

“When Life takes a Turn for the Worse”

Introduction

Pastors tend to speak to the ladies with tenderness and compassion but for the men we reserve our hottest exhortations.

But today I feel that we men need to be encouraged a little—times are tough and for many the future is uncertain—that isn’t easy to deal with—especially when you’re a man and the leader of your family.

What do you do when you’re going along in life and things are going fine, you’re being blessed, you’re family is healthy and your company is prospering—when all of a sudden the bottom drops out?

(Your wife wants a divorce; a child is very sick; your company is laying you off)

What do you do when the road you’re on suddenly takes an unexpected turn and you find yourself in a place you never thought you’d be in, facing a situation you’re not prepared to deal with?

Well that’s exactly what happened to David, the son of Jesse—

1 Samuel 30:1-6 (NKJV)

¹ Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag, on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked Ziklag and burned it with fire, ² and had taken captive the women and those who *were* there, from small to great; they did not kill anyone, but carried *them* away and went their way. ³ So David and his men came to the city, and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive. ⁴ Then David and the people who *were* with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep. ⁵ And David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive. ⁶ Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

Ziklag means “winding road”—life is like that at times.

You’re going along fine where everything seems like smooth sailing when all of a sudden the road you’re on takes a turn you didn’t see coming.

And suddenly everything in life that matters to you—your marriage, your family, your security, your support system is suddenly gone—or at least is in danger of being taken from you.

How do you handle that?

What do you do?

To whom or to what do you turn for help and strength?

Before we answer those questions—let’s look at some of the things that led David to the place he found himself in.

Remember, because David had feared Saul he had forsaken the Promised Land he sought refuge among the unbelieving, worldly Philistines.

For over a year now he had been living among the Philistines and had even joined forces with them which put him and his men in a very difficult position when the King of the Philistines, Achish decided he was going to strike Israel in battle and wanted David to help him.

But in His sovereignty God stepped in to prevent David from engaging in the battle by working in the hearts of the Philistine commanders to oppose David's presence lest he turn against them during the battle to fight for the Israelites.

As a result of the commanders' opposition, King Achish discharged David and he and his men were sent back home to Ziklag, the city the king had given to David in the land of the Philistines.

Ziklag was about fifty miles from the battlefield, so it took David and his men about three days to reach their home.

But to their horror, when they arrived they found their city burned to the ground and their families missing—put yourself in David’s sandals for a minute—how would you feel?

This begs the age old question—“*If God loves me why is He putting me through this horrible circumstance?*”

Warren W. Wiersbe says this:

Perhaps the LORD permitted this raid on Ziklag to encourage David to get out of enemy territory and go back to Judah where he belonged....[The Amalekites] burned the city, an act of vengeance on their part but perhaps a message from the Lord that it was time for David to think about returning to Judah.

Hosea 6:1 (NKJV)

¹ Come, and let us return to the Lord; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up.

Someone has said that God whispers in our circumstances but shouts in our adversities.

In the book of Isaiah God said, “*Sometimes I have to hurt you to heal you*”.

It seems that David had let his fear of Saul instead of his faith in God (God had promised David that he would be King of Israel someday) to cause him to take matters into his own hands and run to the world for help.

Isaiah 31:1 (NKJV)

¹ Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, *And* rely on horses, Who trust in chariots because *they are* many, *And* in horsemen because they are very strong, But who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, Nor seek the Lord!

There’s something else to consider—it was the Amalekites that attacked Ziklag and robbed David and his men of their families.

Each time the Amalekites are seen in Scripture, they're an illustration of the flesh, warring against the people of God.

That is why God said to Moses, "*You shall war against Amalek from generation to generation*" (Exodus 17:16).

Paul put it this way—

Galatians 5:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

So what am I saying here?

I'm *not* saying that every problem or difficult circumstance that you find yourself in is because of some sin or disobedience in your life.

Sometimes we can be right in the middle of God's will and find ourselves going through the worst trial in our life.

But we can't always be sure we haven't brought this problem on ourselves through disobedience, so first thing I do when I seem to be going through a prolonged period of adversity is stop and take spiritual inventory of my life—it could be that I have stepped out of God's will for my life.

Remember, David forsook the Promised Land to go and seek refuge with the Philistines (world).

The Promised Land represented God's perfect will for His people—as long as they were in the Promised Land they were blessed and when God had to chasten them for their sin they were taken out of the Promised Land.

So spiritually what does the ‘Promised Land’ mean to us? → It means to be *‘filled with the Holy Spirit’*—which in part means to be *controlled* by the Spirit.

One of the hardest things we have to learn when we get saved is to turn every area of our lives, every decision we have to make and every problem we face over to the control of the Holy Spirit.

What I’m saying is that sometimes we find ourselves in difficult circumstances because we refuse to trust God and so we take things into our own hands.

Sometimes Christians even go to the world for help (counsel, money, alcohol/drugs, internet porn etc.) or they forsake their relationship with the Lord and start living in the world.

But when they do that the flesh starts to get stronger and stronger until it robs them of what’s most important in life—their wife, their kids, their faith and their friends.

So what did David do—how did he handle this?

I. He strengthened himself in the Lord his God—v.6

1 Samuel 30:6 (NKJV)

⁶ Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

This is where it starts—the first thing you need to do when the road you’re on takes an unexpected turn for the worse is stop and encourage yourself in the Lord your God.

“A crisis does not make a person: it shows what a person is made of. Like his men, David wept and sorrowed, but unlike some of his men, he did not look for a scapegoat. In times of crisis, express your feelings honestly, but do not look for somebody to blame. Rather, get your strength from the Lord...”

Sometimes life can get lonely—especially in a leadership capacity.

David couldn't depend on his men. They were angry with him. There was no one to encourage him, he had no wives or children to hug him and tell him it was going to be okay.

So David had only one option left and that was to turn to the only One he knew was always there for him—the Lord his God.

This is a good lesson for all of us. When you're going through a tough time and you're feeling all alone and there's no one to turn to—turn to God and encourage yourself in Him.

How?

A. By reminding yourself that God is still on the throne.

Psalms 27:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ *I would have lost heart, unless I had believed That I would see the goodness of the Lord In the land of the living.* ¹⁴ Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!

Psalms 42:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul? And *why* are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him *For* the help of His countenance.

When I'm facing a terrible problem I can go on being depressed, discouraged and defeated or I can say to myself, "*What's wrong with you? God is still on the throne. He is with me in this circumstance. He will see me through this. I'm going to hope in Him and He will deliver me and put a new song of praise in my heart*".

B. Take refuge in His word and grab hold of His promises.

Psalms 46:1-3, 10-11 (NKJV)

¹ ... God *is* our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; ³ *Though* its waters roar *and* be troubled, *Though* the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah ¹⁰ Be still, and know that I *am* God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! ¹¹ The Lord of hosts *is* with us; The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah

C. Praise Him for what He's going to do

It doesn't say in this passage that David praised the Lord in this trial—but if you know anything about David he had a heart of worship and praise.

And so I believe he spent a little time offering up praise to God in the midst of this horrible circumstance.

So first he encouraged himself in the Lord and then he inquired of the Lord.

II. He inquired of the Lord—v.7-8

1 Samuel 30:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, "Please bring the ephod here to me." And Abiathar brought the ephod to David. ⁸ So David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?" And He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake *them* and without fail recover *all*."

So often when things take a turn for the worse in our lives—we spend most of the time trying to figure out how we're going to fix the problem and we pray last, when prayer should be one of the first things we do.

After encouraging himself in the Lord, David inquired of the Lord. "*What do You want me to do, Lord?*"

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.

⁶ Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

And don't let the devil tell you that God will only listen to your prayers if you fast and pray for days.

Sometimes you haven't got hours and days to pray—God will often answer your prayers quickly if you take the time to pray.

Ask Peter. He was on the Sea of Galilee. He had been walking on the water, but now he's sinking quickly. He didn't pray for three days, three months, three hours, or even three minutes. He prayed three words: "*Lord, save me.*" And the Lord grabbed him by the hand and pulled him out of the water (Matthew 14:30, 31).

Matthew 6:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

III. He obeyed God and fought the enemy until he gained the victory—v.16-19

1 Samuel 30:16-19 (NKJV)

¹⁶ And when he had brought him down, there they were, spread out over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing, because of all the great spoil which they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. ¹⁷ Then David attacked them from twilight until the evening of the next day. Not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled. ¹⁸ So David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away, and David rescued his two wives. ¹⁹ And nothing of theirs was lacking, either small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything which they had taken from them; David recovered all.

David recovered all that the Amalekites carried away—not some, not a lot, not a good percentage—but *all*.

This is the Lord's will for you and His heart for me. He wants us to recover all that has been ripped off by sin, our flesh, and the enemy.

Look, let me review quickly. When we find ourselves facing any trial or tragedy the three things you need to do are—

1. Encourage yourself in the Lord.

Stop and get alone with God and remind yourself of how much He loves you and has promised to be with you even when you're walking through the valley of the shadow of death—so don't fear.

Remind yourself of His promises and praise Him for what He's going to do.

Above all don't turn against Him in the trial—turn toward Him!

2. Seek the Lord in prayer.

Don't immediately try to fix the problem in the energy of your flesh which is going to lead to worldly solutions and compound the problem even further.

Remember these things are tests of our faith. If you don't handle in the Spirit you'll give place to the devil and he will really rip you off from the blessings of God in your life.

3. Obey what God has told you to do.

As a Christian we're not to lie there feeling sorry for ourselves when life knocks us down.

Seek God for direction and then get up and get going!

And no matter how badly the enemy attacks you—keep on fighting until you gain the victory—don't give up!

This is very basic but are you doing it?

→King Jehoshaphat in 2Chron.20 (what looked like a valley of death turned out to be a valley of blessing when they turned to God, reminded themselves of His greatness and promises, and then marched into battle with praise.

And your problems can have the same outcome if you also do what David and King Jehoshaphat did.