

## Lesson 8      16 December 2012

### David's Faith Is Tested

**Lesson Scope:** [I Samuel 27-30](#)

#### Lesson Focus

After his second close encounter with King Saul, David decided it would be better to leave the country. Although Samuel had anointed him as the future king of Israel, circumstances seemed to indicate that fleeing would be the best course of action. David hoped that then Saul would abandon his foolish pursuit.

David returned to Gath, under Achish's protection. Yet the nobility of the land did not trust David because of his Hebrew heritage. David had been under the suspicion of the princes the previous time he was living here, escaping only by feigning insanity. Yet he still had the trust of the king. The king gave him the city of Ziklag as a dwelling place for him and his men. This second time, David dwelled there for sixteen months. During this time he purged the land of some enemy tribes.

The Philistines again were preparing for battle. David offered his services, but the Philistine princes still did not trust David and demanded that Achish send him away. We see God at work arranging circumstances so David would not be in the battle where Saul lost his life. This also allowed David an earlier discovery of the destruction at Ziklag.

At times God's people face severe tests. God always works out His will in those who trust Him and commit themselves to principles of righteousness.

The race of faith requires many qualities in the runner. One of these qualities is endurance. A marathon runner is always pressing on, but at a pace that will enable him to complete the race. He doesn't pause at the top after a steep climb, and he doesn't allow the monotony of a long stretch to deter him. Likewise, he recognizes what the task is and prepares himself for it. If he allows heat, humidity, terrain, or distance to overcome him, he will not finish the race. The Christian

race is similar to the marathon. It is, usually, a long race with peaks and valleys, long stretches, and uncontrolled external influences unlike the marathon runner, however, the Christian runner has an unlimited source of power and strength to ensure he makes it to the finish line.

In this lesson David is facing a number of discouraging setbacks in a short period of time. He flees Saul and goes to self-imposed exile in Ziklag. Sixteen months later, he is rejected by the princes, not supported by the king, and has his home destroyed by invaders. Through it all, he holds to God's promises and seeks His face for direction, protection, and comfort. This lesson should inspire our faith and help us to lean more fully on God.

**Lesson Aim:** To glean truths for facing the trying circumstances of life.

**Theme Verse:** [Colossians 1:20](#). And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

## Lesson Text

### "David Was Greatly Distressed"

[1 Samuel 27:1](#) <sup>1</sup> And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: *there is* nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand.

[1 Samuel 29:1](#) <sup>1</sup> Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which *is* in Jezreel.

[1 Samuel 29:6](#) <sup>6</sup> Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, *as* the LORD liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host *is* good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless the lords favour thee not.

[1 Samuel 30:1-6](#) <sup>1</sup> And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had in-

vaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire; <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Then David and the people that *were* with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep. <sup>5</sup> And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. <sup>6</sup> 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: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

### **"David Enquired at the LORD"**

1 Samuel 30:8-10 <sup>8</sup> And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake *them*, and without fail recover *all*. <sup>9</sup> So David went, he and the six hundred men that *were* with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed. <sup>10</sup> But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.

### **"David Recovered All"**

1 Samuel 30:17-19 <sup>17</sup> And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled. <sup>18</sup> And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. <sup>19</sup> And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any *thing* that they had taken to them: David recovered all.

1 Samuel 30:22-24 <sup>22</sup> Then answered all the wicked men and *men* of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them *ought* of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead *them* away, and depart. <sup>23</sup> Then said David, Ye shall not do so,

my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. <sup>24</sup> For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part *is* that goeth down to the battle, so *shall* his part *be* that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.

1 Samuel 30:26 <sup>26</sup> And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, *even* to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD;

### **Questions for Study**

#### **"David Was Greatly Distressed"**

1. How is God's sovereignty evident in David's experiences?
2. Contrast the response of David to that of his men upon discovering the tragedy at Ziklag.
3. What severe tests may come to us?
4. How can we remain unwearied and battle ready?

#### **"David Enquired at the LORD"**

5. What attitudes are evident in David's inquiry?
6. How can we discern God's will?

#### **"David Recovered All"**

7. Discuss David's direction concerning the spoils.
8. How can we do our part to overcome the enemy?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

The phrase "I shall now perish" (1 Samuel 27:1) should not be interpreted as doubt on David's part. He had been anointed king by Samuel at God's direction, and he knew this could not happen if he were to die prematurely. Indeed, David needed rest from Saul's pursuits, and we see God working through this situation.

The trust King Achish placed in David (1 Samuel 29:6) was maintained by means of David's deceptions (1 Samuel 27:8-12). Ironically, the Philistine princes were correct in their statements against David. It is unlikely that David would have fought against his own people, and the battle may have gone the other way.

One of the groups that David fought against during his stay in Ziklag was the Amalekites. These people had been harassing and battling Is-

rael since the wilderness journeys. Saul destroyed some of them and David still others, yet it seems that at least some Amalekites were among the plunderers of Ziklag.

The term Belial (1 Samuel 30:22) means "worthless, wicked, and destructive." It is used here to describe the men who had participated in the battle and did not want to share the spoils with those who had guarded the supplies. David overruled and declared that everyone deserved a share of the spoils.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **"David Was Greatly Distressed"**

1. God's people should not grow weary under adverse circumstances (1 Samuel 27:1). God is the source of unlimited power. He will freely give us what we need to overcome the enemy and be victorious. We need to keep in mind that we are in a battle. We should be constantly on guard against enemy attack. We dare not become battle weary.

2. God's hand controls the circumstances of His people's lives to fulfill His purposes (1 Samuel 29:6). God overruled so that David would not be placed in an awkward position in the upcoming battle. Further, the rejection by the princes allowed him to recover the loss at Ziklag. We need to recognize God's hand in the circumstances of life and accept His leading. He wants what is best for us.

3. At times in life, troubles seem to multiply (1 Samuel 30:2, 4, 6). David was rejected by the princes, found only verbal support from the king, and returned to find his home plundered and his family and possessions removed. As if that were not enough, his men wanted to kill him. "But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God." As the storm increases, we rely on the anchor to hold us in place. After all, one of God's purposes for allowing storms in His people's lives is to make them more reliant on Him.

4. God's people must look to God for strength rather than seeking revenge or assigning blame (1 Samuel 30:6). We need to look forward, not backward, in trying times. Our goals are in front of us. By looking forward, our focus remains on God, who will see us through. Our response should be not a despairing "What next?" but rather an eager

seeking for God's direction and a further unfolding of His plan.

### **"David Enquired at the LORD"**

5. God will give wisdom and direction to those who seek His face (1 Samuel 30:8). What is God's face? We cannot see it physically, but it represents all that faces can communicate—sympathy, assurance, direction, and hope. He reveals Himself through prayer, fellowship, worship, His Word, and the church. He may reveal His will through other people and the circumstances around us.

### **"David Recovered All"**

6. God can turn times of distress into blessing (1 Samuel 30:19). We can sometimes look back on a difficult or distressing experience and see how God worked on our behalf. Perhaps we recognize that a time of special trial has made us stronger spiritually. A time of disappointment may have turned to blessing as we received something more or better than we had even hoped for in the first place. But we cannot always see the blessings so clearly. At such times we simply rest in the assurance that God knows all things and always works for our good.

7. Trouble may be avoided by following justice and mercy (1 Samuel 30:22-24).

Justice and mercy generally produce a positive response. Peace and unity are maintained between those involved. There is always some risk when following this path as some simply will not respond right, regardless of the approach, but the blessings far outweigh the risk.

8. Faithful men are able to endure stress without compromising sound principles (1 Samuel 30:23). David's walk with God to this point helped him to stand strong. He leaned on what was revealed and moved by faith that God would deliver. We must lean on God in our adversities and claim His promises. Though we may feel weak in the faith in hard times, we dare not lose our faith in Him. He will bring us through.

9. As we benefit from God's goodness, we share His praise with others (1 Sam.30:26). We should be overjoyed when we reflect on what He has done for us. We should freely share what He has given us with those around us. He supplies our physical needs and our spiritual needs. What is your testimony of what He has done for you today?

## **Important Teachings**

1. God's people should not grow weary under adverse circumstances (1 Samuel 27:1).
2. God's hand controls the circumstances of His people's lives to fulfill His purposes (1 Samuel 29:6).
3. At times in life, troubles seem to multiply (1 Samuel 30:2, 4, 6).
4. God's people must look to God for strength rather than seeking revenge or assigning blame (1 Samuel 30:6).
5. God will give wisdom and direction to those who seek His face (1 Samuel 30:8).
6. God can turn times of distress into blessing (1 Samuel 30:19).
7. Trouble may be avoided by following justice and mercy (1 Samuel 30:22-24).
8. Faithful men are able to endure stress without compromising sound principles (1 Samuel 30:23).
9. As we benefit from God's goodness, we share His praise with others (1 Samuel 30:26).

## **Answers to Questions**

*1. How is God's sovereignty evident in David's experiences?*

God spared David from death at Saul's hand, but the danger he met among the Philistines was nearly as great. Achish wanted to include David in the battle against Israel, but the Lord delivered him from that without confrontation with the Philistines. David returned to Ziklag in time to pursue the attackers and recover all.

*2. Contrast the response of David to that of his men upon discovering the tragedy at Ziklag.*

The loss of wives, children, and homes was grievous to all of them. David's men blamed him and talked of stoning him. David sought refuge in his God and took courage. David looked to the future, but the others were overwhelmed by their present circumstances.

*3. What severe tests may come to us?*

These answers will vary, depending on the needs in each congregation. Some may be facing financial trials with the economic downturn. Others may face temptations from family members outside church circles. Older members may face loneliness or despair. As

with David, sometimes several severe tests are underway at the same time. Not all tests are temptations from the flesh or Satan. God also allows circumstances that strengthen our faith and commitment.

*4. How can we remain unwearied and battle ready?*

We must stay focused on God. Daily reading of His Word, study with other brethren, family worship, and church attendance help keep us refreshed. Realizing that a great spiritual war is in progress helps us sharpen our alertness to spiritual danger. If we feel weary, we must not hesitate to ask help of the brotherhood. Prayer, an encouraging word, or simple companionship can go a long way in encouraging us and regaining our stamina.

*5. What attitudes are evident in David's inquiry?*

David did not know what to do, but he knew One who did. He went to the Lord, confident that he would receive clear direction. He received the Lord's direction and proceeded immediately to carry it out.

*6. How can we discern God's will?*

Prayer is the vital link between the believer and God. He speaks through His Word; no answer from God will contradict the Word. He speaks to us through church services and through the brotherhood. God can also speak through circumstances, thus nudging us in the direction He wants us to travel.

*7. Discuss David's direction concerning the spoils.* Selfish men among them wanted more than their share of the spoils. David perceived clearly that the Lord had wrought a great victory for them. That exhausted men were able to win such a battle, recover all, and suffer apparently no losses was indeed miraculous. David recognized that the men who "[tarried] by the stuff" had also filled an important role, and they deserved to share in the rewards.

*8. How can we do our part to overcome the enemy?*

Be it the human tendencies to failure or direct attacks from Satan himself, we need to be fortified against the temptations we face. We overcome by avoiding known temptations, even at personal cost. We overcome when we strengthen ourselves by communing with God. We overcome by identifying with God and His people and by keeping our love for Christ alive and our Christian walk active.

## Research Guide

1. The full lesson scope will present a fuller understanding of the entirety of what David faced.
2. Read on the attributes of God in a topical Bible (i.e., faithfulness, goodness, mercy, and so forth).

## Summarizing the Lesson

With tearful eyes I look around,  
Life seems a dark and stormy sea;  
Yet 'midst the gloom, I hear a sound,  
A heavenly whisper, "Come to Me."

It tells me of a place of rest;  
It tells me where my soul may flee;  
Oh! to the weary, faint, oppressed,  
How sweet the bidding, "Come to Me."

When nature shudders, loth to part  
From all I love, enjoy, and see;  
When a faint chill steals o'er my heart,  
A sweet voice utters, "Come to Me."

"Come, for all else must fail and die;  
Earth is no resting place for thee;  
To heav'n direct thy weeping eye;  
I am thy portion, "Come to Me."

O voice of mercy! voice of love!  
In conflict, grief, and agony,  
Support me, cheer me from above!  
And gently whisper, "Come to Me."

—Charlotte Elliott