

Why We Do Not Lose Heart

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[0 : 00] 1 Samuel chapter 30. 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.

Then David and the people who were with him lifted up their voices and wept until they had no more power to weep. And David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelite and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive.

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 daughters.

But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God. Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, please bring the ephod here to me.

And Abiathar brought the ephod to David. 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.

[1 : 39] So David went. He and the six hundred men who were with him and came to the brook Bezor, where those stayed and were left behind. But David pursued, and he and four hundred men.

For two hundred had stayed behind, who were so weary that they could not cross the brook Bezor. Then they found the Egyptian in the field and brought him to David, and they gave him bread, and he ate, and they let him drink water.

And they gave him a piece of cake, of figs, and two clusters of raisins. So he had eaten, and his strength came back to him, for he had eaten no bread nor drunk water for three days and three nights.

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, servant of an Amalekite.

And my master left me behind, because three days ago I fell sick. We made an invasion of the southern area of the Cherethites, in the territory which belongs to Judah, and in the southern area of Caleb.

[2 : 43] And we burned Ziklag with fire. 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 only master, and I will take you down to this troop.

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.

Then David attacked them from twilight until the evening of the next day. Not a man of them escaped except 400 young men who rode on camels and fled. So David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away, and David rescued his two wives.

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. Then David took all the flocks and herds they had driven before those other livestock and said, This is David's spoil.

Now David came to the 200 men who had been so weary that they could not follow David, whom they had also made to stay at the brook of Bezor. So they went out to meet David and meet the people who were with him.

[4 : 03] And when David came near to the people, he greeted them. Then all the wicked and worthless men of those who went to David answered and said, Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except for every man's wife and children, that they may lead them away and depart.

But David said, My brethren, you shall not do so with what the Lord has given us, who has preserved us and delivered us into our hands, the troop that came against us. For who will heed you in this matter? But as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays with the supplies.

They shall share alike. So it was from that day forward that he made a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day. Now when David came to Ziklag, he sent some of the spoil to the elders of Judah, to his friends, saying, Here is a present for you from the Lord, the spoil of the enemies of the Lord. To those who were in Bethel, those who were in Ramaph in the south, those who were in Jatir, those who were in Aurel, those who were in Sifmaph, those who were in Es-Tamon, Moa, those who were in Rakhah, those who were in the cities of the Jeremilites, those who were in the cities of the Kenites, those who were in Hormah, those who were in Korashan, those who were in Atak, those who were in Hebron, into the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to rove.

[5 : 44] The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever.

Let's pray. Oh, Lord, may your word stand. We pray that you will please speak through the preacher, despite the preacher's limits and brokenness, Lord.

We pray that your word, the word of God, through Jesus Christ, of hope and salvation, of a coming kingdom, of this better king, whose kingdom has been inaugurated and who is coming again, Lord. We pray that this you will minister to your people today. We pray that you'll encourage us, Lord. You'll strengthen us, that the power of the Holy Spirit will breathe life and hope into your people today.

For your glory we ask. Amen. Amen. Amen. To lose heart, it means to faint or to give up. A coach might have used that expression with you at halftime when you're down three to zero, or maybe a jujitsu teammate after you lost.

[6 : 59] Don't lose heart. David and his 600 men had just gotten great news. If you remember back a couple weeks, they were not going to have to be put in that impossible dilemma of fighting on the side of the Philistines against the Israelites.

Fighting their own nation. God in his providence had used even the captains of the Philistines to send David and his 600 men back to their temporary home in Ziklag, which was controlled by the Philistines, but it was land promised by God to his people.

They get to go home, but quickly as they arrive at home, all of them, including David, lose heart. When it comes to our faith, our walks, and our life as a church, losing heart is always a temptation. In a spiritual sense, losing heart means caving in to evil or losing your spiritual will to take another step or to continue standing.

The enemy wants to attack God's people, especially when we're about to faint and tell us that we have no reason to press on, no reason to hope. The sermon title today is why we do not lose heart.

[8 : 17] Why we do not lose heart. I'll walk us through about five reasons using this passage. Number one, we do not lose heart because the enemy is only a temporary parasite.

We do not lose heart because the enemy of God's people is only a temporary parasite. Look at verse one. 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.

You know what the Amalekites were? They were nomads. This means they travel around. They don't have permanent dwellings or farms. And they were parasites.

This means that they live by draining another source. So they were nomadic parasites on the move that you can say as you look across the land, land of Israel and of the Philistines, it was like an infection on their system.

Nobody liked the Amalekites. They survived by draining the resources of these established societies rather than farming for themselves. And after taking a cheap shot and attacking, they would ride off like we just saw on camels.

[9 : 31] They're really always ready to go into the desert and they would hide in the ravines and in caves and be really hard to hunt down. And they wouldn't face you head on in a battle like a decent civilization.

They had mastered this over generations, how to be predatory opportunists. In Deuteronomy 25, 17 and 18, they targeted the stragglers coming out of Egypt on the Exodus.

Remember that? Then in Judges 6, chapter 6, verses 3 and 4, it describes them like a swarm of locusts trying to hijack the harvest of the Israelites.

This is the Amalekites. And now they've struck in again following their modus operandi. Verse 2 says, They took captive the women and those who were there from small to great.

See, what they do is when the army, the whole army is gone. They've just left their homes and the women and children back. That's when the Amalekites move in. They're awful. They're predators. But there's an interesting comment in verse 2.

[10:34] It says, They did not kill anyone. And even in this first verse in 2, we can see that God is limiting and even ordering all things, including these wicked Amalekites, even in their sinful acts of men, and he will use it for his own holy end, even if we don't understand it or see it fully.

The Amalekites intended total destruction everywhere they go. That's why they set it on fire. But see, in this case, God's mighty hand was superintending theirs. They took the captives and carried them along with them as slaves.

Instead of executing them. They carried them away. They went on their way, it says. Literally, it says they drove them away. That's the same word used to how you would move cattle from one place to the other.

This is bad treatment for these women and these children being driven by these horrible Amalekites like cattle. They specialized in low-risk, high-reward strikes.

They only attack the vulnerable and they live off the work of others. They don't do anything constructive on their own. Think about how in this world, there's either constructive work, destructive work, or restorative work.

[11:52] It's only those three. And the enemy of God, God creates. God does the constructive work. New creation. The enemy destroys. God recreates.

God reconstructs. And God's enemy, the devil, is like these Amalekites. Revelation 12, 12 gives this encouragement. The devil has come down to you, inhabitants of the earth, full of great wrath because he knows that he only has a short time.

See, the devil is a temporary destroyer, a temporary parasite seeking to be like a locust with a swarm of demons to do damage to the good that God creates.

So brothers and sisters, we do not lose heart because the enemy is only a temporary parasite.

Number two, we do not lose heart because grief does not mean God has departed.

We do not lose heart because though we do grieve in this life, it does not mean that God has departed. He's near those who grieve. Look at verse three. So David and his men came to the city and there it was, burned with fire and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive.

[13:08] Then David and the people who were with him lifted up their voices and wept until they had no more power even to weep. Imagine those 600 men.

The last time they had been in Ziklag, everything was full of life, color, sound, smell. They said goodbye to their families and they went off to fight their brothers and cousins so they thought in this great confrontation.

They didn't know anytime you go to battle, you never do, whether the Lord would let them come back home again. Would the Lord deliver them and bring them back to their families again? They got that great news that they were released and could go back home and they could go be with their wives and children but now they find their artifacts that were once in their homes just as charcoal. Each thing they pick up, like it would for us if our house burnt down, it would remind you of a relationship or a memory with a loved one, with a family member. their town burned, their loved ones taken captive, their fellow brothers in battle crying aloud, bitter of soul, exhausted from weeping till they had no more strength to weep.

And the army that was marching after David, seeing God take them in and out and have victory, now wants to stone the anointed king that they had left everything to follow.

[14:43] I paused on this. Why did they want to stone David specifically? These are warriors. They're carrying all kinds of different blades and instruments you can use to kill other people.

Why would they leave all those aside and pick up stones? Under the Mosaic law, the success of the people was tied to the faithfulness of the leader.

And the men may have viewed the destruction as Ziklag as a sign of God's judgment against David. See, the camp was to be kept holy because God walked among them.

Deuteronomy 23, 14 says that. God is with his people among their camp and is to be kept holy. And the preservation of the family and the home was each man's primary duty.

By allowing their wives and children to be taken captive, their king was now the greatest failure. He had let the enemy intrude and violate the home front.

[15:41] The total loss at their camp in Ziklag suggested that perhaps the presence of God had departed from among them. The men in their grief viewed David like their generation's version of Achan from the book of Joshua.

One man whose poor judgment has brought a curse on the entire group. And so by stoning David, everyone would have a part in killing what they believe is the cause of all their bitter trouble.

Stoning would give each man that opportunity to experience a cathartic sense of justice and vengeance. If we crush this man that we follow, then our souls will feel less bitter.

We read in verse 6 that David was greatly distressed for the people spoke of stoning him. because all the soul of the people was grieved.

Literally, they were bitter of soul. Every man for his sons and daughters. But the encouragement without getting any details is that God was with David.

[16:53] He is in grief. His army is in grief. He's despairing. In Psalm 139 verses 7 and 8 cries out with these questions to God.

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I make my bed in hell, the grave, the depths, behold, even there you are.

We do not lose heart because our grief does not mean that God has departed. Number three, we do not lose heart because our distress, in our distress, God is our strength.

We do not lose heart because in our distress, God himself is our strength. look at the rest of verse 6.

We read that David strengthened himself in the Lord his God. He strengthened himself in the Lord. For who is God except the Lord?

[18:01] Psalm 18:31. And who is a rock except our God? It is God who arms me with strength, the psalmist cries out and makes my way perfect.

He says, you have also given me the shield of your salvation and your right hand has held me up. Your gentleness has made me great. We don't have any indication that David wrote a new psalm for this occasion, but it's a wonderful comfort in those old truths, those old psalms, singing them at the time when he needed it most.

David strengthened himself in the Lord, we read in verse 8. And he also inquired of the Lord. Think about this. And David, in this moment of worst peril and darkness and despair, goes to the Lord. He's reminded of the Lord's presence and it's the presence of the Lord that strengthens him. And as we've lined up all of these events, remember how two chapters ago it skips back. It's like a flashback for Saul going to consult with the witch.

The timeline has it, at least how some have put it together, how the very moment when David is seeking strength in the Lord is when Saul, within that same 24-hour period, is going to speak with a witch.

[19:19] As goes the king, so goes the kingdom. Saul consulting the realm of the dead and David consulting the living God.

See the contrast between these two kings, these two men. it's a new pattern being set for the nation, a new direction, a new hope for God's people. Even without any good news, he's finding his strength in God.

David then receives from God the promise of a total recovery. They go and they pursue those raiders, but on their way, 200 of their soldiers reach their point of exhaustion.

They've been weeping. It says they wept till they were already exhausted and powerless. Now they go marching and they get to a point and they've lost heart. They are fainting. They cannot go anymore.

And they just say, I'm going to stay right here in the coolness of this ravine. We're done. The word of the ravine, the Brook Bezor, it means just that coolness or refreshing for the body.

[20:25] It also has a second meaning, which I'll give you in a bit. So they leave them behind and as they're traveling the direction they think the caravan of the Amalekites has gone, they come across a starving, abandoned Egyptian slave.

And we read that they revive this man. They give him food and water and bread and calories. And then he's able to talk. And then they ask him, where are you from? In other words, they didn't have any information that would lead them to show kindness to this person in need right here, this injured slave that's been abandoned because he was sick.

It wasn't necessarily a transaction. Here these men that are desperate themselves are simply showing kindness to a slave that's been left for dead because it's the right thing to do.

And in God's providence, think about that. He got sick three days ago. And as a sick man being abandoned and left right there, this is also the path they're traveling. They happened to find him and prepared him in the right moment to be able to give them the information they need to now go carry out what God has decreed.

See God's providence in every little detail as it unfolds. Verse 16, And when they had brought him down, there they were, spread out over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing because of the great spoil which they had taken from the land of the Philistines and the land of Judah.

[21 : 52] These Amalekites had gained a lot. They had amassed a great bounty. All the spoil, not only from Ziklag and the Judeans there, but also from the Philistines. And it's all there and here they are with the slave being left for dead, starving without water.

And here they are just enjoying wine and feasting and dancing. So in verse 17, what God promised David comes true.

David attacked them from twilight before the sun was even rising, get a jump on it, until the evening of the next day, fighting over the night. Not a man of them escaped.

I like that statement because God was true to his promise. Now, at the same time, 400 young men rode on camels and fled. But God is always true to his word and to his promise.

And if we keep reading later on and take the whole counsel of God's word, 1 Chronicles 4.42 says that all of those that escaped get wiped out.

[22 : 56] It says 500 men of the sons of Simeon. So Israelites, later on, a different point, they go and they defeat the rest of the Amalekites who had escaped and possessed that land forevermore. So eventually, the Amalekites do get their final justice.

We do not lose heart because in our distress, God is our strength. I'm sure David was distressed and exhausted and wanting to stop at the Brook Bezor himself.

But God was his strength. God made him press on and God gave him the great victory. It wasn't David's energy. It wasn't David's power. It was God being his supply, being his strength.

Colossians 1.29 reminds us, Paul cries this out after all his persecution and suffering. He says, I labor striving according to God's working which he mightily works in me.

We press on. We do not lose heart because in our distress, it is God who is our strength. Number four, we do not lose heart because God sets the boundaries for the enemy.

[24 : 08] We do not lose heart because God himself sets the boundaries for the enemy. In verse 18, we read, so David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away 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. Evil goes exactly as far as God permits it and no further. Think of how horrible it could have been.

Even if it was horrible enough, they grieved, they were distressed, but it could have been so much worse. When Job experienced evil, it was not a punishment for his sin.

Beginning of Job makes that clear, but it was by God's permission. And Job, understandably, questioned God's goodness, God's power, and God's justice.

And God answered Job in chapter 38 with these questions. Job, says God, who shut in the sea when it burst forth at creation?

[25 : 24] I fixed my limit for it. I said, this far you may come, but no further. And here, you proud waves must stop.

evil will rage and cause genuine grief, but it cannot cross the boundary, it cannot cross the line that God himself draws.

From the perspective of the women and children that got driven away, they could have cried out with these New Testament words that we have in 2 Corinthians 4, which we read earlier.

Yes, we were captives of these horrible people driven away. We were hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed. We were perplexed, but not in despair.

Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed. God sets the boundaries for the enemy.

[26 : 25] Remember in Jesus, his own words in Luke 22, 31. He looked at Peter in the eyes. Simon, Simon, indeed, Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail, and when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren.

God sets the boundaries on the enemy. Jesus prays for his people. The enemy cannot invade what Christ is protecting. Well, the fifth and final reason for today of why we do not lose heart, it's because our king shares the spoils of his victory with the weak and weary.

Our king shares his victory with us who are weary and weak. Look at verse 20. Then David took all the flocks and herds that they had driven out before them that belonged to the Amalekites, and now he won, and he's the leader of this group from Ziklag, so all the people say this is David's spoil. He's the one who gets to distribute it however he sees fit. And as they go back to those 200 men who stayed back at the brook and the coolness of the ravine, those who did go and fight say, we don't want to share with those men, even though he said it's yours, David, to decide, we don't want to share with them.

That's not right. They didn't even go fight. They should have no share in the prophet, give them their families, and that's all. And David rebuked those men who followed him and who fought, but were refusing to share the plunder.

[28 : 12] And here's the second meaning of this brook where these 200 waited back to cool off. The brook Bezor can also mean good news or glad tidings.

So while it might have refreshed the body in the coolness of the shade, it's a place where a gospel refreshes the soul. David said in verse 23, my brethren, you shall not do so with what?

The Lord has given us who has preserved us and delivered us into our hand. All shall share alike, he says in verse 24.

Verse 25, so it was from that day forward. See, this becomes now a decree at the brook Bezor, a rule for the whole kingdom going forward as long as David is king.

Here's the gospel decree. there's an ordinance for all Israel that all will share in the spoil. All will receive alike because it's the Lord who gives.

[29 : 21] And so he sent these gifts to all the elders of Judah, to all those different places. And he said, here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the Lord.

Lord, it's God's battle, it's God's enemies, it's God's victory, it's God's glory, it's God's blessings that he distributes now through his servant David.

And he gave those to all the places where David himself, verse 31 says, and his men were accustomed to rove. While the Philistines will very soon defeat Saul and Israel's army, God is still distributing the spoils of the Philistines to Judah as if they had won without David even having to go and fight the Philistines for their own spoils.

You see God's sovereignty over all of this. David saw God's sovereignty firsthand. God is using these wicked Amalekites and this new king who God has humbled.

God has shown him again and again, it's not you, David, it's all of me. And this is God's pleasure in bringing in his kingdom. What a contrast we have.

[30 : 42] Saul lost most of his battles. He taxed God's people. He took and took and took more from them. And now we see with David a new king, a new hope.

God wins the battles. God gives bountifully. God spreads his blessings to all the people through his servant, his anointed one. As goes the king, so goes the kingdom.

Our Lord Jesus in Matthew 20 declared this, for the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labors for his vineyard.

And they all work and people start at different times of the day and he gets to the end of the work day and he gives generously all the same blessings no matter whether you labored all day or barely any at the very end.

Everyone receives the reward because it's his to give. He is the owner of the vineyard and he is the king of the kingdom. In Ephesians 4, 8, we read that when Jesus Christ had ascended on high, last week we saw the glorious truth of his resurrection and he not only rose and walked on the earth with all the eyewitnesses and teaching his disciples but he also ascended and he's seated in session ruling from heaven.

[32 : 10] We read that he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. He sits on his throne in heaven, our Lord Jesus, blessing all his people, his church with gifts.

1 Corinthians 1, 26, God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise. God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are mighty and the base things of the world the things which are despised.

God has chosen and the things which are not to bring to nothing the things that are. So we do not lose heart, brothers and sisters, because King Jesus shares the blessings of his victory with us who are weak and weary.

Amen. Romans 8, remind us, Romans 8, 17, we are heirs of God. We receive freely the blessings that Christ secured.

We are joint heirs with Christ. If indeed we suffer with him that we may also be glorified together with him. So where are we in this story, church?

[33 : 18] We've seen God's providence, we've seen his sovereignty, his power, we've seen his kingdom, what he is about. I think we have to be like the women and children.

We are in enemy territory. We are not of this world. Here we are exiles and sojourners and we are longing for King Jesus, God's anointed one who is coming again like the groom, like those wives longing for their husband to come and rescue.

We know Jesus will come for us as people. He calls the church his bride. We trust that he will. He will deliver us once and for all. We put ourselves there.

They look back at the smoke going up from the city of Ziklag and that could be like our life on this earth. It's a vapor. It's a smoke. But there's an eternal weight of the kingdom of God that he's working into us.

It's the certain promise that our king will restore everything that the enemy has stolen. He will make it all right one day. 2 Corinthians 4, 16.

[34 : 31] Therefore, we do not lose heart. Even though outwardly our man, the outer man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day for our light affliction, the sufferings of this life, which are but for a moment is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

We do not look at those things that are seen, but at those things that are not seen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal.

Brothers and sisters, because Jesus is our king, we do not lose heart. Amen? Let's pray. Oh, Lord, we are so weak.

We are so helpless. You are so mighty. You are sovereign in your providence, Lord, over everything. Help us to trust you more, to follow you more closely, to not depend on ourselves, to depend on you.

Will you please build your church, Lord? May your kingdom come here. And, Lord, we long for the day where your kingdom of heaven will cover the whole heavens, the whole new earth, Lord.

[35 : 50] We long for this day. Until then, we trust that you'll use everything that you allow in each of our lives to prepare us for yourself, we trust, Lord, that you are true to your promises.

You will come for your loved ones. Amen. Amen. so