but through seeking the LORD. Instead, we read, "But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God...and inquired of the LORD" (1 Sam. 30:6c -8a). That is where David sought for the solution to his problem. And, in contrast to Saul (1 Sam. 28:6), the LORD answered David (1 Sam. 30:8b). With this divine endorsement, David and four hundred of his men pursued the Amalekites (1 Sam. 30:9-10). Because the other two hundred men were too exhausted, they stayed back (1 Sam. 30:10. See verse 24). As they were pursuing the Amalekites, David and his men encountered an Egyptian who offered to guide the party to the place where he knew the Amalekites were having a celebration (1 Sam. 30:11-16). The story comes to a climax when David slaughtered them and recovered all that the Amalekites had taken (1 Sam. 30:16-20).

David sends parts of the spoil to Judah, to express his gratitude for their help when he roamed through their territory, and to gain their support in the future. Two important life lessons can be drawn from this narrative. First, our response to distressing situations reveals whether or not we are trusting in the LORD. Would we blame others or inquire of the LORD? Secondly, we should always acknowledge those who stood with us in seasons of distress, whether they are prayer warriors or baggage holders. May the LORD help us to seek Him for guidance when we are distressed.

By God's Grace and for His glory,

Pr. Francis

Hymn: “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah”
William Williams (1745)

1. Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy pow’rful hand.
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more;
Feed me till I want no more.
2. Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth
flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.
Strong Deliv’rer, strong Deliv’rer,
Be Thou still my Strength and
Shield;
Be Thou still my Strength and
Shield.
3. Lord, I trust Thy mighty power,
Wondrous are Thy works of old;
Thou deliver’st Thine from thrall-
dom,
Who for naught themselves had
sold:
Thou didst conquer, Thou didst con-
quer
Sin and Satan and the grave,
Sin and Satan and the grave.
4. When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death and hell’s Destruc-
tion,
Land me safe on Canaan’s side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to Thee;
I will ever give to Thee.