

Distress sanctified (Quality: Average)

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[0 : 0 0] The first book of Samuel, chapter 30, and with the Lord's help I will speak this evening from verse 6.

The first book of Samuel, chapter 30, verse 6. And David was greatly distressed, for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters.

But David encouraged himself, and the Lord is God. This last clause appears to be the first beam of light that penetrated into the dark case of dear David when he was in Zeglag.

For this period of time of which we were speaking this morning, a year and four months, he had been in darkness.

He had come where he wanted to come. And he had found, as we read in the text this morning, what he thought was a better way whereby he might find security from the persecuting King Saul.

[1 : 3 8] We noticed this morning his amazing unbelief, the impenetrable nature of it and its determination, showing us very solemnly what the human heart is capable of.

Lest any of us should think well of ourselves as if we were far removed from this, how we need to take heed to such words as things, and to bear them in mind, lest we too, thinking we stand, should fall.

The subject, really, of David's flight down into the land of the Philistines is a very long, detailed one, and a considerable amount could be said about it and certainly written about it.

Because there are certain things in it that are very minute and detailed that are very important. It's clear proof of the Lord's overruling hand in the matters of David's wanderings.

And although he was left alone to follow such a sinful call, God did not leave him alone. And these things are better perhaps for your reading at home and thoughtful consideration.

[3 : 3 2] Because they are here to show very clearly how God preserved David from going deeper into disgrace.

For example, the 29th chapter gives an account of how he would have most willingly gone and fought against Israel and proved himself a traitor.

Now this would be dire indeed. He was quite ready to go down with the Philistines as they passed on by their thousands.

that these Philistine princes were too wise, too diplomatic, to follow the course that Achish had taken.

They wouldn't have David with them. And they said how best can he reinstate himself in the affection of his people than by turning in the battle and turning against us.

[4 : 49] He was a traitor in that sense and he was under suspicions. Now you consider him in such a position as this and yet so wonderfully preserved from doing that very thing in which he was determined to do.

And he argues with Achish and says what have I done? What hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee?

He laid himself at the feet of this man like a puppet and put himself in this ignoble position child of God laying at the foot of one of God's enemies.

I say it hardly bears thinking about but it has its very deep teaching capabilities of the human heart and as I said this morning not an out and out character that you could say was truly an atheist or irreligious or anything but a child of God.

There is no doubt about the characteristic and yet here he is in this distressed condition so that one of the things to notice is the fact that God prevented him from fighting against his own people.

[6 : 26] and going deeper into the mile of this unbelief God has remarkable ways of delivering his backsliding people.

He suffers them to go so far then he says no further. Here shall I browse ways this day and they live to see the great mercy of God in stopping them in their mancareer.

I'm not talking about them in the days of their unregeneracy but in the days of their regeneracy. They were born of God and understood in some measure what they were doing and yet were left to themselves to such dire strates as this that had not God intervened David would have gone on and on in this matter and he would have fought against his own and having done so the throne would never have been here.

He would have forfeited all right. He did in the spirit that he forfeited all claim to the throne that God preserved him.

I say this is one point to remember the overshadowing hand of God. This is what I would point you to. The unseen hand.

[8 : 13] As I mentioned this morning the sleep of those 3,000 men that God brought upon them so that Abner and David could walk right through their ranks and take the spear and the crews from the head of Saul.

The next thing is that which we read we read about of the young Egyptian dying in the field.

Cast aside by his cruel master because he was sick. Three days without food or drink on the point of death.

death. And yet the very link that was provided for the deliverance of David and all their possessions.

And it is to be understood that apart from this young man's guidance, they would have long wondered about seeking those Amalekites who had raided their own city.

[9 : 35] These are natural things, but they are the overruling power of God, very comforting to the Lord's people, giving much evidence to young and old alike that though they cannot see his hand, they cannot trace his judge, yet he is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind.

So that in this we have a matter and matters for looking very closely at and making a profitable study of it.

And these studies of the Word of God can often lie in the heart a foundation for the days to come.

Some of us could look back to the times when we first read about these things and see how they have stuck with us all our lives.

We've had to come back to these scenes and look at them again and again and see how God works by these most singular things.

[11 : 03] Whether it be the whole company of the Philistines constrained to refuse David's company, or whether it be the single Egyptians.

But the text speaks of David's distress. And this distress, you see, was controlled. But what a terrible loss.

It's somewhat like Job's loss. Everything gone. And not only David, but the men that were with him.

And this loss was something that strong men even couldn't bear the loss of their wives and children.

For this was no ordinary matter where they stayed at home and the men went to battle alone. The wives and children were engaged in it as well.

[12 : 06] And not only this, but the whole of the city was burned. The other cities you will notice this Egyptian declared that they made an invasion upon the south of the Kerasites and upon the coast which belonged to Judah and upon the south of Caliph.

But we burn Ziklag with fire implying that they didn't the other cities. But God saw to it that Ziklag should no more be David's hideout and resting place.

In this therefore the hand of God is so clearly seen as to give his people hope and encouragement in their distresses.

There are two kinds of distresses. There's this one and there are distresses that you cannot account for.

Some of these distresses you bring into your own life. David brought this into his own life.

[13 : 28] He couldn't blame anybody out. It was David and David alone more than one. He was responsible for his own distress and the distress of his own people as well.

Even when he was over 70 years of age and none of the people. He brought deep anguish upon many of his people.

And this is one of those occasions that we have to look at some of our distresses and say have not I procured these things unto myself?

Did not I initiate this matter? Did not I take this full step? Did not I say in unbelief far better for me to escape into the land of the Palestine?

Better for me to seek the wings of the dove and fly to the outermost parts of the earth and get out of it all? This escapist attitude?

[14 : 44] And we say anything about this? And what follows it? And who are you going to blame? And where are you going to place the responsibility?

on someone else's shoulder? Is the husband going to blame the wife? Could David blame his wives for this trouble?

Poor women they were plunged into it on his account. I had nothing to do with it. This makes it all the harder you know but all the more necessary when foolish mistakes leading us downhill and away from Christ and communion and fellowship and softness of spirit and they make us further and further into the mire and we feel what fools we are.

This is the beginning of David's humble and distress. This is the hour of reckoning time when he begins to reflect and oh so much to reflect upon.

There's no need to go over again but you know how things crowd into your mind don't you? the mind is a remarkable relay the things that it brings back one after the other in rapid succession and there it opens up as it were a panorama of the past past.

[16 : 41] You see it all one thing following another and who is the culprit. David was greatly distressed and we cannot enter into that distress unless in some measure we've been our own biggest enemies trod in our own night and followed a similar course of unbelief.

death. It is this that makes distress. As I was thinking in connection with this text each heart knoweth its own bitterness and oh how true that is.

How many God's dear people walk about with a secret that they cannot talk about of bitterness which they endure by reason of their own utter folly.

I can see where they went astride the motive that prompted them the desire for a freedom from trouble to get away from those things which are so irksome and their heart is full of bitterness.

They're not against other people but against themselves. Paul said of himself that he's a wretched man and did he mean that?

[18 : 36] What real religion there is in this isn't there and how it's hidden from the so-called wise and prudent why they won't have the word wretched.

it. They won't admit it into their religious services much less have a preacher to mention it. They'll soon ooze him out of the pulpit and finish with him entirely if he dare talk about a wretched heart and a wretched nature and a distress which is peculiar to the individual but what of the Bible what of the outstanding features of it?

Are there not abundant evidences of those who can honestly say that they know the bitterness in their own heart and life in this David was no simpleton David was greatly distressed so we clearly see that it was brought upon himself and there were several incidents in his life as I've already said that were just like this but there are other parts of distress that you do not bring on yourself you cannot say that Job brought his trouble upon himself as far as the scripture record plainly declares he was one that feared God and eschewed evil and in the inscrutable purposes of

God Satan was permitted to harass him and take away all from him except his wife and there are those distresses which you do not bring into your life you're not responsible for them and you can find plenty of these in the word of God when young Joseph at 18 years of age was sent on a minor errand to go and see how his brethren did he went well that was an ordinary everyday event but a loving father would in ordinary circumstances do and Joseph went to see how his brethren fare and when he came to the place where they were thought to be they weren't there he overheard a man or rather he met a man who overheard them say overheard mark you hearsay

I overheard them say let us go to do that they want a single thread that one wasn't they and Joseph goes the second mile obediently he goes to bring good news to his father and a dear boy is plunged into trouble distress but he didn't bring it on himself it is a beautiful distress sinner if God brings you into distress and convinces you of sin with own loving heart mercy towards you this is beautiful distress oh the reality of this God you can't give it yourself it is not something that I can give you or anyone else this distress is worth having this unhappiness unrest gift under divine conviction from God originates from a divine purpose and although in so many other respects you deserve eternal condemnation here is distress apart from that so that with your trials today may well be that it is nothing that you've done you have brought it upon yourself by any unbelieving foolish action you have not sought to escape the cross and the trials but suddenly the Lord has brought into your life this distress and it is the distress that is welcome in the sense that God has ordained it to his own end but when you are responsible yourself how much more bitter is the distress and so it was here

[24 : 30] David was greatly distressed now he had with him a company of men who had been intensely loyal and they were a strange company but they were intensely loyal and they had been his supporters through this time of his evil action and departure from God but now that was the trouble in which they were found all of them that they lifted up their boys and wept until they had no more power to weep a Hebrew way of expressing deep grief now these men began to turn they'd had enough they were at the end of their loyalty and their patience and they spoke of stoning now this added to his distress you've come to time you know and you think you've come to the end of the trouble and the distress but you haven't there's some more to come on in this was what

David had it it wasn't just this it was his own life was in jeopardy they didn't come to him with any of their suggestions as to any way out they spoke of stoning him distress indeed and God knows how to squeeze the last ounce of distress into our troubles yes so that we come to ourselves it was a beautiful way that Jesus dealt with poor Peter whose sin was as great as David when he traitorously denied his rule the Lord turned and looked upon him and wrung out of his heart tears of bitterness

Peter went out and wept bitterly you may know what bitter tears are they are beyond description both from the point of view of natural tears and especially on spiritual ground but Peter was not left in this the Lord turned and looked on him David is now brought to the utmost extremity people spoke of stoning him because the soul of the people was grieved every man for his sons and his daughters and now we come to the turning point but David encouraged himself into Lord his God what

God found in such a place as this David God found in such a place as this surely not surely he's left you in time surely there's no God and zig zag burnt to the ground as it is surely there's nothing to be found here they think with everybody gone and you don't know where they're gone whether they're dead or alive and you David only a few days before have put men and women to the sword so that you should not allow any to escape to tell Achish what you have been doing David and if your wives and children and the whole of you were treated in the same way would not justice have been done his regard of mercy supreme mercy unfathomable mercy his hand over this guiding directing this

David encouraged himself in the Lord his God how could he do this how could it be that after all this time he should ever think of God and he said better for me that I go into the land of the finished life no God there no conference with Jehovah about that step no divine guidance for him there but no as I said at the beginning this is the first ray of light the day star begins to appear above the dark sky there is David and what's he doing he's encouraging himself in the

[30 : 48] Lord his God now I mentioned this morning that all those past blessings have been blotted out completely obliterated by his wicked spirit and so they have all that God had done for him from his youth upwards he cast a veil over it and he said that another colleague of his had said that God had forgotten to be gracious and in anger he shut up his tender mercies and can David be found turning to God again what I think you was the innermost recesses of David's heart at this time for myself I persuaded of this and have been for years that David encouraged himself in divine faithfulness

I remember years ago at Old Mournard Hall one Sabbath morning in deep distress and so myself no text or anything and those words came to me so clearly and David encouraged himself in a Lord his walk and I saw at a glance that it was divine faithfulness God an unchanging faithful God that David caught a glimpse of in this dreadful moment when he was about in all probability to come to an ignominious end and die the death of a fellow and this too encouraged himself in a faithful

God the remarkable revival of faith out of all the ashes literal ashes if you like a sick leg but the ashes of his experience and God brought up this and all its sweetness so that he encouraged himself and not only did he encourage himself but he at once betook himself to inquire of the Lord he brought back he was brought back to prayer he called Rebiath the priest I pray thee bring me the ephod David inquired at the Lord oh David what a good God you've got

David what a faithful God you've got David not to desert you as you have deserted him what a promise proving God you've got David how faithful to his word and all that he has caused you to hold how can the prayer of the psalmist remember the word unto thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hold how beautiful a word it is isn't it filled in such a setting as this and is this the pathway through which the Lord's people have to go it is indeed to prove divine faithfulness in the utter extremity of their wicked unbelief that it is of the

Lord's mercy says David that we are not consumed and Jeremiah says the same thing and it is a proven fact that it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassion fail not and David proved it so that this unbelief and bar work of Satan which brought him into such distress is in the end overruled by divine and sovereign hand to bring him back to encourage himself now encouragement in prayer is a very blessed thing it helps you to go on to open your mouth wide and to see the fullness of God's promise the constancy sea of his grace that not like you and me like a wavering line he takes a steady and alterable course and he doeth as he will and bringeth to pass by his permissive or decreed will those things which will both lead to his glory

[36 : 41] David therefore is delivered in a very quiet God-like manner we cannot but admire the simplicity of the sacred word there is no mighty word from heaven no angel as there was that came down when he numbered the people his own face in his own breath God-given home now survives the storm and the tempest and comes up again and just like Jonah gone out of sight weeds wrapped about his head yet will I look again toward thy holy temple and all the gracious majesty and the purpose of

God revealed to a poor sinking wretched sinner in his utmost disobedience now what will we say to these things what is the outcome of this lesson is it a free and easy course that we shall say well if these things are so we've no need to worry we can go on as we like we can practice unbelief we can go to the philist died we can be a traitor we can deny our own cause and case is this what it does the natural mind can very well argue and does argue and the atheist and the critic of the scripture does argue like that because he can't see she can't see they see not through the impenetrable veil of these things that the hand of

God is even acting in and on them the fool has said in his heart there is no God he doesn't say the man or men have said he gives them a description the fool has said in his heart there is no God and what a fool but with David his vital spark now begins to brighten are we therefore on the other hand to say of this oh what a solemn example that it stir up in your heart as I trust it does in mine an earnest desire to be taught this lesson the danger of playing with fire poison going into those paths that are so damaging paths that are going to bring us deeper and deeper preserving us from such distress as this which of the two because there are only two of them the word of God in such cases as these as I've already said twice today is for our instruction not for our copying but for our instruction to show us the danger the probabilities and possibilities that the faithfulness of Jehovah now this was founded upon the covenant and this covenant

David was sure later on in life but this was all part of it you remember when David went in and sat before the Lord after the Lord had promised him that his son should inherit the kingdom that there should be none like him and when he spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ in the future David went in and sat before the Lord in a very humble prayer and he said in this the manner of man O Lord God for thou hast spoken to thy servant for a long time to come and he had and David's greater son the Lord Jesus Christ was in that covenant engagement so was David brought to see that his preservation was through covenant love and purpose and not merely to one but to the whole of the election of grace those whom the Lord had set his love upon to preserve them throughout all the vicissitudes of their pathway now this will engender love in the heart prayer to be preserved from such cause as this a tenderness of spirit it's good thing to warn the children of the danger the necessary thing they may not listen often they don't they're rather inclined to say yes well we'll meet those when they come it's a necessary thing in preaching the gospel to give warning as Paul says warning every man and teaching every man it doesn't mean to say that they receive the warning neither does it mean to say that they receive the teaching thousands don't they disregard it as being masters of their own destiny and far above any godly counsel but with the child of God he sees a case like this and he once feels that he's got the capabilities of this within his own heart and his cry therefore is hold up my goings in thy paths that my footsteps slip not divine faithfulness is throughout the covenant of grace once you pass your word you're bound don't you you feel in honor bound to keep that word that is ordinary morality that is what is expected of men that they should honor their work and oh how much more and

Jehovah ties himself by an unbreakable word of promise that he will do this and that he does not one moment deviate in any one degree from it and though through various paths we go we may know no reason yet we shall hereafter know each in his duties on this ground the covenant stands secure world David had to look around him and I emphasize this morning this was a personal pathway David when he came to the latter days he had to look within the bounds of his own family he had to say this though my house be not so with

[45 : 37] God yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure though this is all my strength and all my desire though he make it not to grow strange admission surely especially the latter part of he had to see that this covenant was not made with Absalom it was made with him and this covenant was a covenant of grace and peace divine faithfulness and everlasting mercy and it was this of which he had his one of his first rays of night out of this dark abyss that he encouraged himself now this is faith's great work to lift up the soul out of this tread by faith by faith reads the 11th of

Hebrews by faith as regards David very strangely you may think that I have thought that there is only just a fair mention of David in the long list of words and more said about Rahab than David but Paul says doesn't he and what shall I say more for time would fail me to tell and he named several of them David among them but here is the spark of faith uprising out of all the gloom and the encouragement that brought David back to his knees I was going to say to the throne of grace and at last the Lord replies to him and promises him that he shall recover all but before he recovers all he has to find that 200 of his men are too faint to go any further though his forces are considerably diminished and with these 400 he pursues and

David recovered all all of this sounds very short doesn't it and turns but think on it he himself you know destroyed a good many even in this incident but the Lord preserved everything men women children and he recovered all did he then encourage himself in the Lord his God for nothing did the road lie in that poor Egyptian boy in the field dying without a purpose did he was he there to be the slender thread and the answer to David's prayer then look well to your power and don't despise the smaller things which have a very marked effect and a very important effect in the deliverance from these troubles or how often it is that as I said of

Joseph just now the purposes of God are suspended I've often likened it to a spider's thread and you see the spider suspending itself from the ceiling and you watch it have you ever seen the thread break and the spider fall helpless to the ground never you children you mark it as you grow up and this slender silken thread of divine purposes will never break never amen