

# DAVID FINDS STRENGTH IN THE LORD

1 Samuel 29:1-30:20

Key Verse: 30:6

*David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God.*

Everyone makes mistakes. We often fail in our walk of faith. But failure is not bad if we learn from it and grow. Failure can be an opportunity to come closer to God. This is what David did in Ziklag.

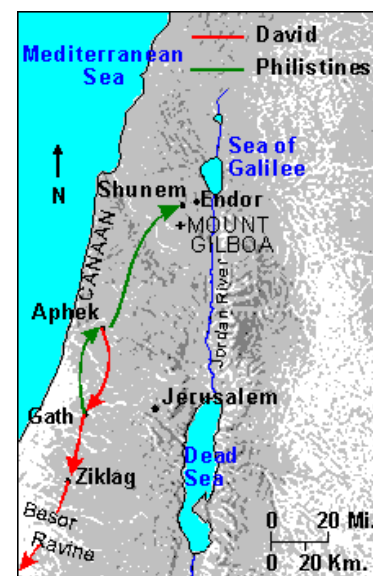
In Chapter 29, God intervenes to help David so that he did not have to fight with Achish against his own people of Israel. In Chapter 30, David finds strength in the Lord when he was in extreme distress. He makes good decisions by going to God first this time.

## I. GOD HELPS DAVID NOT TO FIGHT HIS OWN PEOPLE (29:1-11)

David had been conducting secret raids on three desert tribes (including the Amalekites) while he and his men lived in Ziklag under the sponsorship of Achish, the king of Gath (27:8). Achish was totally fooled by David's deceptions. He trusted David 100%. Everything seemed to be going well with David and his men. They raided the towns of Israel's enemies in their covert operations and accumulated many assets. They had their wives and children with them in a town of their own. Life was good for a change for David, even though he had to use his deceptions to maintain it.

Now a day of reckoning came for David. The Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek to fight Israel. The Philistine rulers, including Achish, began their march with their forces to go to war with Israel. And David and his men were following Achish at the rear (2). As they left Aphek in Philistia and marched toward the Jezreel Valley passing Megiddo on the way, what do you think was on David's mind? What were he and his men doing, going to war against his own people? Would they really fight against his own fathers and brothers on the side of the Philistines whom he had called those "uncircumcised fellows" and the "enemies of the living God"? David probably regretted seeking a refuge under Achish by now. He had done so

without asking God about it. He hated his situation now. Likewise, we sometimes make our decisions without asking God first, thinking we know what is best for us. But the truth is that our views and understanding of our situations are often narrow, short-term and self-centered. We cannot see our future clearly. We have to admit that God knows us better and it is best for us to ask him first. But David had put himself in a terrible situation. How could he get out of it this time? What could he do? Well, he had no good



answer, except for marching behind the Philistine force. Once again, it was God who came to rescue him.

The Philistine commanders did not like the picture either. They remembered who David was. How could they forget the one who had defeated their champion Goliath? They asked, "What about these Hebrews?" Achish tried to defend David. He told his fellow rulers that even though David had been an officer of King Saul, he had proved himself loyal to him since he joined him over a year ago. But the Philistine commanders did not buy it. They became angry with Achish saying there was no way they would allow David to go with them into battle. They argued that David could have an excellent chance to make up with King Saul by betraying the Philistines. They added, "Isn't this the David they sang about in their dances: 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands'?" (5) Achish had to admit that they had a good point in their argument.

Achish came to David to break the news. Basically he said, "I am sorry, David. I trust you and am more than happy to fight together. But the other rulers don't approve of you. So go back home in peace" (6). So David ended up not having to fight his own people. Now some people might say that David was extremely lucky to get out of the tight spot. But it wasn't luck. It was God's hand working through the Philistine commanders. God protected David. He helped David not to fight his own people of Israel. God protects those who commit their lives to him even when they veer off the course by mistake. This is a privilege of being God's covenant people. In Genesis 28, Jacob made a vow that God would be his God if he would protect him in his uncertain future. It was a selfish vow but his commitment to God was genuine. From then on, Jacob would make many mistakes, but each time God came through to help him. It was as if God had attached a long cord on him so that Jacob could deviate from the right path but God would not let him veer off too far. God protects his covenant people. What a privilege we have in God to be his covenant people!

We should also know that what appears to be coincidence or mere human action on the surface is actually what God is doing in the background. We often cannot see it at the moment. What can we do? We should train ourselves to see things through the eyes of God by studying the word of God deeply and by developing spiritual insight.

David was thanking God profusely in his heart, but being a natural actor, he kept a straight face when he protested, "But what have I done? What have you found against your servant from the day I came to you until now? Why can't I go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" David should have been nominated for an Academy Award for his acting here. Achish answered, "I know that you have been as pleasing in my eyes as an angel of God; nevertheless, the Philistine commanders have said, 'He must not go up with us into battle.' So get up early and go home" (9). Of course, David and his men were happy to say goodbye to Achish and go back to their temporary hometown of Ziklag while the Philistines went up to Jezreel (11).

## II. DAVID FINDS STRENGTH IN THE LORD (30:1-20)

It took three days for David and his men to return to Ziklag. A shocking and devastating scene was waiting for them in their town. During their absence, the Amalekites had raided their town. Their houses were burned down. Worse yet, all their family members, women and children, were taken captive. David had thought Ziklag was a safe haven for him and his men. But it was nothing but. They found the town destroyed by fire and all their family members were gone including David's two wives.



So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep (4). I cannot imagine what the sound of 600 men weeping aloud at the same time. It must have been a thoroughly depressing scene. In that situation, some of his men began to talk about stoning David. They must have snapped when they saw the destruction and thought about their children and wives. Each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters who had been taken captives by their enemy. The loyal men turned on David in their desperation. They blamed David for bringing them to Ziklag. They blamed David for leading to secret operations to raid the Amalekites earlier.

David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him. His wives were taken captives. He grieved for them. Now his men, his loyal friends through thick and thin, turned against him. They even talked about killing him. How did David deal with this desperate situation? He did not snap. He did not become angry with his men. David did not try to find someone to blame which was an easy thing to do. He could have blamed God for putting him through all kinds of difficulties after telling him that he would be king.

A lot of what if's might have been going through David's mind as well. What if he didn't bring his men there out of their home territory? What if he didn't bring their family members there? It was certainly one of the most difficult moments of his life thus far. What did David do?



Look at verse 6b. *But David found strength in the LORD his God (6b)*. In a moment of extreme distress, David turned to God. He found strength in the Lord his God. He did not focus on his problems. He lifted his eyes to see God. He remembered God who had been with him through his difficult life so far. He remembered how God granted him the courage and strength to fight against the Philistine champion Goliath. When he focused on his eyes on the smoldering town of his and 600 crying men, all his

strength was gone. But when he focused his eyes on God who gives strength, he found strength to think and find an answer to his problems.

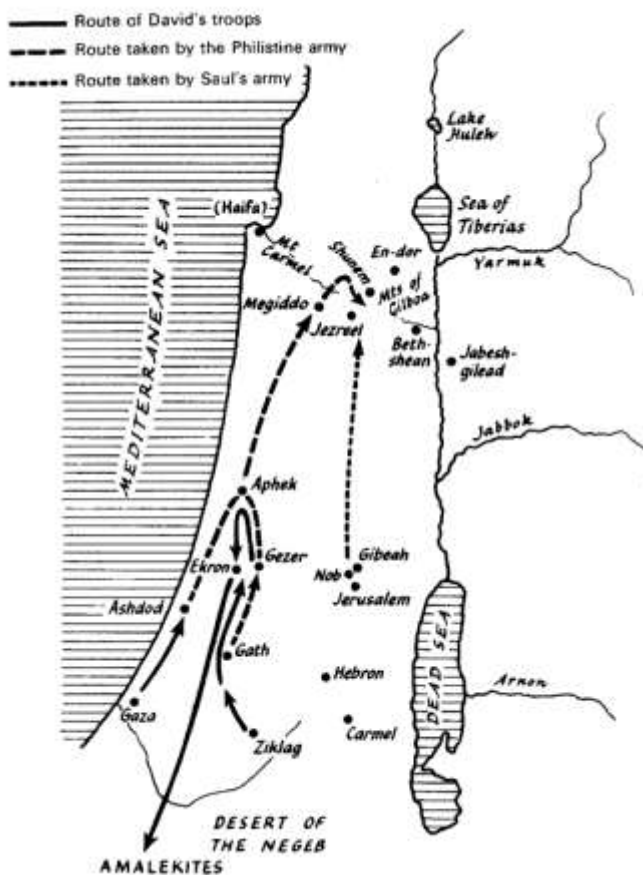
Look at verse 6b again. *But David found strength in the LORD his God.* David found strength in the Lord “his God.” Unlike King Saul who treated God as his vending machine, David had a personal relationship with the Lord. In Psalm 18, David sang, “I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge... In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help” (Ps 18:1-2,6).

How can we find strength in God when we are in deep distress? Like David did, we should focus on God and his love rather than on the problems. We should remember how God gave us strength in the past when we were weak. We should acknowledge our weakness and helplessness, and turn to God. We must have basic faith in God and trusted him, like Daniel’s friends did as they were about to be burned alive in a fiery furnace (Da 3:16-18).

After gaining strength in God, what did David do? He asked Abiathar the priest to bring him the ephod (that included the Urim and Thummim in the pouch). It was like saying today, “Can you bring the phone? I want to call someone.” He wanted to pray to God in the presence of ephod. He inquired of the Lord, “Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?” (8)

David inquired of the Lord. This had been David’s MO (modus operandi) in his wilderness training. He inquired of the Lord first whenever he had to make a difficult decision. But in his fear, he had made a wrong turn to go to Achish without inquiring of the Lord. It was a critical mistake. It was a spiritual lapse in judgment. David had learned a lesson. It is okay for us to fail and make a mistake as long as we learn from our failures. Failures provide opportunity to grow in faith if we are willing to learn from them. That’s what David did. He inquired of the Lord once again.

What was God’s answer? “Pursue them,” he answered. “You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue.” So David and the 600 men came to the Besor Ravine in pursuit of the Amalekites. There 200 men were left behind with supplies



because they were too exhausted to cross the ravine (10). As they continued the pursuit, they found an Egyptian in a field and brought him to David. They gave him food and drink and he was revived, because he had not eaten any food or drunk any water for the three days and three nights (12).

The Amalekite owner of this slave was cruel. He left his slave to die of hunger when he had become sick. He was abandoned like a broken-down used car by his master. But David and his men had compassion on him and took care of him. Little did they know that God would use this Egyptian to help them!

David and his men had room in their hearts for someone like this Egyptian. This passage reminds us of a Roman centurion in Luke 7 who had a shepherd's heart for his slave. A centurion was a military officer with 100 soldiers under him. Roman centurions were notorious of their brutality. They had no regard for human rights. But this centurion was different. He valued his servant highly (Lk 7:2). One day, his servant was sick and about to die. To most Romans, slaves were their properties that were replaceable. When their chariots got old, they traded in for a new one. When their slaves got old or sick, they abandoned them and acquired new, stronger ones. But this centurion did not do that. He tried everything to revive the slave. Finally, he heard about Jesus' healing ministry. He brought his slave to Jesus. He had a shepherd's heart for his slave. Jesus was happy to learn of his shepherd's heart. Jesus healed his slave. Miracles happen when there is a shepherd's heart.

David asked the man, "To whom do you belong, and where do you come from?" He said, "I am an Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite. My master abandoned me when I became ill three days ago. We raided the Negev of the Kerethites and the territory belonging to Judah and the Negev of Caleb. And we burned Ziklag" (13-14). David knew this man was telling the truth. So he asked the man, "Can you lead me down to this raiding party?" The man agreed to guide David and his men after acquiring David's pledge that he would not kill him and hand him over to his old master. So this Egyptian became an important guide that led David to the Amalekite raiding party.

When David caught up with the Amalekites, there they were, scattered over the countryside, eating, drinking and reveling because of the great amount of plunder they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from Judah (16). David fought them from dusk until the evening of the next day, and none of them got away, except four hundred young men who rode off on camels and fled. David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back (17-19). He also recovered all the flocks and herds, and his men drove them ahead of the other livestock. "This plunder belongs to David!" they said (20; NLT).

In today's passage, we learned that God protects his covenant people even when they veer off the right path. It is a privilege to be God's children. But we should not waste God's grace on us or test his patience by repeating the same mistakes. In a time of crisis, David did not give in to his human situations. He went to God in prayer. He found strength in God. May God help us to find strength in God in all circumstances!