

July 24, 2016
Sunday Morning Service
Series: The Life of David
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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ADDING INJURY TO INSULT 1 Samuel 30:1-15

When life unravels one of the first questions we are prone to ask is, “Why?” For us who love God and trust His Word, that question is typically addressed to Him. We, who truly believe that God is sovereign, that He who knows when a sparrow falls out of its nest anywhere in the world controls all things, are taken aback when stuff goes wrong.

About a week ago, I watched the billows of smoke rise to the sky as a local business went up in flames. I sympathized with the owners and wondered what it would be like to stand by helplessly as my means of livelihood crumbled into a pile of ashes. I think about people who lose their health without warning and wonder what it is like to hear the word “terminal” from your doctor. People are fired without notice from their jobs, or suddenly their spouse walks out on them, or their church into which they have poured their lives hits a crisis and unravels. How do we respond when these inevitable consequences of the sin principle impact our lives?

God put in His Bible various stories about these kinds of things smashing into real people so that we can learn from them. Sometimes those real people teach us what not to do. For example, when trouble comes through testing, it is not good to flee to Achish the pagan Philistine king for rescue. But it is good, when life takes a nosedive, to conclude with Job, “Though God slay me, yet will I trust Him.”

David’s life illustrates for us both good responses and bad responses. For David not to kill King Saul when he had a chance was a good response. For David to seek rescue from Saul by the hand of Achish was a bad response that brought with it some pretty bad circumstances. Because David fled to Achish instead of trusting God,

he put himself in a situation where he had to lie. Because he lied, Achish put him in an impossible situation where he would have to fight against his own relatives. God graciously delivered David from that dilemma.

However, while David was in the process of marching off to war with Achish before God delivered him, David and his men experienced a horrible loss. The Amalekites sacked their homes and stole the families and possessions. If they had been at home in Ziklag, this never would have happened. How David and his men responded is very instructive and very encouraging for the most part. Let’s learn from David how to respond when life falls apart.

“Why God?!” (vv.1-8).

David was found in circumstances with which many fellow humans can identify. This wasn’t supposed to happen (vv.1-3). The brave warriors marched home after Achish had honorably discharged them to discover their city was sacked. *Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid against the Negeb and against Ziklag. They had overcome Ziklag and burned it with fire and taken captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great. They killed no one, but carried them off and went their way. And when David and his men came to the city, they found it burned with fire, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive (vv.1-3).*

David and the men had been a three days journey north at Aphek with the Philistine army. They were in a difficult situation because David had not been honest. At the same time, we can implicate all the men in the dishonesty also because there is no indication that any of them confronted David. Because the men were away from home, they were unable to fulfill their husband/father responsibility. Ultimately, they were away from home because of the sin of dishonesty. In short, they were out of God’s will. Only by God doing the unexpected work of turning the hearts of the Philistine rulers against Achish did David and the men head back to their proper responsibilities.

Were the men rejoicing and slapping each other on the back because God had delivered them in such an unusual way? Their

rejoicing in God's provision would be short-lived. While they were away from home, distracted with difficult circumstances, the enemy attacked their homes. Everything that was dear to these real men was gone. The condemned enemy had destroyed their homes. The condemned enemy had stolen their possessions. The condemned enemy had kidnaped their families. How did the 600 men and David feel?

Put yourself in their sandals. No one likes to be the victim of theft or vandalism. To have our vehicles or homes ransacked makes us feel violated. We have experienced that feeling more times than we care to remember here at Community Baptist Church.

When I was in highschool I read Orson Welles *1984*. He published the work in 1949, intrigued the world with his proposal that governments in the future would be so intrusive that it tracked the citizens' every move. Big Brother, the party leader who may not even exist, watched the common people with cameras installed in multiple public places. One of Big Brother's important responsibilities was to rewrite the news so that it always made big government look innocent and beneficial. How accurately Welles' imagination has come to pass is shocking. Even we at CBC have of necessity fallen into this phase of watching, ever watching through the camera that does not lie. Because the buildings here have been broken into multiple times, we are resorted to installing cameras that watch every angle of the property 24/7/365. We came to this point because we do not enjoy the pain that comes with thieves successfully making off with our possessions.

And no doubt all the men asked, "Why?" when they came upon the disaster they used to call home. More specifically, we would probably ask, "Why did this happen to me?" Or even to place blame we might wonder, "Why did God allow this to happen?" God did allow it to happen, didn't He? It wasn't like He was distracted or off playing golf and forgot to watch out for His people. Sometimes when we are the victims of difficulty, we will never know all the reasons God had for allowing it. The right response in such cases is to trust God. Sometimes we know or can surmise that there is a reason for the test. The right response is still to trust God.

In David's case, he might easily have thought that what goes around comes around (vv.4-6). As is obvious from David's and his

mens' response, the Amalekites caused bitter grief. *Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep. David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters (vv.4-6).*

Everyone wept until they could weep no more. This is intense distress like we experience only occasionally in life. Two phrases describe this emotional pain and upheaval. David was *greatly distressed*, which means that he was exceedingly pressed from every side, not knowing which way to turn, unable to see a means for escape. The people were *bitter in soul*. The word is *mara*. That is the same word the Bible used to described Naomi after she lost her husband and two sons while living in Moab.

In particular, the story indicates that God made David the center of this pain. He too experienced intense loss. But his pain was compounded because his men held him responsible for the disaster and were ready to stone him. Maybe that was just part of being the leader. Maybe the men were angry with David because he had created a dangerous situation by not leaving some men to guard their families. Ziklag was situated in a precarious place out in the wilderness, a sitting duck for raids. Maybe the grief was deeper than we might first suspect because they all sensed that this tragedy came upon them because they were where they should not have been, because they had been doing what they should not have been doing—and it was David's idea.

David thought he was in distress when he was looking for rescue from Saul. *Then David said in his heart, "Now I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will despair of seeking me any longer within the borders of Israel, and I shall escape out of his hand" (1 Samuel 27:1).* That distress was minor compared to what he felt now. Why? Why did he have to endure such hostility against himself?

I wonder if it occurred to David to ask how many families had felt this same kind of pain because of him? Remember what he was doing for a year and a half. *Now David and his men went up and*

made raids against the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites, for these were the inhabitants of the land from of old, as far as Shur, to the land of Egypt (1 Samuel 27:8). It is true that God had commanded the removal of these people groups from the land. In his closing days Joshua specifically named the Geshurites and Amalekites as two people groups who remained and who Israel should remove from the land. He told the people, “*This is the land that yet remains: all the regions of the Philistines, and all those of the Geshurites*” (Joshua 13:2). Those were two of the groups David attacked.

Be that as it may, they were people with families. They felt pain like David did, like his men did, and like we do. Did David’s past actions haunt him? There is something in our souls that naturally asks in times of difficulty, “What did I do to deserve this?” Severe stress in times of loss and sorrow is difficult to deal with. Facing a trial with a guilty conscience is infinitely more difficult to handle.

What would you have done if you were in David’s sandals? Humans have multiple ways of dealing with adversity. Some become depressed. Some turn to alcohol, or drugs, or sex, or even become co-dependant on other people. These responses are evident and expected. What other option does a person have? David concluded, “Let’s see what God says” (vv.7-8).

David found strength in the LORD. *But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God (v.6b)*. Surely the thoughts of his Psalm twenty-five were on his mind, though he might have written it at a later time. *To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long. Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD! (Psalm 25:1-7). My eyes are ever toward the LORD, for he will pluck my feet out of the net. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The*

troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distresses (Psalm 25:15-17).

Observe carefully the process the words of our text describe. David did not sit around and wonder where God was. David did not blame God or accuse Him of being unjust or unfair. David could not call on Achish and the Philistines for help. Nor could he reach out to Saul and the Israelites, his own relatives. Rather David intentionally, purposely turned his thoughts to the Lord. He rehearsed God’s promises. He meditated on God’s law. We need to remember that the only Word of God that David had was probably the writings of Moses and maybe of Job. He didn’t have the whole collection of Psalms or the New Testament to draw on like we do.

And yet, what David had was sufficient. He affirmed the sufficiency of God’s law when he wrote, *The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb*” (Psalm 19:7-10).

We should not be surprised that the servant of God was made strong by God through meditating on God’s Word and praying to God—the very same helps that are available to us. Having found strength in God to carry on the duties of life, David sought the LORD’s will.

He communicated with God in a special way that we do not use and that we do not completely understand. *And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, “Bring me the ephod.” So Abiathar brought the ephod to David (v.7)*. God had given the design for the ephod to Moses at the beginning of the nation. The ephod was like an apron which the high priest wore as he represented the people before God. It was designed with various reminders that Israel was God’s chosen people. It contained the Urim and Thumim in a pocket. God ordained the use of these odd things for discerning His will in an age when the people did not have a Bible or the indwelling Holy Spirit to help them. The ephod with the Urim and Thumim were in

David's camp because Abiathar the remaining priest (after Saul's slaughter of the priests at Nob) was with David.

Now David truly desired to know God's will. His attitude at this point in life was quite a contrast to how David got himself in trouble with Achish and the Philistines when he did not seek God's will. Also, this was quite a contrast with Saul who also was in a very difficult situation with the Philistine army breathing down his neck (chapter 29). Instead of seeking God, Saul chose the advice and guidance of a witch or medium who claimed she could communicate with dead people.

The lesson should be clear to us. In times of trial, distress, and difficulty, we must remember to reach out to God who promises. A quick review of just a small portion of God's manifold promises is encouraging to us. God said through divine wisdom, *"I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me"* (Proverbs 8:17). He promised to the person in trouble, *"When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him"* (Psalm 91:15). Jesus invited us to, *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you"* (Matthew 7:7). He invited, *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28). Therefore, God also said through Peter, *"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you"* (1 Peter 5:6-7).

David trusted God's promises and invitation and called out to God. God graciously answered him. *And David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them?" He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue"* (v.8). David's question was plain enough. And God gave a clear answer. We do not exactly know how, but it was clear to David that he and his men should go and rescue their families. It doesn't work that way in this age. But sometimes the way God answers our prayers is truly remarkable. Sometimes God arranges circumstances. Sometimes God uses people to give us an answer. Often God simply grants peace of heart. Always God answers in accord with His Word. Rarely God answers with a genuine miracle, but that is His prerogative.

David sought God's will. God revealed His will. What would David do, and what would be the outcome?

Jehovah-Jireh (vv.9-15).

God has to supply for us because human strength is too often insufficient (vv.9-10). Sometimes we feel like David and his men who knew that strength is gone. *So David set out, and the six hundred men who were with him, and they came to the brook Besor, where those who were left behind stayed* (v.9). Sympathize with them. David and his men had marched for three days from Aphek. Obviously the men were tired. Having arrived at Ziklag, they found their lives destroyed, and they were exhausted mentally and emotionally. But they **set out**. That means they got up and moved with intent.

We understand how human strength gives out. Not everyone who grows weary is slothful. Some people have greater emotional, spiritual, or physical strength than others. When others cannot pursue with you, let them rest without despising them. Because in reality, when the battle is engaged, God doesn't need our help. In this case, because of human insufficiency, *David pursued, he and four hundred men. Two hundred stayed behind, who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor* (v.10). How was David going to have military success against the raiders in his condition? He had left one-third of his men behind. Those with him had marched for three days and now they were moving another 10-15 miles south before engaging the enemy. Even adrenaline will give out at some point.

There is no doubt that God loves to use us in His work, but He is not limited by our limitations. Last week Pat and I attended a banquet for supporters of the Wilds Christian Camp's summer ministries. We went as representatives of CBC. Typically, about a dozen workers will give testimony about what God is teaching them this summer. One young lady in particular said something that really hit me. I have said it myself many times. But when I heard it from someone else, especially a young person, it made a great impact on me. She said, "One thing that God is teaching me this summer is that He doesn't need me."

It is so easy for us to begin to think that God cannot accomplish His will unless He can depend on me. Are we really that important? Remember that when the Pharisees told Jesus to silence the crowd who was praising Him, Jesus told them that if the people were silenced, the rocks would cry out His glory. God is very kind to allow us to be involved in His work. But God can accomplish amazing things with 400 tired men or even 10 tired men. Who illustrated that better than Gideon? Let's trust God to do what He desires to do, and let's thank God that He is willing to use us in the process.

David sought God's will. God gave David an answer. David set out to rescue his people with a small and weary band of discouraged men, and God provided (vv.11-15). Here is a great story, a foundational story, about God's provision. God told Abraham to take his only son Isaac to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him. No we do not and cannot understand all the reasons and ramifications for it. But we do know that Abraham trusted God. Along the way, *Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here am I, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together (Genesis 22:7-8).* Skip down to verse ten and read, *Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I" He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided"(Genesis 22:10-14).*

In David's situation, God provided a sick Egyptian (vv.11-14). *They found an Egyptian in the open country and brought him to David. And they gave him bread and he ate. They gave him water to drink, and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. And when he had eaten, his spirit revived, for he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights (vv.11-*

12). What good is one sick Egyptian slave boy? Surely David and the guys were thinking, "Lord, we need an army to get our families back!" What is that in your hand? If all God gives you is a tired, sick Egyptian, then feed him, strengthen him, and make him useful.

God actually provided a useful Egyptian. *And David said to him, "To whom do you belong? And where are you from?" He said, "I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite, and my master left me behind because I fell sick three days ago. We had made a raid against the Negeb of the Cherethites and against that which belongs to Judah and against the Negeb of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire." And David said to him, "Will you take me down to this band?" And he said, "Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this band" (vv.13-15).* Lo and behold what a coincidence! The Egyptian guy just happened to be connected and have all the information David needed to launch a successful raid.

How amazing and gracious God is to us. Most of the time He gives us the freedom to do whatever we want to do. He uses the freedom as tests and opportunities for us to prove our love or lack of love for Him. In response to our choices, God our loving Father will discipline us for making choices that leave Him out. But the purpose of the discipline is to cause us to humble ourselves and cry out to Him. When we call on God and seek His will, He answers and He always provides. When the world of sin levels injury on top of the insults of Godly discipline, God stands with open arms ready to invite us into renewed fellowship with Him.