

David encouraged himself in the Lord his God (Quality: Good)

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- [0 : 00] Samuel in the 30th chapter and at the 6th verse. The first book of Samuel chapter 30 and verse 6.
- And David was greatly distressed for all the people spoke of stoning him because the soul of all the people was grief.
- Every man for his sons and for his daughters. But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.
- David was greatly distressed. But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.
- We are accustomed to think of David as the great mighty man of God. And so he was. Or we are accustomed to think of him as the sweet singer of Israel.
- [1 : 05] And so he was. But here in this situation, the context of which we read this morning, in the first book of Samuel chapters 29 and 30, David is in a situation apparently so different from that of a mighty man and apparently so uncondusive to singing about anything.
- David was greatly distressed. But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.
- Things had gone wrong. In a gist that amounted to this. David was under suspicion from the Philistines. He was oppressed by the Amalekites.
- His own friends and brethren maliciously threatened to stone him. His home was burned. His wives were taken for slaves.
- And David, we are told, in verse 4, verse 5 of chapter 30, David, among others, lifted up his voice and wept until he had no more power to weep.
- [2 : 33] Can you imagine what that is? The weep. Till you haven't strength enough left the weep. Till you're reduced to utter exhaustion.
- Greatly distressed. And in these circumstances, by the common ills and sorrows of life and life's pathway and life's circumstance that had come in on him like a flood.
- Sorrows that are not peculiar to Christians, sorrows that don't come to Christians because they are Christians. But sorrows, troubles, that come to men because they're men.
- Because they are members of a fallen race. And yet, at this very time, David finds encouragement and strength.
- Greatly distressed. He encouraged himself in the Lord his God. By this experience, David reminds us that God's people are never promised exempt from the ordinary sorrows and difficulties and troubles of life.
- [3 : 48] He shows us that however obedient, however faithful, however zealous we are, as we ought to be, in the service of the Lord, these natural mortal ills, troubles, may still happen as they happen to all men.
- In a sense, we are to expect them. In a sense, we are not to be surprised by them. And, we therefore have to fix it firmly in our minds that this kind of trouble is not, as such, token of divine displeasure.

They are not judicial punishments. Their timing, indeed, may be providentially ordered, so that they may be used for our sanctification and our blessing.

But these things are not God's punishments. And then, we ended this morning by seeing how that here is the point at which the godly and the ungodly differ in the time of trial.

The man of the world carries his own burden and rebels against it. The Christian man, although greatly distressed, is a man who can, who is enabled, to cast his burden upon the Lord.

[5 : 23] He can match his natural distress with the supernatural strength that he has in the Lord, his God.

His sorrow may be great, but his God is greater. The trouble is nigh, but God is nigher. his anguish may be stark and hard and real and biting, but not one half so vivid nor so real as his God and his Savior.

So then, to proceed in this consideration this afternoon, I would draw your attention to the fact that we can learn from this just how the godly man finds his strength in the hour of darkness.

Here he is. David was greatly distressed, surrounded by sorrow, but in, in that situation, not in the sunshine, but in the shadow, not in the time of prosperity, but in the time of adversity, David encouraged, or, as the Hebrew really has it, David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

How did he do it? Where was this strength found? Well, the first answer to that question is this, that this strength, this divine strength, was found in God's character as revealed in his word.

[7 : 04] You can never know too much about God. You can never think too much about God. The central doctrine of the Bible is God, and the central thing in Christian experience is God.

And what you know about God makes all the difference to the amount and the quality of strength that you find in him.

If you never read your Bible, you needn't be surprised if you know very little about God. But he's an infinite being, the variety of whose attributes is always more and more revealing itself through the word.

And if you know little of him, well, you'll find little strength in him in the evil day. You see, David could go back in mind to God's character as it had been revealed to Moses.

The Lord is a God, whole of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth. David could go back in what is recorded in the Old Testament to instances of God's compassion in the history of his nation.

[8 : 41] God had not preserved his people in Egypt, and brought them out of Egypt, and brought them through Canaan without demonstrating to them what kind of a God he was.

In other words, without showing them his character. And this is a knowledge and an understanding of God that was with David in his evil day.

When he craved courage, when he needed strength, he turned not to some ill-defined or undefined spiritual being, but a God whose person and character had already been revealed in history and in the Word.

He didn't have to wonder whether God is a gracious God, or a good God, or a pardoning God. He was able to strengthen himself in his God because he knew these things, and knew these things through God's Word.

Just how much scripture of the Old Testament was in David's hands is perhaps a question we cannot answer accurately and precisely. But certainly he had the five books of Moses.

[10 : 05] And there was revelation enough of the character of God. Mighty in his power, merciful in his compassion, and love. God's love.

And I said there are many reasons why we should read our Bibles. But here's a very practical and a very relevant reason.

You see, David, it was, who in one of his Psalms spoke about hiding God's Word in the heart. What is the object of hiding God's Word in the heart?

God's love. But to remember it and to store the heart and the mind with the truth that is set down in the Word, so that the mind and the soul become a storehouse of truth about God's character among other things.

Then when the hour of trouble arrives, your storehouse is there, your barns are full. your barns are full, not of earthly material things, but of heavenly things and holy things.

[11 : 18] Then when you come into trouble, you don't beat the air with frantic ignorance. You don't confusedly turn the pages of Scripture in superstitious hope that you'll get something.

You know what kind of God there is, because you have entered into his word and his word has entered into you. And because you know him, you gain your strength.

It is possible to encourage oneself in the Lord one's God by the storing up in the heart and the mind of those things his words say about himself.

strength. That is how this strength comes. Another way in which this strength comes is this, that it was from the experience of God that David drew his strength.

He knew not only God's character from the word and from history, he knew it by his own pathway, by his own experience.

[12 : 37] God's voice had spoken to him. God's hand had guided him. He could remember a certain lion that would have pounced on him, but for the fact that gone into thee.

he could recall a certain bear that would have torn him and his sheep, but for the fact that God intervened.

He could recall the murderous rage of Saul vaunted against him, but for God's intervention.

He could remember that giant of the Philistines against whom he stood no hope in a natural sense and respect. Now, in his dark game, when it is said David was greatly distressed, David could recall these things, and over against the gloom of the present, he could put what God had done for him in the past.

It was not an unknown distant thing. It is something that had already been manifest to him.

[14 : 03] Out of his own experience, he could say, in effect, greater is he that is for me than he that is against me.

so my friends, when you find yourself in a day of distress, take a turn over God's past mercies towards you.

When you find yourself in sorrow, in trouble, let your mind roll back over the things God has already done to you and for you.

Count up your blessings, recall how he pursued you as a sinner, how he showed you your need of a saviour, how he brought you to a full salvation in Jesus Christ, how he set your foot on the heavenward road, how he kept you there, how his grace has been sufficient.

I say when you tell over in memory those things, it will enable you to encourage yourself in the Lord your God and you will say he who has brought me hitherto will see me all my journey through.

- [15 : 25] When you remember all the way the Lord your God has led you, you'll be able to say in the day of trial, his love in time past forbids me to think he'll leave me at last in trouble to sin, of course not, of course he won't.
- But you'll never be able to encourage yourself, strengthen yourself in the Lord your God if you're not constantly storing your soul with the reality of his grace in his word and in your own experience.
- you'll never have a greater sorrow in this world than your own evil heart. And if your God is equal to that then he's equal to anything.
- David encouraged himself in the Lord his God. God's character in the world, from God's character in terms of his experience.
- But again I would put it like this and say that we can find strength in our evil day as David did in the covenant of God.
- [16 : 51] God has promised to do certain things to them that love him. God has of his own free will entered into engagement with his people.
- To David he covenanted that he would give him the throne of Israel. And the covenant is a solemn thing. God keeps his covenants.
- David knew it. And when David's dark day came as it did on this particular occasion, David was not so bewildered by it that he forgot what God had undertaken to do for him.
- Mindfulness of God's covenant engagement, mindfulness of God's promises to his people is something which however great one's distress keeps a Christian man on even keep, encourages his heart, however great his distress.
- David knew that the God of the ages was covenanted to him, whoever was in league against. There was a league between him and God, a bond, and nothing that could happen could prevent God's keeping his covenant.
- [18 : 25] So my Christian friend, do you, let me put the question, do you, when comes the evil hour, do you forget that God has promised you, I am with you unto the end?
- when you are in trouble, do you tend to forget that God has covenanted eternal, unending, everlasting redemption, that no natural or temporal or mortal sorrow can possibly destroy, you want to know the strength of God in the day of your sorrow, then I say you must remember, you must recall the promises of God.
- You must remember that God has bound himself by oath to save to the uttermost, then come to God by him.
- you can lose money without losing heaven, you can lose friends without losing the friend of all friends, you may have an aching heart, without having a hopeless future, great distress, encouragement in God at one and the same time, you may have lost faith in me, but God hasn't let go of you, he cannot deny himself.
- How can I encourage myself in the Lord my God? How can I strengthen myself in the Lord my God? Will I know nothing firmer, nothing surer, in this respect, my friends, than the oath and the covenant of God, whereby he has given his son a people, not for a while, but for eternity.
- [20 : 33] So you see, David shows us how the godly man finds his strength in the hour of darkness, promise, and he can encourage himself in the Lord his God.
- Yea, when all the earthly streams are dry, his firmness is the same. And David can do this because he knows God's character, because he recalls his experience of God, because he rests in his covenant promise.
- So that leads me to this final main point with regard to our subject, and that is that it seems to me that David, by inference, is saying to the Christian man of his day and every day, you have far greater reason than I ever had for finding your strength in God.

David is saying to Christian men of every generation, you have far greater better reason than ever I had for finding your strength, your encouragement in God.

What do I mean? Well, I mean this. You see, we have seen far more wonderful displays of God's power than David ever saw.

[22 : 12] Simply because of that point in history at which David lived. Not that God was any less powerful in his day, but David did not see the displays of his power that have been revealed in these last days.

David read the power of God in the wonders of Egypt, the plagues, the Red Sea, the overturning of Pharaoh, the redemption of his people out of bondage, the power of God.

It was more than any man could have thought of or could have conceived. David has seen the goodness of God in his own day to his own people.

But what is that by comparison with the victories of the cross? The Israelites won battles in the field.

The cross of Christ has won battles in human souls. David saw the might of arms. We have seen the might of a suffering saviour.

[23 : 28] power that has stooped to the lowest, that has saved the worst, that has delivered men from a worse tyrant than Saul or Goliath of Gath ever were or could have been.

We have seen the salvation of our God in the face of Jesus Christ. We have seen the arch enemy defeated in the one who bruised the serpent's head.

We have seen the ultimate victory in the revelation of God's power, in the life and death and burial and resurrection of his ever-blessed Son.

And therefore I say we have far greater reason to encourage ourselves in our God in the time of trouble of David.

ever had. In David's day those things were all future. In David's day those things were embryonic in prophecy. They were the subject of time.

[24 : 39] But because of the day in which we are born and we have lived, we have the record of the accomplishment of these things. And we know that he is a God of redeeming power.

yes we have seen greater displays of God's power than David ever did.

And I say we have had more amazing evidences of God's love than David ever did. It is true the history of Israel even up to David's time records a great many instances of God's love toward them.

But what were they by comparison with the gift of God's Son to die? With the gift of God's Holy Spirit to indwell and renew his church and people?

The incarnation and Pentecost. Gigantic evidences and movements of God's amazing love for sinful men.

[25 : 51] These were unknown. These were still awaited in David's death. What could God do more than he had done for Israel? This is what he could do more.

He had not yet sent his Son. He had not yet sent his Holy Spirit. Does your trouble, my friends, sometimes make you ask and wonder whether God loves?

God's love? Oh, surely the sheer historic fact of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is the answer to your question. Does God love?

Well, he loved you enough if you were his child to send his only begotten son, and but for that you would not be his child. But by that you are his, and his forever in spite of your trouble, and your trouble cannot alter it.

your sorrow, your natural sorrow, your mortal, ill, and difficulty, cannot undo what his love has done in his son.

[27 : 02] That's how, that's why we can see that to us, we have far more amazing evidence of God's love than David ever had.

Or again, let me put it like this, we have far more abundant proofs of God's faithfulness than David ever knew.

God promised to David the throne of Israel, but David was the first man to whom God made that promise. God so David couldn't look back and check on whether God had kept that promise before.

No, but how many promises made to the church at large have already been accomplished and fulfilled by our blessed Lord Jesus Christ?

how many members of Christ's church from the first day until now have found the gospel promise fulfilled in their own church?

[28 : 20] They believed and he saved them. They repented and he redeemed. They came to him in their fear of their sorrow, their sin.

They could offer him, as we've already sung, nothing but their sin. And he washed it away. And he gave them a cleansing in the son of his love.

His people will tell you this is their testimony in every age and generation. That he does save. That he does give inward peace. That he does enlarge our hearts to love him and love his people.

In proportion then as God's faithfulness has been discovered and tried, surely then our confidence in him should be increased. David teaches us all this by inference.

That if he had good reason to find strength in God in his day and generation, before the revelation in the person of Christ and the disclosure of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, then we have infinitely greater reason.

[29 : 39] David's example, David's experience, and the example and the experience of all the saints as our guide and as our inspiration.

And so we can see how God's people have not been spared necessarily, their sufferings, or their trials.

Indeed, on the whole, if you look at history, I think it's probably true to say that Christian people have suffered more than any other race or group of people in the history of the world.

And I say that in full knowledge of the amazing persecution of the Jews, of the church of Jesus Christ, the people of God, have been amazingly persecuted beyond that of any other category or class of people.

And yet, their strength has been in the Lord their God. They were thrown to the lions and they went singing his praises. They were banished and they went with the knowledge, the knowledge that he went with them.

[30 : 50] Greatly distressed, greatly encouraged in the Lord. Their God. Their distress drove them to their God.

And their God, because he was not just a proposition in theology, because he was not just a figment in the realm of knowledge, but because he was a God whom they knew and had felt and believed, a God whom they had experienced.

Their distress was melted. in his strength. So I say David's experience leaves us then with this one important question.

Is this God our God? Now let me be even more pointed. Is this God your God? What do I mean?

Well just this. When I spoke about counting up God's mercies and blessings and remembering experiences of his goodness and his grace, was that something you could do or did you find that that was something foreign to you?

[32 : 07] Did you say to yourself, well I can't remember any of these things happening to me. I know about God by reading, I know about God from history, I've heard about God from preaching, but I don't know that I ever felt that he had anything particularly and specially to do with me.

that was your reaction my friend, well then this God is not your God in the sense that he was to David and you had to meet your distresses alone.

God but this God is a God who knows his people and his people do know their God as Daniel says and the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits.

Do you know God? God there's nothing higher possible to sinful man than to know God.

Yes, that's the highest, that's the greatest thing of all, for man to know his maker, for man estranged by sin to be brought back, to be reconciled, to be reintroduced, to enter into communion with God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so that he is a vital living person.

[33 : 42] God is only a name and a word to you. You'll never know his strength, you'll never feel his power, you'll never experience his grace in the hour of distress.

But it is that he might be known as father as friend, as savior, as redeemer, that he has come in Christ. It is that he might be to his people encouragement and strength that he has come in the person of his Holy Spirit, and by his Holy Spirit he convicts men of sin, and brings them to the end of themselves.

And it's when they come to the end of themselves that they come to him. Because being brought to the end of themselves they see their total inability to make that reconciliation.

And he sets before them his ever-blessed son whose finished work of redemption does just that. For when he ascended up on high he led captivity captive, and he gave gifts unto me the gifts, the mercy of a sovereign God, the redeeming blood of a precious Savior, the regenerating work of a gracious Holy Spirit.

Where then does it begin? It begins with my knowledge that I'm a sinner. It begins with my knowledge that I need a Savior. it begins with God's gracious moving me to seek that Savior.

[35 : 29] And in setting that Savior before me in all his loveliness and beauty, he becomes attractive to me because I see that in him is the answer to my soul's need, and in him I find the fullness of God.

For in him all fullness dwells. David was greatly distressed, encouraged his heart in the Lord his God.

If you carry your distress alone, my friends, it is misery, misery, misery to the end of the day. But if you carry that distress, whatever it be, that mortal, that natural distress that overtakes Christian men as well as others, if you carry that to the throne of grace, the throne of grace will carry you to the heart of God, and the heart of God is open, open to his people's Christ, and his heart is made of tenderness, it overflows with love, and so you will be able to encourage yourself in the Lord your God.

May he so manifest himself this day and in every distressful day of need.

Amen.