

Ziklag: The Test of Kings

by Chip Brogden

David's story shows that even in the midst of difficult situations, we can choose to get better and encourage ourselves in the Lord to move forward.

Topics: "Trials And Tribulations", "Faith And Strength"

Description

Chip Brogden preaches about the misconception that following God exempts us from trials, using the life of David as an example. Despite being a man after God's own heart, David faced severe trials and losses, challenging the belief that serving God guarantees a trouble-free life. When faced with a devastating situation at Ziklag, David and his men were emotionally drained but David chose to encourage himself in the Lord, showing that true strength comes from God alone. By seeking God's guidance and pursuing recovery after tragedy, David exemplified true kingship and turning trials into triumphs.

Transcript

Early in my Christian walk I somehow reached the erroneous conclusion that if you love God and do what His Word says then nothing bad will ever happen to you. This idea was reinforced by teachers and preachers who claimed that people who knew how to exercise their faith and operate under the anointing and walk in the Spirit would never get sick, become depressed, lose money, or come under spiritual attack.

Time and experience are patient teachers, and in their classroom I learned a different view of life.

Consider the life of David, "a man after God's own heart", the "sweet psalmist of Israel." Surely a man after God's own heart will never have to experience terrible trials, afflictions, misunderstanding, suffering, rejection, pain or misfortune!

But in David we see that even someone who is after God's own heart, someone who seeks Him early and often, someone who desires Him more than anything else - yes, THAT kind of person, ESPECIALLY that kind of person! - will be called upon to endure some of the most excruciating physical, emotional, and spiritual rigors imaginable.

DISASTER AT ZIKLAG

David's problems began as soon as he was anointed! As soon as his calling and destiny was confirmed by Samuel the prophet, David became a target for the jealous rage of Saul. The anointing, for David, was like

a huge sign around his neck that invited trouble.

I Samuel 30 records one of the severest tests in David's life. Circumstances would force him into a "do or die" situation. His response to this test would either confirm his destiny as king or destroy him completely. There would be no warning for what was about to happen, and there would be no second chances.

"And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire; And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way. So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives" (I Samuel 30:1-3).

How do you respond to impossible situations? How do you react when everything you hold dear is taken from you? The first reaction is quite natural, quite human, and quite understandable:

"Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep" (I Samuel 30:4).

I cannot imagine what those six hundred screaming, crying men sounded like. It must have been the most awful sound in the world. They wept, and cried, and screamed out in agony, until they had no more power to weep. How long did this go on? I don't know, but the episode left them emotionally bankrupt, absolutely numb from grief, with no more power to cry even though they wanted to.

But it would get worse before it got better!

WILL YOU CHOOSE TO GET BITTER, OR GET BETTER?

"And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters..." (I Samuel 30:5,6a).

Not only did David have to deal with his own personal loss, but he also had to deal with the combined losses of his men, who were now looking for someone to blame. David, as the leader, was the most likely target. Facing Goliath is one thing, but dealing with six hundred angry, grief-stricken men is another.

It looked like David was done for. Six hundred angry men coming against one man. There could be no escape from this.

I believe that every one of us will, at least one time in our life, come face-to-face with a Ziklag experience. Everything you have in this world is either taken away or burning down right before your eyes.

Friends, I have learned that when things like this "come to pass" in your life, you have a choice. You can get bitter, or you can get better. Six hundred men chose to get bitter. That is the easy path. One man chose to get better. That is the narrow path.

Kings are anointed by God and selected based on how they respond to situations like this.

How would you respond?

In a similar situation, many of us would have had this conversation with ourselves: "I thought God had called me. I thought God had anointed me to be king of Israel. But that was a long time ago, and I have seen nothing but trouble ever since. I have spent the best years of my life running from Saul. I did the right thing, and now I'm being punished. What do I have to show for it? Absolutely nothing! I've lost my family and everything I have is going up in smoke. The people are ready to stone me. Everything is against me. I quit! I give up! Just let me die so I can have some peace! God can keep his anointing, it's too much of a price to pay."

I know most of us would say this because most of us HAVE said this at one time or another. I have given up many times (at least temporarily) because the pressure was too great. The easiest thing to do in a situation like this is to just lay down and die. And that is what most people end up doing.

David had an opportunity to do the same thing.

This verse could have very easily read:

"And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters. So David gave up, and the people stoned him, and tossed his body onto the burning rubble of Ziklag. And God was very displeased and began looking for a new king..."

This worst-case scenario is actually played out in real-life with real brothers and sisters who have a real calling from God but are on the verge of giving up because Ziklag has left them wounded, hurt, bitter, disillusioned, jaded, frustrated, or disappointed.

Brothers and sisters, Ziklag can either be your graveyard or your greatest opportunity. The decision is yours.

"BUT DAVID ENCOURAGED HIMSELF"

What did David do?

"...But David encouraged himself in the Lord His God." (I Samuel 30:6b).

Thank the Lord for "but"! The sheer weight of things was piling up. The pressure was enormous. One bad thing after another was coming against David. One tiny word - "but" - introduces something new, something different, something that rises up to stand against all this doom, depression, disillusionment, distress, and desperation.

Nothing had changed and the situation looked hopeless - but David encouraged himself in the Lord His God.

In a similar situation we might call the pastor to come pray for us. We might look for a prophet to give us a word. We might go to our brothers and sisters and ask them to pray for a breakthrough. If we have people around us then we can and should ask for their prayers and support. Yet David had none of this.

What do you do when all visible means of support have collapsed? What do you do when the people you used to be friends with are now ready to stone you? And what do you do when you are all alone? The easiest thing to do is quit.

"But David encouraged himself in the Lord His God."

One translation says, "But David strengthened himself in the Lord His God." Another version says, "But David took courage from the Lord His God."

How did he do it? Was it a special song? Was it a special prayer? Was it something he confessed? Exactly how did David encourage himself?

We do not know, because the Bible does not say specifically. He probably did a little of all the above. He probably went back in time and remembered how the Lord helped him to kill the lion and the bear who tried to steal his father's sheep. He probably thought about the time the Lord helped him to slay Goliath. He probably thought about all the times when the Lord had delivered him from being destroyed by Saul.

All that is speculation, but here is what I want you to know: if David could encourage himself in the Lord, so can you. You can encourage YOURSELF.

Since most people are takers, and not givers, most people are looking to receive encouragement, not give it. It is very difficult to find encouragement in other people. I am always appreciative of encouraging letters and kind words when I receive them, but I cannot always depend on other people to encourage me. Neither can you.

"But David encouraged HIMSELF."

You have to learn to encourage yourself. You will not always find encouragement in your circumstances. It is not easy to look on the ashes of your life and imagine anything good coming out of it. Fiery trials and difficult tests are not conducive to encouragement. Most of the things in this world are specifically designed to DIScourage you.

"But David encouraged HIMSELF."

When the enemy says, "You've lost everything", you can encourage yourself in the Lord your God!

When friends forsake you and the people say, "It's all your fault", you can encourage yourself in the Lord your God!

When your circumstances say, "You'll never make it out alive," you can encourage yourself in the Lord your God!

What is the secret to David's strength? Where did David find encouragement? Certainly not in his situation. Not in the prophet Samuel. Not in his family and friends.

"But David encouraged himself IN THE LORD his God."

In the Lord! In the Lord! In the Lord!

This is why Paul could say, "When I am weak, then I am strong. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice! Because it is GOD Who is working in you, and He WILL complete the good work He has begun in you, and ALL THINGS are working together for good according to HIS purpose!"

This is not some kind of positive confession, faith-promise formula. It is not up to you, it is up to Him, and since you have nothing to lose anyway, you have everything to gain by casting yourself completely upon

the Lord and finding your strength IN HIM.

PURSUE AND RECOVER ALL!

When David had encouraged himself in the Lord, and asked God what to do next, the Lord said,

"Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all" (I Samuel 30:8b).

And so David wiped away his tears, took his sword, led his six hundred angry men into battle, defeated the enemy, and recovered everything they had lost.

That's what it means to be a king.

On that day, David turned tragedy into triumph. He passed the Ziklag test. He did not have his crown yet - that would come later, but that did not matter right now. He did not need a crown or a throne to prove he was a king. His kingship was demonstrated there in the rubble of Ziklag, where he learned to encourage himself in the Lord His God.

Don't ever give up! Ziklag is not your final resting place, it is only the test of kings. Encourage yourself in the Lord, pursue, recover, and move forward. This is your destiny, and this is the word of the Lord to you. May it be so!

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