

Endurance

1 Samuel 30:7-17

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-6-2012

Introduction – the amazing endurance of these soldiers

In my last sermon I looked at the first six verses, and examined several principles that enable us to face a crisis without falling apart and becoming a crisis ourselves. David did not lash out at God or his men when he felt overwhelmed. He did not even lash out when they lashed out at him. We saw how he strengthened himself in the Lord and was able to face his crisis and anguish of heart in a godly way.

But today we are going to be seeing that the crisis did not automatically go away simply because he had faith in God. Some Christians have a very naïve view of Christianity. They think that if they trust in God, God will bail them out of their problems, and He will take away all of their pain. Not so. And yet, because of such false expectations, they are hugely disappointed when the pain does not immediately disappear. In fact, many people have become disillusioned with Christianity because of such false advertising. And let me tell you something – God did not do the false advertising – men did. God has never promised us a bed of roses. Quite the opposite. Jesus warned potential disciples over and over again that they might not want to follow Him because His plan for their lives involved persecution, pain, disappointment, and misunderstanding. He told them to count the cost before they followed Him. He did not engage in false advertising.

In Luke 9:23 Jesus said, **“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”** His whole call to discipleship was a call to endurance – to taking up the cross daily. Matthew 24:13 says, **“he who endures to the end shall be saved.”** In other words, lack of endurance was a sign of lack of regeneration. 2 Timothy 2:12 says, **“If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.”** The writer of Hebrews worried about the believers in his church because they were so discouraged that they were tempted not to endure. He told them, **“For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise....But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.”**

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I bring these Scriptures up because you might think this sermon on endurance has no bearing on your life. Things have been going fairly well at home and at work, and you have no intention of going to the Olympics, or racing through blizzards in the Iditarod, and so you see no reason to endure. But our fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil is a constant call to endurance. Sometimes it is blazing hard to do the right thing and we don't feel like doing it. It takes endurance to be a godly wife when your husband is not being godly. Right? It takes endurance for singles to stay sexually pure. So this sermon is a sermon for every Christian. We are called to endurance.

But let me clarify that we are not talking about a hopeless endurance that trudges through life with glassy eyes. No, that is a counterfeit. That is not one of the fruits of the Spirit. Part way into the sermon we will be seeing that the endurance that *is* a fruit of the Spirit is an endurance that flows from hope. We are *inspired* to endure. We are *energized* to endure. Now, likely God is not going to make you endure to the degree that David had to in this chapter. But it sure might feel like it. In any case, the endurance that is a fruit of the Holy Spirit flows from faith, hope, and love.

I. Faith, hope, and love as the foundation for endurance (vv. 4-8)

A. Love gives a reason to endure, though it is often not enough (vv. 4-6)

And we'll start with love. I've talked to a number of people who had previously said that they would never go through chemotherapy, and yet they have ended up putting themselves through that misery because their children wanted them around a few more months. They didn't even think that the chemo would work. So why try? Well, they were motivated to endure because they loved their kids and their kids weren't ready to see them go. There are countless stories of mothers enduring unbelievable things for their families because they loved them so much.

1 Corinthians 13 links faith, hope, love, and endurance together as a package deal when it says that **“love... believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”** And in the first six verses we saw the deep love that the men had for their wives and children. In the rest of this chapter it is a love that makes them fight to the nth degree in order to get back their wives, sons, and daughters. They went almost beyond a body's endurance because of love.

But one thing that we shouldn't miss is that love by itself was not enough. They had no more love in verses 8 and following than they had in verses 4-6. Look at verses 4-6:

1Samuel 30:4 Then David and the people who *were* with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep.

Certainly they had love for their families, but because they had lost all hope, they did not seek their wives let alone endure in seeking their wives. The text goes on:

1Samuel 30:5 And David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive.

1Samuel 30:6 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.

Other than David, these men had lost hope that they would ever see their families again and verse 4 says that they wept themselves into a state of utter exhaustion. Hope without love might be unimportant, but love without hope can't endure.

B. Faith fans the flames of endurance (v. 6c)

But faith is also important. It was faith in God that made David at least try to do what seemed to be hopeless. And last week we looked at the two Psalms with which David strengthened himself in the Lord. He fought unbelief and even though he didn't feel like it, he began taking the actions of faith a step at a time. And that Psalm spoke of several actions that required faith. One was to ask God to help him bless his men even though they were being unfair and mean to him. By faith he was asking God for the kind of love that Christ called for in the Sermon on the Mount – a love that returns blessing for cursing, that returns good for evil, and love for hate. Another evidence that David was trying to take steps of faith was that he took action against the Amalekites. He didn't know where they were, but God did, and by faith David started praying God's curses against the Amalekites. Instead of giving up, he was taking the actions of faith that he could. God could judge them and take them out, and even though David didn't yet know what God's plan was, he began taking what little actions he could in his apparently hopeless situation. Another action of faith that he took in Psalm 69 was that after crying his heart out to God, he told God that he fully trusted him in the situation. He told God that though he was sorrowful, he would praise Him. It takes faith to do that. He told God that though he felt like he was in a prison, that God would release him in His own timing and

His own way and would infallibly bring his promises to Israel to pass. Let me read a sampling of what David said at the end of that Psalm:

Psalms 69:29 But I *am* poor and sorrowful; Let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high.

Psalms 69:30 I will praise the name of God with a song, And will magnify Him with thanksgiving.

Psalms 69:31 *This* also shall please the LORD better than an ox *or* bull, Which has horns and hooves.

Psalms 69:32 The humble shall see *this and* be glad; And you who seek God, your hearts shall live.

Psalms 69:33 For the LORD hears the poor, And does not despise His prisoners.

Psalms 69:34 Let heaven and earth praise Him, The seas and everything that moves in them.

Psalms 69:35 For God will save Zion And build the cities of Judah, That they may dwell there and possess it.

Psalms 69:36 Also, the descendants of His servants shall inherit it, And those who love His name shall dwell in it.

Did David feel like saying any of that? No. He probably felt like lashing out just like the other men were doing. But he forced himself to think by faith, talk by faith, and live by faith. He shook himself by the scruff of the neck and told himself, “Don’t you dare give up; don’t you dare doubt God.” In fact, David reminds me very much of the way some Saudi’s train their Arabian horses. They go through rigorous training that requires absolute obedience to the trainers. The final test takes the animals almost beyond their endurance. They force the horses to go without water for days, and then turn the horses loose. Of course, the horses start running straight toward the water. But just before they get to the water, ready to plunge in and drink, the trainer blows his whistle. The horses that have been completely trained stop, turn around and come pacing back to the trainer. They stand their quivering, wanting water, but they wait in perfect obedience. And when the trainer is sure that he has their trusting obedience, he gives the signal that they can drink. David showed that he was ready for kingship by his trust, and God gave him the signal in verses 7-8.

C. Hope enables persevering endurance beyond human calculation (vv. 7-8; Rom. 8:25)

1. The endurance of the 200, though limited, was still remarkable (vv. 9-10)

These verses give the third key to endurance – hope.

1Samuel 30:7 Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, "Please bring the ephod here to me." And Abiathar brought the ephod to David.

1Samuel 30:8 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*."

We aren't told exactly how the ephod worked, but it brought God's guidance. And we looked at the importance of guidance when we looked at that verse last week. But I want to paint the picture of the kind of endurance this sure hope gave to David and his men, because it really is remarkable.

Remember that we saw last week that David had traveled a minimum of 120 miles in the last six days. With all the baggage, food, and armor that they were carrying, 20 miles a day was a fairly decent workout. If some conservatives are correct, and this is the Aphek up north, right near Shunem, then it means that they have traveled over 36 miles a day for six days straight. That would be absolutely exhausting. Then you've got them combing through the ruins to find any bodies, and when they realize that their families have been kidnapped they weep themselves to exhaustion.

But this renewed hope in verse 8 gave them renewed energy. There is something about hope that does this. Even the 200 that bail out have a great deal of renewed energy. Lord willing, I want to give a sermon on the men who stay by the baggage next week, so I will not comment on it too much here. But let me read verses 9-10.

1Samuel 30:9 So David went, he and the six hundred men who *were* with him, and came to the Brook Besor, where those stayed who were left behind.
1Samuel 30:10 But David pursued, he and four hundred men; for two hundred stayed *behind*, who were so weary that they could not cross the Brook Besor.

It didn't say they would not. It says, "they could not." They too had gone to their bodies' limits. Let's just do a little calculation here so that we can have sympathy on these 200 men. If the last day's journey was twenty miles (and there are some who say it was 36, but let's assume the more conservative figure for the Aphek that was at Antipatris), if they really pushed it, they would have arrived around 2 in the afternoon, but with all the baggage, more likely 3 pm. That's good stiff march for even a small army like David's when they are carrying all of their equipment. They would be tired, but happy when they got near to Ziklag. But the shock of seeing Ziklag burned would take the wind out of their sails. If they took an hour to comb through the buildings looking for survivors and then weeping their hearts

out, that would leave a little over two hours before dusk. From Ziklag to the Brook Besor was 16 miles. Just to give you perspective, a half marathon is 13 miles, and the average time for that is 1 hour 54 minutes – basically two hours. Trevor can run it faster, but that is the average. And with men carrying backpacks of their food, armor, weapons, and extra changes of clothing, it would be an amazing feat to be able to run at a marathon pace for an additional sixteen miles. And yet they would need to do something like that to be able to get to the Amalekites before dusk – which is beyond the Besor Brook. So don't look down on the 200 men who stop at the Brook Besor. They have traveled a minimum of 36 hours that day, the last sixteen being at a run. It's no wonder to me that 200 of the men physically cannot take another step. Even with faith, hope, and love driving them, they couldn't do it. They had reached their bodies' absolute limits. But I just wanted to point out that hope gave even those 200 the energy to do something rather impressive – to run three miles more than a half marathon after traveling 120 miles in the previous day (using a conservative figure).

2. The endurance of the 400 was staggering (29:1; 30:1,10,17)

So what kept the 400 going? Obviously they were pushing their bodies beyond exhaustion too, but in verses 11-15 their hope is fanned into a blaze with the news from this Egyptian that the Amalekites weren't too far away. Sometimes it takes renewed encouragements, and renewed hope to keep people keeping on. And you need to keep this in mind when your children's endurance is lagging – add hope and encouragement.

I read that Florence Chadwick, the first woman to swim the English channel in both directions, tried to swim from Catalina Island to the California coast two times. I can't even imagine wanting to do that. I about froze swimming just one hour in that water in the summer time. Anyway, the first time she failed because she lost hope. She said it wasn't the distance or the bone chilling waters. After 15 hours in the water and within one mile of her goal she gave up because she couldn't see the land. She told a reporter, "If I could have seen land, I might have made it." She said, "I was licked by the fog."¹ And the same is often true of us. When we begin having doubts and start losing hope, the spiritual fog comes in and makes us tempted to give up and wonder if it is worth it. The second time that she tried it she had

¹ Various accounts of this can be found online. Randy Alcom, "Florence Chadwick and the Fog," epm.org/resources/2010/Jan/21/florence-chadwick-and-fog. "Florence Chadwick," in *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, vol. 19 (2004): 64–66; "Navigation Information" and "Swim Successes," Catalina Channel Swimming Federation, swimcatalina.com.

fog obscuring her vision too, but she told reporters that she kept a mental image of the coastline in her mind. Hope is that mental image.

So that combo of faith, hope, and love are what can keep your endurance going. When you are discipling your children to endure, make sure you fan the flames of all three. And there are all kinds of exercises you can do to increase faith, hope, and love. And if any one of the three is missing the others will wither on the vine. What happens to a love that has lost faith and hope? It's no longer the love of 1 Corinthians 13, which believes all things and hopes, endures all things. Those are a package deal. Now it is true that in eternity love is greater than faith and hope because it alone will last throughout eternity. Scripture says that faith gives way to sight and hope gives way to fulfillment but love will endure forever. But that doesn't make it greater in an absolute sense. It is faith after all that receives all graces from God's throne. And it is hope alone that can sustain love and sustain faith. We cannot neglect any one of those three. For example, Colossians 1:5 speaks of "**faith and love that spring from hope.**" Huh! "Faith and love that spring from hope." So in that verse, hope is foundational. But there is really a circularity between those three graces that feed each other. And it is so important to realize when you are in counseling. You've got to feed all three.

And I want to spend just a few minutes talking about the critical role that hope plays in endurance, because I believe this is the most neglected of the three in our century. We are a generation that has lost hope for the future, and so we give up on our families; we give up on our culture; we fail to endure. Romans 8:25 says, "**But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.**" What is the hope that he is talking about there? It is God's promises for the future of planet earth; it is eschatology. He is saying that eschatology enables us to endure. This is why it is silly to say that eschatology is unimportant. People shrug their shoulders and say, "Who cares? I'm a panmillennialist. It will all pan out in the end." And while that is a clever quip, it robs people of hope, which in turn robs people of faith. If you don't believe God promises great things for the future, you can't have the faith to achieve great things for the future. These graces fit together.

But when we are talking eschatology, we shouldn't just be talking about what happens out there. God has a personal eschatology for each of you. Take your sanctification, for example. Many Scriptures give an eschatology (in other words, it gives promises for the future) of your sanctification. 1 John 5:4 says, "**Whatever is born of God overcomes the**

world.” That is an eschatology of victory. And there are hundreds of Scriptures that you need to familiarize yourself with and set your hope upon if you are to endure in sanctification. One of the biggest challenges I have when I counsel people is to give them hope that they can win the battle. Without the hope of the Scripture you will not endure. Philippians 1:6 says, **“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”** He is promising that non-stop your future can be growth in God’s grace. That’s an eschatology of victory. That’s an eschatology of hope.

Romans 8:28 is an eschatology of hope when it comes to providence. It’s the certain hope that for the rest of your life God will work all things together for your good. This gives you David’s ability to look for opportunities – to be optimistic.

God also gives an eschatology regarding your finances and your personal needs. He says in Philippians 4:19, **“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”** And the context is talking about money, so it is a promise of providing for you financially. But it is more than that - **“my God shall supply all your need.”** That’s an eschatology of hope that is just as hopeful as the promise God gave to David in this chapter. 2 Corinthians 9:8 (also talking about money) says, **“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”** Such a hope can help you endure in providing for your family.

And speaking of family, does God have an eschatology of hope for your family and its future generations? Yes he does. It is all of the promises for covenant succession that we have looked at in years past – that God will be a God to you and to your children after you. And Genesis 18:19 says that such promises concerning Isaac enabled Abraham to persevere in commanding his children and his household after to him to keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice (and here comes the operative phrase) **“that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”** That verse indicates that without endurance the package of faith, hope, love, and endurance falls apart. They are a package deal. And even though we have far more hope than Abraham did for covenant succession for our children, we must still endure in investing the Scriptures in their lives and raising them in the fear and nurture of the Lord. Can you see how the eschatology of hope is tied to faith, love, and endurance in everything.

That's true even of our relationship to culture. We believe the Scriptures give us a hope for planet earth in time and history. Christ promised, **"I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."** But did the apostles have to endure in being vessels through whom Christ built his church? Yes they did. Endurance was not an option. Paul said, **"we...endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ"** (1 Cor. 9:12). The implication is that if the apostles had not been enduring, the gospel would have been hindered. You cannot separate divine sovereignty from human responsibility. You cannot allow God's promises to make you lazy. Faith, hope, love, and endurance are a package deal. And we need to teach our children that they are a package deal.

But we do glory in God's promises for the future, because those promises make our endurance worthwhile. Those promises energize us just like they energized David and his men. I love the promises of God for planet earth – they make me want to pour my life out for the cause. Isaiah 9 promises that once Christ was born, that the increase of Christ's kingdom and of peace would be non-stop. And if you do not have hope for society as a whole, you will not have the energy to work to change our society. Why? Because Scripture says that everything needed to be successful in changing society flows from hope.

Let me give you some examples: 1 Thessalonians 1:3 speaks of the **"patience of hope."** Hebrews 6:11 speaks of the **"diligence of hope."** Without hope, why would you be diligent? Hebrews 6:19 says that hope is an anchor that keeps us steadfast. In other words, it keeps us from giving up. Why have so many evangelicals given up on working for a Christian republic? They have given up because they have a faulty hope; they have an eschatology of despair, not an eschatology of victory. Romans 12:12 speaks of rejoicing in hope. Does your Biblical hope make you rejoice, or does it make you gloomy? So many Scriptures indicate that without an eschatology of hope, we will give up. Psalm 78:5-7 says that without hope we will give up on keeping his commandments. Proverbs 13:12 says, **"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire is fulfilled, it is a tree of life."** I am convinced that the major reason many Christians don't endure in changing society, don't have endurance in investing in the training of their children, don't have endurance in their marriages, and basically give up on their own sanctification is because they have lost hope. Secondary reasons for lack of endurance are lack of faith and lack of love. But hope is a critical component.

II. God's providence gave the endurance success (vv. 11-15)

A. He made sure the door to fighting in the north was closed (chapter 29)

I wanted to spend the bulk of my sermon on those three foundations for endurance. But let me quickly go through the reasons why endurance is not useless for believers. God is providentially at work in our lives working everything together for our good.

When I preached on chapter 29, we saw that David was likely very disappointed with four doors of opportunity that God systematically closed. But now in hindsight we realize that it was a good thing that God closed those doors. Otherwise the Amalekites would have returned to their country, and David would never have seen his family again. God closed those doors for David at just the right time, and though David was disappointed, it was for his good. When you get disappointed over God's providences, look for the good in it.

B. God helped them find a needle in a haystack (v. 11a)

Then in verse 11 God makes them stumble on the key to success. And finding this Egyptian in that huge wilderness was like finding a needle in a haystack. It says, "**Then they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David.**" And yet this was no accident. This was God providentially responding to David's faith in Psalm 69. Last week I told you how I lost my ring on a big beach and couldn't find it, but immediately after praying for God to open my eyes, I kicked the sand, and up from under the sand popped my ring.

And I've got to tell you another fun story. In her book, *Keep A Quiet Heart*, Elizabeth Elliot told about Brenda Foltz' first rock climbing experience. After a fair bit of climbing she got to a small ledge on the face of the rock where she could take a breather. Once she was ready, she started to put her weight on the safety rope again, and as she did so, a portion of the rope snapped against her eye and knocked out her contact lens. So there she was on the ledge with hundreds of feet above her and hundreds of feet below her and she is trying to find her contact lens. She hoped it had landed on the ledge, but she looked and looked with absolutely no success. And finally in frustration she asked God to help her to find it somehow. Well, apparently He didn't – at least not right away. She was disappointed, and with fuzzy eyes, climbed the rest of the way up. When she got to the top, a friend examined her eye and her clothing for the lens, but no contact lens could be

found. She sat down discouraged, because she wasn't able to see very well, and she waited for the rest of the party to arrive. As she looked across the range of mountains, the verse that kept coming to her mind persistently was, "**the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth.**" She thought, "Lord, you can see all these mountains. You know every stone and leaf, and You know exactly where my contact lens is. Please help me." As they walked down some climbers from a different group yelled, "Hey, you guys! Anybody lose a contact lens?" They had found her contact lens. Well, that was amazing enough, but the most amazing part was how they found it. When they got up to the ledge where her contact lens had fallen out, they noticed something moving on the ground. As they looked closer, they saw that ant was moving slowly across the face of the rock, carrying the contact lens on its back. And he was so curious about this thing that was moving across the ground that he picked it up. He probably would not have noticed the contact lens if the ant had not been carrying it. Her father later drew a cartoon of an ant lugging that contact lens with the words, "Lord, I don't know why You want me to carry this thing. I can't eat it, and it's awfully heavy. But if this is what You want me to do, I'll carry it for You." And someone responded by saying that we ought to occasionally say, "God, I don't know why you want me to carry this load. I can see no good in it and it's awfully heavy. But, if you want me to carry it, I will." Brothers and sisters, God never makes you endure in carrying heavy contact lenses without a good purpose. May you be like that ant and endure so that you can bring the blessing that God wants you to bring into the lives of others.

C. God prompted them to bring provisions (v. 11b-12a)

Another little providence that is so cool is that God prompted them to bring provisions with them. Verses 11-12:

1Samuel 30:11 Then they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David; and they gave him bread and he ate, and they let him drink water. 1Samuel 30:12 And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. So when he had eaten, his strength came back to him; for he had eaten no bread nor drunk water for three days and three nights.

Why do I say it is a cool providence that they brought bread, figs, raisins, and water? Because verse 24 makes clear that in their hurry, they dropped most of their supplies with the 200 men. Someone decided that they better bring food. It was a providential prompting.

***D. David thankfully was in the habit of treating aliens Biblically
(see Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Lev. 19:34; Deut. 23:7)***

And of course, it was providential that David and his men were in the habit of treating foreigners in a Biblical fashion. If they had ignored the man as many Jews might have been tempted to do, they would have had no information. But David followed the commandment of Deuteronomy 23:7 which says, “You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land.” And he followed Leviticus 19:34, which commanded him to love such strangers as he loved himself. If David had been so self-absorbed in his anguish of heart that he had refused to have compassion on this Egyptian, he may never have gotten the information that he needed. And commentators point out that the amount of food that it mentions the man consuming was more than a meal’s rations, and some of the other men may have begrudged the Egyptian that treat. But providentially, David thought to have compassion even though he and his men were overwhelmed with their own losses.

E. God motivated the Egyptian to talk (v. 12b)

And then of course, this Egyptian was motivated to talk. If he was an Amalekite, he might not have been. But he was an Egyptian who had been abandoned to die. This left him with no great love for the Amalekites. He was motivated by his national origin and he was motivated by his hunger.

F. God prepared the Egyptian for such a day as this (vv. 13-15)

And of course, God’s providence prepared this Egyptian with perfect timing. Let’s read verses 13-15

1Samuel 30:13 Then David said to him, “To whom do you *belong*, and where *are you from*?” And he said, “*I am a young man from Egypt* [there’s providence number one], *servant of an Amalekite* [Wow! What were the chances of that?]; *and my master left me behind, because three days ago I fell sick*. [Well, that’s right when David and his men left Aphek – talk about perfect timing. Verse 14:]

1Samuel 30:14 We made an invasion of the southern *area* of the Cherethites, in the *territory* which *belongs* to Judah, and of the southern *area* of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire.”

This too is a remarkable providence. Ziklag was the last place that they had visited, which means that the plunder that David will later collect from the Amalekites is not just his own, but is plunder taken from all of the other southern territories as well. We need to remember that all the armies of the Philistines went north, and this motivated the Amalekites to plunder all of

Philistia. David will have a massive amount of plunder that will do him in good stead in the upcoming chapters. Verse 15:

1Samuel 30:15 And David said to him, “Can you take me down to this troop?” So he said, “Swear to me by God that you will neither kill me nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this troop.”

Though he had gotten sick three days earlier, he must have finally been abandoned shortly before to know where their last stop was. So the timing of his disease, his loss of strength, and his finally being cast off as dying were perfectly timed by God. And God did not allow him to die.

G. God made the Amalekites utterly unprepared (vv. 16-17)

One more providence that worked with David’s endurance was that the Amalekites were utterly unprepared. Verses 16-17:

1Samuel 30:16 And when he had brought him down, there they were, spread out over all the land [that’s a great providence, because if they had been more tightly grouped together, they could have more easily defended themselves. But they are probably totally confident that there are no soldiers around to catch them. They’ve all gone up north. It goes on...], **eating and drinking and dancing** [commentators say they were drunk, and though they vastly outnumbered David’s men, they were not in good enough shape or prepared to fight – “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.**

1Samuel 30:17 Then David attacked them from twilight [So that’s a great providence – it’s dark and it appears that the Amalekites are too drunk to notice David’s men going from camp to camp to camp killing them all night and all the next day – “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.**

This is remarkable. David’s exhausted men are 400, and they are engaged in non-stop killing for 24 hours, and the passage implies that all except for 400 young men manage to escape. That means that the 400 are nothing compared to the number killed. The way it is worded implies that David’s men killed a staggering amount of Amalekites. We aren’t told if it was twenty, thirty, forty thousand who died. It could have even been more because commentators say that this slaughter so decimated the Amalekite numbers that nothing is heard about them until the time of Hezekiah, 290 years later. On one day David almost accomplished what Saul had failed to do in his entire lifetime. And of course, the author deliberately makes that contrast because he is going to show how David is shortly going to become king. So these providences are so amazing that they are almost miraculous.

H. However, though providence enabled a victory, it was no substitute for endurance (v. 16-17)

But the last point emphasizes that though providence enabled a resounding victory, it was no substitute for endurance. You cannot pit human responsibility against divine sovereignty. Both must be held together. Without endurance, we lose. Without endurance in getting involved in our culture wars, we are going to lose. Without endurance with our spouse, we cannot expect fruit to arise from our labors of love. Without endurance in investing emotionally, spiritually, and in other ways into the health of our family, we cannot expect health to automatically happen. Without endurance with our children, we cannot expect success.

Endurance is a key Christian characteristic that we must embrace. It is part of picking up our cross daily, dying to self, and following Jesus. I like David Livingstone's response to his missions committee when they wrote to him saying, "Some people would like to join you. What's the easiest road to get where you are?" He wrote back, "If they're looking for the easiest road, tell them to stay in England." Well, that's exactly what Jesus told would-be followers – "If you are expecting an easy road in following Me, don't bother." That's what I tell my counselees – "If you are expecting an easy road and aren't going to invest all your energies in this, don't bother. On the other hand, if you are willing to bust your chops in overcoming your sin, I will do so for you as well." But lack of endurance is recipe for disaster. In Hebrews 12:4 the writer told his church, "**You have not yet** resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin." He is in effect saying, "You claim to have tried to conquer sin, but I don't believe it. I don't see any wounds or bloodshed. I don't see any evidence that you have expended yourself. I don't see any evidence of endurance." Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 2:3, "**You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.**"

Conclusion – a victorious endurance, not a sullen endurance

But let me end with by saying that David's endurance was a victorious one, not a sullen endurance that trudges through life with glazed eyes. It was an endurance that sprang from a victorious faith, a determined love, and an eschatology of hope. And I want you to be energized and inspired to endure in the same way.

I don't know if any of you have seen the Harlem Globetrotters. I saw them one time when I was younger, and it was fun to watch. But you actually got to watch two teams. The second team was the Washington

Generals. They had one purpose – to be doormats to the Globetrotters. They passively got stomped in basketball. It was their job to lose.

Well, brothers and sisters, God has not called any of us to be the Washington Generals. He has not called us to be enduring doormats. The endurance that flows from the Holy Spirit always advances His kingdom. And the sparring partners that God has given to you are on a team made up of the world, the flesh, and the devil. You have been called to victorious endurance that advances the kingdom of God through every move that we make. If you believe that, it will make your endurance seem much more worthwhile. Let's pray.

Endurance

1 Samuel 30:7-17

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-6-2012

Introduction – the amazing endurance of these soldiers

- I. Faith, hope, and love as the foundation for endurance (vv. 4-8)
 - A. Love gives a reason to endure, though it is often not enough (vv. 4-6)
 - B. Faith fans the flames of endurance (v. 6c)
 - C. Hope enables persevering endurance beyond human calculation (vv. 7-8; Rom. 8:25)
 1. The endurance of the 200, though limited, was still remarkable (vv. 9-10)
 2. The endurance of the 400 was staggering (29:1; 30:1,10,17)
- II. God's providence gave the endurance success (vv. 11-15)
 - A. He made sure the door to fighting in the north was closed (chapter 29)
 - B. God helped them find a needle in a haystack (v. 11a)
 - C. God prompted them to bring provisions (v. 11b-12a)
 - D. David thankfully was in the habit of treating aliens Biblically (see Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Lev. 19:34; Deut. 23:7)
 - E. God motivated the Egyptian to talk (v. 12b)
 - F. God prepared the Egyptian for such a day as this (vv. 13-15)
 - G. God made the Amalekites utterly unprepared (vv. 16-17)
 - H. However, though providence enabled a victory, it was no substitute for endurance (v. 16-17)

Conclusion – a victorious endurance, not a sullen endurance

