

Amazing help

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[0:00] At the beginning, when we read that David and his men are back home to Ziklag, I think that's a really happy thing. That's a really, really good thing that David has decided to come back home.

He spent some time off, probably a little bit foolishly, with the Philistines, but he's coming back home. Coming back to where he belongs. And as we'll see, he's coming back to the Lord, really, as well.

But it gets quite sad. Have a look at the rest of verse 1 and 2 with me. David and his men reached Ziklag on the third day.

Now the Amalekites had raided the Negev and Ziklag. And they had attacked Ziklag and burned it. And had taken captive the women and everyone else in it, both young and old.

They killed none of them, but carried them off. As they went on their way. That story with Samuel and Isaac just now is a bit similar to this.

[1:11] David and his men come home. And they find a really sad situation. They find that it's been burnt. And that the Amalekites have taken away their wives and children.

This is really sad. And in life, we're not always going to be happy. We're going to come across sad situations.

Situations where we'll think, God, why did you make that happen? Why did you let this happen even? And that's what David and his men discover here.

Can anybody look in verse 4 and tell me, how are they feeling? And what are they doing? Gracie? They were weeping. Yeah. So how do you think they're feeling? They're feeling sad. They're weeping.

[2:21] They're feeling sad. This is a really sad situation. To come back home and find the place has been burnt down. And your wives and children have been carried off.

It's a really sad situation. Now, David, we read in verse 5, he has two wives. He should really only have one wife, but he has two.

And they've been captured, it says. So David himself, the one who is waiting to be king of the Lord's people, is feeling sad.

And you know what? David and his men, we've said they're team David. And his men look to David as their leader, their trusted leader. But have a look in verse 6.

David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him. Each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters.

[3:25] So David is not only feeling sad because his wives have gone, he's also feeling pretty distressed because the men around him on team David are wanting to stone him.

They're wanting to stone him. They're wanting him dead. This is a really hard situation for David to come home to.

Many of us know with David that he's been waiting to be king for a long time. And he's had his life under threat from another guy. Can anybody remember the other one?

Isaac? Isaac? Saul? Yeah. So we've got team David, team Saul. And actually, team Saul is about to come to an end next week.

We'll see that Saul dies. Spoilers. But the men with David are now turning against him. And David's probably feeling like his life is under threat from the people he should most be able to trust.

[4:32] They're blaming David. We want you dead. It's brutal. It's like when you see football teams struggling. When they're just not getting results and you start seeing the fans get upset and protesting and holding up signs saying, Sack, the manager, we want you out.

That's a bit like what it is for team David. They want him out. They want him gone. So what does David decide to do? Because he could just sort of run away from all his troubles, run back to the Philistines.

He could sort of put his feet up at home, watch TV and pretend none of it's going on. He could go away and hide from his people who want to kill him.

But what he really does is he turns to someone for help. It's at the end of verse 6.

David found strength in the Lord his God. That's the second thing we see. He finds strength from the Lord his God.

[5:50] David's in this really sad and desperate situation. Where does he turn to? He turns to the Lord for help and strength.

And it's not the first time we've read that in Samuel. Some of us have been looking at Samuel for quite some time now at Calvary Church. We read in 1 Samuel 23, for instance, of Jonathan helping David find his strength in God.

A question I've been thinking through this week is, How do we find our strength in God? Three quick ideas that I've got for us.

For David and Jonathan, we thought how Jonathan would have reminded David of the promises that God has made to him, that he's going to be king. David has a really special role to play in the life of God's people.

He's going to be king. And Jonathan could help him find strength by reminding him of those promises. And for us, none of us are about to be the Lord's anointed king.

[7:00] But we can read the Bible and we can read some wonderfully precious promises. We can read that God has promised never to leave us nor forsake us.

He's promised to forgive us our sins when we confess them to him. He's promised to hear our prayers. He's promised to meet all our needs.

For those who love him, he's promised that all things are going to work together for our goods. He's promised that he's going to come back again and take us home to be with him and there'll be no more sadness and pain.

So one thing we can do to help us find strength in the Lord is to remember God's promises to us. Second thing, remember who God says you are.

For David, as we've said, he can remember that he's got this role of becoming king of the Lord's people. He's the Lord's anointed. None of us are in that position, but in Jesus, the great and final anointed king of the Lord's people, in Jesus we see that we belong to the king.

[8:23] In Jesus, we can remind ourselves that God has, the Father has in love chosen us to be his. He has adopted us into his family to be his sons and daughters of the living God.

That's who we are. We're sinful, but we're forgiven in the Lord Jesus. Loved, so loved.

Because Jesus the king has given his life for us. If we're Christians, we can find strength in the Lord by remembering who we are in him.

And one more thought, and we see it in this passage, is that we can pray. David is in a really sad and dark and desperate situation and he prays.

So verse 7, it says this, Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, bring me the ephod. Abiathar brought it to him and David inquired of the Lord.

[9:37] David spoke to the Lord. He inquired of the Lord. And he does that because he's got this guy called Abiathar and he's a priest. And he is able to help.

He is able to come before the Lord in his role as a priest. And with David having him by his side, it means that David himself can inquire of the Lord.

And David asked two questions of the Lord. There in verse 8, Shall I pursue this raiding party? These people have come to take everything. Will I overtake them?

And the Lord answers David's prayer. In verse 8, Pursue them, he answered, and you will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue.

David in his sad situation gets to pray. It's another way that he finds strength in the Lord, his God. He gets to speak to God who is seated on the throne of heaven.

[10:42] And all of us who know and love the Lord, when we're sad, when we're in desperate situations, in dark places, we can pray.

We can ask God questions. We can tell him how we feel. We can be honest with him. When we feel like we're in desperate situations, when we feel alone, when we feel like we're in danger, God is there.

And we can find strength in him. And we can do because we have a priest as well, whose name is Jesus.

And because of Jesus, because he's become a human being like us, we know we're praying and we're talking to someone who understands how we're feeling.

So we can take comfort in those things. We're going to sing a song before we look at the rest of the passage. And don't worry, we will come back to the chocolates at the end.

[11:49] So don't panic. We're going to sing this, all about being able to come before God's throne of grace, and knowing that we have a faithful God.

30. And it had been a hard few days for David and his men. First, they had journeyed back home, a long old journey.

And then they had the sadness of finding their homes and other belongings gone. It's been an emotionally and physically exhausting time.

And have a look at verse 9, bearing that in mind. David and the 600 men with him came to the Beazle Valley, where some stayed behind.

200 of them were too exhausted to cross the valley. But David and the other 400 men continued the pursuit.

[12:53] I wonder if you ever feel like that in life, feel like you're too exhausted to just go on. You can't find any more strength, and you just need to stay at home and rest.

Well, that's how some of David's men felt, after what had just been a really tiring day. But in all this, we're going to see that they find amazing help.

Amazing help. Just a very short, slightly silly quiz. Who should help in these situations?

So, when you need a plaster, are you going to turn to a policeman or a first aider? Hands up for a policeman. Who would turn for a policeman for a plaster?

No, no, strange looks around. First aider? Yeah. Yeah, that's probably the best place to turn. You might just be able to do it yourself.

[14:00] But there we go. When you need a plaster. When you want to book a holiday, are you going to go to right move? Or you can look at houses? Or are you going to go to maybe somewhere like EasyJet?

Who would go to right move? No, no. EasyJet? Yeah. Yeah, that's one option anyway. Depends where you want to go, really.

If you're going to Chichester, then maybe not EasyJet. When you want to get the bus, are you going to turn to Uber?

Or are you going to turn to Brighton Hove buses? Uber being the taxi service. Who would get an Uber if they want to get a bus? No, that would be silly. Oh, well, some people just might look like buses.

And if you really want to get a bus, just get on Brighton Hove buses, wouldn't you? Who should help in this situation? Imagine when you're trying to find your wives and children from Ziklag.

[15:05] And when 200 men have said we're too exhausted to carry on. Where are you going to find help? Well, we've seen already that David has found help in the Lord, who has made it clear, yeah, go, and you'll have success.

But humanly speaking, how's this going to happen? Well, how are they going to know where they are? Well, in this passage, we find an amazing provision from the Lord.

An Egyptian man who was with the Amalekites, raiding the lands. Have a look, verse 11. They found an Egyptian in a field, and they brought him to David.

And they were very nice to him. They gave him water and drink and food to eat. They gave him a wonderful, delicious cake. Are you looking forward to lunch?

Looking forward to a cake of pressed figs? And two cakes of raisins? Well, you should have been there with the Egyptian in a field. That's what he gets, and I'm sure it was a real treat.

[16:16] That's who they find. And this is an amazing and unlikely provision. Because do you see there in verse 13 who he is?

He said, when they asked him some questions, he said, I'm an Egyptian. The slave of an Amalekite. He's not on Team David.

He was on Team Amalekites. They helped take these wives and children. He helped burn down their homes. But, something happened.

My master abandoned me when I became ill three days ago. He was with the Amalekites, but now he's been abandoned.

He got ill. And now he's been left. And now he's just been left. But this is a wonderful provision for David and his men. It's wonderful because he'll have knowledge of where they might be.

[17:22] So verse 15, David asked him, can you lead me down to this raiding party? And he answered, swear to me before God that you will not kill me or hand me over to my master, and I will take you down to them.

This is a risky thing for this Egyptian man to do. If the Amalekites found out that he'd given them information, he might have his head chopped off or something horrible like that.

So this was a really unlikely thing to happen, but an amazing provision. This is surely a provision from the Lord in his providence.

So this man is of help. He can point them in the right direction, and he does that in verse 16. The Egyptian, he led David down, and there they were.

He found them scattered over the countryside, eating and drinking and reveling because of the amount of plunder they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from Judah. They're partying, just like maybe Isaac was when he got the chocolates, partying, thinking, I've got the chocolates.

[18:37] Yay. So these men are partying. We've got all this stuff. We've won. It's successful. But not for much longer.

They're not going to be partying for much longer. Have a look. Verse 17. David fought them from dusk until the evening of the next day, and none of them got away, except 400 young men who rode off on camels and fled.

David recovered everything. The Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. Nothing was missing.

Nothing. The Lord was right when he said to David, back in verse 8, you will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue.

The Lord was right. The Lord's word was right. And that can help us. That can teach us that the Lord's word is right.

[19:41] That he will do as he says. His promises we were thinking about earlier. He will indeed never leave us or forsake us.

He will comfort us. He will hear our prayers. He will come again to take us home to be with him. We can trust the Lord and his words. When we feel the sadness and desperation of a situation, he is indeed the right place to turn to you and find strength and help.

Here he provided an Egyptian. Wonderful provision for us. At just the right time, he'll surely provide what we need.

We can trust him, our good shepherd, to lead us through dark and sad and desperate days. That's a comfort.

Amazing help. And fourthly, we see in this chapter, amazing grace. Amazing grace.

[20:47] Do you remember those 200 men who were left behind? They were so exhausted. They didn't have any strength left in them to fight.

Well, now, as David and the other 400 men return with all their goodies from the land and the wives and children, there's this dilemma.

Verse 22. Have a look. But all the evil men and troublemakers among David's followers said, because they did not go out with us, we will not share with them the plunder we recovered.

However, each man may take his wife and children and go. They don't want to share. These 400 men that went off and got all this good stuff from the land, they don't want to share it with these 200 men who were just too exhausted.

You know what? I can kind of understand. At Christmas time, when I was younger, I always used to think that I was the good one and my brother was the bad one.

[21:56] And I always thought that I deserved a few more presents than my brother did. And yet every year we seem to get the same amount of stuff.

But I've been a good person. I've always tied in my room. My mum says so. I was doing well at school. I was well behaved. I can understand how these men feel.

Those 200 men, they were lazy. They didn't come with us. They don't deserve anything. But look at what David says.

Have a look in verse 23. David replied, No, my brothers. You must not do that with what the Lord has given us.

The Lord has given us this good stuff. He's protected us and delivered into our hands the raiding party that came against us. Who will listen to what you say?

[23:01] The share of the man who stayed with me with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All shall share alike.

David wants to make sure that everyone gets to enjoy the good blessings that God has given to each of them. It's not just for the 400 men.

It's for everyone. All will share alike. But David, what do you mean? That's not fair.

Those men didn't do anything. But they still get the gift. Well, what was given to them, David recognizes, is from the Lord.

The Lord has given us this, verse 23. He's protected us and delivered us into our hands the raiding party that came against us.

[24:02] David is very unlike King Saul. Samuel helps us to contrast the two figures, David and Saul. David's very unlike Saul.

Saul is a king who takes and takes. Samuel warned them of this. David here, at least, gives generously, and he gives even wider than that if you're to read the rest of the passage.

See, David points us away from himself to the better king, King Jesus.

King Jesus who gives generously. King Jesus who is a king of grace.

See, David gave equally and fairly to all his men those that fought and those that were too exhausted to because of grace. And God's grace says to us, you cannot do anything yourself.

[25:08] You're like those 200 men who are exhausted, too tired, and we're too sinful.

We're too sinful, aren't we, to save ourselves. And so on the cross, something really unfair happens. On the cross, where we should be, Jesus swaps places with us.

He dies in our place, the death that we deserve, and faces the punishment that our sins deserve so we can go free. And that's grace.

It's not fair. We've not done a thing to earn it, but it's grace because you and I could not save ourselves. But Jesus can.

And to celebrate God's grace, to give us a picture of it, do you remember those chocolates that Isaac took from Samuel?

[26:17] Well, here we go. Isaac's away. I've rescued them. And you know what? I'm sure Samuel will be happy with this. We're going to share them.

You can pass them around now and eat when you like. Hopefully there's one for everyone. There might not be, and if there isn't, I'm sorry, but there is lunch to come.

And that will be okay. And as we share chocolates, remember God's grace. None of us have particularly done anything to deserve those chocolates other than we're here sitting, doing nothing.

And the Lord's grace. It's just a little picture of that. As we're enjoying chocolates being handed out, let's just say a prayer and then we'll sing a song.