

If you remember, last week we left David returning from the battle between the Philistines and Israelites to Ziklag. Ziklag was a rather modest country village given to David by Achish the king of Gath. David and his men's families were left in Ziklag as the men went off to fight. But now having returned, David and his men are to have their worst fears realized. In their absence Amalekites had raised Ziklag and taken all of their families hostage.

Now, although the trial David faces in chapter 30 is very great, as we shall see, we find David behaving in a very different manner than before. And you know brethren, as I have thought about this, it's actually become a great encouragement to me. David had good and bad chapters in his life. There are chapters where he honors God and there's chapters when he dishonors God. There are chapters where he trusts God and there's chapters when he doesn't. And surely brethren, we learn from this, that our lives too will have good and bad chapters, but just as God patiently dealt with David, He will patiently deal with us.

I. David's Distress (vv1-6)

II. David's Victory (vv7-20)

III. David's Goodwill (vv21-31)

I. David's Distress (vv1-6)

1. It's hardly possible to properly understand all that David and his men felt as they returned to their town of Ziklag.
2. V1—"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, and had taken captive the women and those who were there, from small to great."
3. V3—"So David and his men came to the city, and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive."
4. V4—"Then David and the people who were with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep."
5. I suggest there were to facts that together led to David's distress—his family was taken captive, and his troops turned against him.
6. (1) His family was taken captive, v5—"And David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive."
7. (2) His troops turned against Him, v6—"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."
8. It's evident that David's men blamed him for their predicament—it was because of David they had to leave their homes unprotected.
9. Now, there's certainly some sense in which this is true—if you remember, David had been a poor leader in the previous chapters.
10. Furthermore, according to chapter 27, the Amalekites were one of the people David had conducted his raids against.
11. But surely brother, in the fullest sense it was hardly David's fault that the Amalekites retaliated against David.
12. If you remember from last week we learned, it primary reason David conducted those raids was to provide for his men.
13. And thus, how can his men blame him for angering the Amalekites, when they were just as guilty as David was!
14. No, my friends, I suggest what we have here is a classic example of blame shifting, and the fickle nature of man.
15. When things are going well, everyone is happy, but when things go wrong, everyone needs someone to blame.
16. V6 says—"David was greatly distressed"—the Hebrew word translated "distressed" literally means "to be in straits."
17. It refers to someone boxed in—someone besieged, cramped, or overcome with problems and/or circumstances.

18. David was "greatly distressed"—we can hardly fathom how overwhelmed he must have felt that sad day in Ziklag.
19. Perhaps David thought at the end of chapter 29—Surely, it can hardly get any more difficult or more distressful.
20. And then he returns to Ziklag! And as he drew closer to the town, he no doubt notices smoke coming from that direction.
21. And then, as he came closer to the town, he began to realize it had been destroyed, and their families taken captive.
22. And then, on top of that, just when you thought things couldn't get any worse, his own men seek to stone him.
23. V6b—"But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God"—this is one of the great statements of Scripture.
24. David was greatly distressed—there's little doubt he was filled with sorrow for his family and fear for his life.
25. And yet, we learn from the end of v6, that David "strengthened himself in the LORD his God"—what does this mean?
26. Simply put, this statement means—David found renewed strength, encouragement, and vigor from His covenant God.
27. This imagery is that, David was on the verge spiritual collapse, and he found renewed strength in the LORD his God.
28. Thus, the question becomes obvious—How did David strengthen himself in the LORD his God? How did David find strength in God?
29. But before I seek to answer this, I want you to notice that David was far from passive in this activity—"David strengthened himself."
30. In other words, whatever it means and whatever it involves, it certainly underscores our responsibility and activity in it.
31. David did something, that was blessed and owned by God, that resulted in him finding renewed strength in God (let me suggest David found strength in God in three ways).
32. (a) He strengthened himself in God's grace—that is, he shot up a quick and desperate prayer for help and strength.
33. Most of us are aware, that prayer is described as a means of grace or strength—it's through prayer that God gives us grace.
34. I think sometimes we forget that we can and should pray at all times, and not merely in our formal prayer times.
35. Should we have regular prayer times? Yes, it's right that we pray every morning, afternoon, and night, but we can and must pray in-between.
36. Our forefathers often referred to this aspect of prayer as ejaculatory prayer, which refers to short and sudden prayers.
37. Ex.14:15—"And the LORD said to Moses, 'Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.'"
38. If you remember, Moses and the Israelites were backed up to the Red Sea by the Egyptian army—Moses had the Egyptians before him and the Israelites began to turn on him.
39. Actually, Moses' situation was rather similar to David's, and his response was similar to also—he cried to God.
40. God didn't rebuke Moses for crying to Him, but He did rebuke Moses for his lack of faith—he should have led the people through the sea (as he would).
41. But here's my point—Moses was crying to God as his enemies boxed him in and he become greatly distressed.
42. And this is really why God allows His people to become distressed—He boxes them in that they would cry to Him.
43. Ps.18:6—"In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, even to His ears."

44. If you notice, the caption of this Psalm says—"A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD, who spoke to the LORD the words of this song on the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul."
45. In other words, this Psalm is a reflection upon God's mercy in delivering David, from all of his many enemies.
46. Again, this is why God brings His people into distress. He boxes us up so that we would know our weakness, and cry to Him.
47. (b) He strengthened himself in God's promise—that is, he clung to the promise that he would eventually be king.
48. All David's circumstances seemed to deny God's promise—all of his circumstances seemed to contradict God's promise.
49. This is how David found Strength in the LORD his God—he found refuge in the promise and word of God Himself.
50. You may remember, we've actually already seen this phrase before, back in 1Sam.23:16—"Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God."
51. Do you remember how Jonathan strengthened David's hand in God? He reminded David of God's gracious promise.
52. V17—"And he said to him, 'Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel.'"
53. O brethren, surely this is what David was doing for himself in chapter 30:6—he strengthened himself in God's promise.
54. Now, some of you will remember that last Wednesday we considered the first half of our Savior's letter to the Laodiceans.
55. And do you remember how our Savior revealed Himself to this needy church—"These things says the Amen" (Rev.3:14).
56. Remember, I said that Christ is God's Amen behind every promise—every promise comes backed with Christ.
57. Thus, David found strength from God's promise—put another way—he took refuge in God's promise that he would be king.
58. Dear brethren, this is simply another way of saying—David took refuge in Christ Himself—in God's Promise (in God's Amen)!
59. Yes, it's true that the Messiah was revealed to David in dimer and shadowy ways, but He was revealed to him.
60. (c) He strengthened himself in God's character—that is, he simply threw himself upon God's covenant love and mercy.
61. Though David's people turned upon him, his faithful covenant God would never leave nor forsake or turn on him.
62. This is suggested in the phrase—"David strengthened himself in the LORD his God"—in the LORD his God!
63. Dear brethren, this is covenantal language—David did not merely take refuge in God's promise but in His love.
64. Prov.18:10—"The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe"—safe from their enemies!
65. By "the name of the LORD" is meant God Himself—each attribute is a chamber, to hide and protect us from our enemies.
66. But there's a very important word in our statement—"But David strengthened himself in the LORD HIS GOD."
67. As I've said, the phrase "the LORD" refers to God in His covenant role with Israel, but the phrase "his God" makes its personal.
68. David didn't merely strengthen himself in the covenant LORD of Israel, but in HIS covenant LORD of Israel!
69. Remember, God was in covenant with the entire nation—in this broad sense, God was in covenant with Saul also.

70. But Saul never took the covenant LORD to be his God by faith, and thus he had no refuge to run to and be safe.
71. Remember brethren, at this point David had no way of knowing that his family was still alive—for all he knew they were dead (or sold off into slavery).
72. At present David's house was burned, his family killed (or enslaved), his possessions taken, and his men have turned on him.
73. Think of this! He had nothing! And yet, dear friends, there is a sense in which he still had everything for he had His covenant God.

## II. David's Victory (vv7-20)

1. There are three basic steps to David's victory—he inquired of the Lord, found an Egyptian, and defeated the enemy.
2. (1) He inquired of the Lord, v7—"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."
3. If you remember, Abiathar was the last living priest, and possessed the high priest's ephod which contained the Urim and Thummim.
4. This was a unique way in which God made known His will, through His high priest to the nation and the king.
5. Thus, it was an acknowledgment of need—David, or whoever inquired of the Lord through the ephod, was confessing his need for direction.
6. V8—"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.'"
7. Thus, David and his six hundred men, pursued the Amalekites and came to the Brook Besor, where those stayed who were left behind (v9).
8. V10—"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."
9. This means, a portion of the men (200 of them) were too weary from the journey, and were not able to cross the river.
10. (2) He found an Egyptian—from vv11-15, David's men happened upon an Egyptian slave who was a part of the Amalekites.
11. According to v13, his Amalekite master left him behind because he fell sick, and he had not eaten nor drunk for three days (v12).
12. After David and his men fed him and he regained his strength, he told David of the present location of the Amalekite army (v14).
13. V15—"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.'"
14. Brethren, here we behold the gracious providence of God—the text simply says—"Then they found an Egyptian in the field" (v11).
15. Having humbly sought direction from God (through the Ephod), the LORD leads David to happen upon an Egyptian.
16. (3) He defeated the enemy—from vv16-20, we find David and his men fall upon the Amalekites and destroy them.
17. V17—"Then David attached them from twilight until the evening of the next day. Not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled."
18. And so, David recovered everything they lost, their wives, children, livestock, and possessions, v19—"And nothing of theirs was lacking."
19. V20—"Then David took all the flocks and herds they had driven before those other livestock, and said, 'This is David's spoil.'"
20. In other words, David not only recovered all that he lost, but he actually increased his belongings and possessions.
21. O dear brethren, behold the mercy of our God! While the chapter begins with distress, it actually ends with prosperity.

22. Here before we move on to our third heading, I want to pause for a minute and point out an important principle.
23. Principle—Prayer and pursuit go together—that is, David's prayer to God and pursuit of his enemies go together.
24. In verses 7-8 David sought direction from God—God promised him complete victory and David left to pursue his enemies (thus prayer and pursuit go together – let me in two ways).
25. (a) Prayer regulates pursuit—this is a very important point—David sought guidance before he began to fight!
26. This is the problem that some of us face—we want to work, but we fail to wait upon God through humble prayer.
27. David had unique access to God through the ephod, we don't, but we do have access to God's will in Scripture.
28. Simply put brethren—don't pursue after the Amalekites without first seeking God's will from His Holy Word!
29. Prayer regulates pursuit—it's through prayer that we are given wisdom and guidance—only a fool runs into battle without prayer.
30. But remember dear friends, God provides guidance and direction through His Holy word! Don't trust your feelings!
31. How often do I hear professing Christians, make major decisions, by merely going by their feelings and opinions!
32. And then, in order to sound spiritual, they usually—"I believe God is leading me here or there, to do this or that."
33. But there has been no consultation of the Ephod nor has there been any counsel sought from those around you.
34. No, dear brethren, be assured of this, pursuit of your enemies without prayer and direction from God's word often ends in disaster.
35. (b) Prayer motivates pursuit—this is another important point—through prayer David was motivated to pursue and defeat his enemies.
36. It may seem a bit strange—God tells David he will defeat his enemies and recover their families and belongings.
37. God promised him complete victory (v8), but then look at verse 9—"So David went, he and the six hundred men."
38. Think of this! God tells David, "You will have complete victory," and what does David do but go and fight for victory!
39. Here's how this applies to us. Through prayer and the word, God reminds us that we shall in fact defeat our enemies.
40. And then, fueled and motivated with that fact, we are strengthened for battle, and we pursue and defeat our enemies.
41. Let me put this as plainly as I can—before David pursued his enemies, he first sought direction from God through prayer.
42. Perhaps I can put it like this—before David pursued his enemies, he strengthened himself in his covenant God.
43. Perhaps another way of saying this would be—David pursued his enemies in the strength that came from God.
44. Ps.18:37-39—"I have pursued my enemies and overtaken them; neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed. I have wounded them, so that they could not rise; they have fallen under my feet. For You have armed me with strength for the battle; You have subdued under me those who rose up against me."
45. Notice, David uses the word "I" a number of times—"I have pursued my enemies and overtaken them; neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed. I have wounded them...they have fallen under my feet."
46. And yet, notice how David did this—"For You have armed me with strength for the battle; You have subdued under me those who rose up against me."
47. In other words, here in Psalm 18 (as well as in 1Samuel 30), we have the activity of God and man brought together

48. David pursued his enemies and utterly defeated them—David attacked his enemies and fought them for one full day.
49. And yet, while David pursued, fought, and defeated his enemies, it did so from strength he received from God.
50. "I have pursued my enemies and overtaken them" and "I have destroyed them," and yet, "You have armed me with strength for the battle" and "You have subdued them under me."

### III. David's Goodwill (vv21-31)

1. From v21 to the end of the chapter, we find David graciously bestowing his spoils to his weary soldiers and friends in Judah.
2. (1) His weary soldiers (vv21-25)—if you remember, 200 soldiers were too weak to follow David in crossing the river.
3. Thus, after they returned with the spoils, wicked and worthless men believed they should not share in the spoil (v22).
4. V23—"But David said, 'My brethren, you shall not do so with what the LORD has given us, who has preserved us and delivered into our hand the troop that came against us.'"
5. David's primary reason for being generous was that God was generous to them—it was God who gave them victory.
6. V24—"For who will heed you in this matter (who with any sense will follow your suggestion)? But as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike."
7. V25—"So it was, from that day forward, he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day"—that is, that those who go to battle and those who guard the supplies share alike in the spoil.
8. And thus again, we behold the godly and gracious spirit of David, who gently and wisely provided for his beloved people (even though some of them, just earlier, sought to turn on him and stone him).
9. (2) His friends in Judah, v26—"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 spoil of the enemies of the LORD.'"
10. And then, in vv27-31, we learn exactly who those elders and friends were, and then in v31 we have a hint why, v31—"and to all the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to rove."
11. In other words, it appears David was repaying those who had sheltered him and his men while he fled from Saul.
12. These places fed and housed him, probably at great risk, for had Saul found out he would have destroyed them.
13. And thus, David graciously remembered them for their work, and sent portions of spoil to them saying—"Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD."
14. I want to spend the remainder of our time, turning our focus from David to Christ, and suggest we behold Christ shadowed in David in at least three ways.
15. In other words, we not only learn from practical lessons from David, but we also see our beloved Savior in David.
16. (a) Christ, like David, was hated unjustly—just as David's men unjustly hated him, so Christ was hated without a cause.
17. (b) Christ, like David, trusted His Father—just as David looked to his father in the midst of his distress, so Christ looked to His Father in His distress.
18. When I think of David in this chapter (in great distress), it reminds me of another Man who too was in great distress.
19. Mk.14:33-34—"and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.'"
20. Our Savior too was boxed in by troubling circumstances—His friends have left Him and the Jews sought to kill Him (similar to David).
21. But more than this, the greatest cause of our Savior's distress was the cup that He anticipated drinking the next day.
22. And yet, what did our Savior do, v36—"Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."

23. In other words, our Savior strengthened Himself in the LORD His God, as He submitted Himself to His Father's will.
24. (c) Christ, like David, shares His victory—that is, Christ shares His riches of His grace to His needy and weary people.
25. Perhaps we can say, the spoil that Christ won is grace and eternal life, which He freely shares with His people.
26. And how are David's people described in this passage—two ways, weak and wicked—and this is also true of Christ's people by nature.
27. O dear friends, Christ has won a great victory! And He now has great spoil! He too could say with David—"This is Christ's spoil."
28. And here's the amazing part. He's more generous with his spoil than David was with his, because He shares it with His enemies.
29. O dear brethren, behold your Savior! He who has defeated our enemies and won the victory! And blessed be His name, for He graciously shares that victory with His beloved people.
30. O poor sinners! Weak and wicked by nature! Come and bow your knee to King Jesus and He will give you the victory.