

Building An Empire From A Heap Of Ashes

"But David found strength in the Lord his God"

1 Samuel 30:6 (NIV)

I only know of one other person in the entire Old Testament who found himself as deserted and alone as David at the time he "found strength in the Lord". That sad person was Jonah in the living submarine, a great fish somewhere in the Mediterranean Sea. David's story up to now has been like a hare before the hounds. King Saul has been chasing after him for many months.

David and his small band of men had just been dismissed by his only friend Achish. Achish was a ruler of a Philistine army. He told David that he had been a very loyal friend and he found no fault with him. However the other rulers did not like David so David had to go. It was politically incorrect to be seen with David it seems. So all David had was family and the little group of soldiers who had remained faithful so far.

When David and his men got back to their village they discovered that a raid on the town had taken place and everything that had not been stolen was torched. The only thing left was smouldering ashes. All of the men and David sat down and wept when they realised the damages and the disappearance of their loved ones. But there was more.

The soldiers who had been loyal to David through so much the last year or so now talked about stoning David. This is the horrific place that David had descended to as he walked through the ashes of what he owned. He had a pastor named Samuel but Samuel was now dead and David could not receive wisdom from him. He was utterly desolate, except for one source of help.

Our text tells us what an incred-

ibly desperate man did when there was no one to turn to and even his friends talked about murdering him. David sought the Lord. Various times we read about David seeking the Lord for guidance or finding the Lord to be his strength. He was a man of prayer and some beautiful prayers of his are included in the Book of Psalms. Perhaps Psalm 23 is the most beautiful of David's expressions of how adequate the Lord was to him. Indeed the Lord was David's Shepherd.

But in the verses surrounding ours for today there is no suggestion about how David received his encouragement or strength. How then did he get the needed help from God? Well there is one very efficient way to find encouragement in the Lord if we do what David likely did on this occasion.

David could recall when he was anointed king by Samuel the prophet the Spirit of the Lord came on him powerfully. Such a remarkable experience would stay in David's mind for the rest of his life. (See 1 Samuel 16:13) God was with him and he would thus be able to give such beautiful expression to God's presence in his Psalms.

Then too, we need to remember that this situation was not the first when David's life was on the line. He had been a shepherd and in the area where he worked there were lions and bears that preyed on sheep. It seems that whenever a lion or bear attacked David's flock and carried a sheep off David pursued it and killed it. Such experiences were etched into David's memory. When he did his duty God gave him strength to kill the enemy. (See 1 Samuel 17:34-37)

Everyone knows of the story of David and Goliath. This fearsome champion of the Philistine army, a man of extraordinary stature, was taunting the Hebrew army to send out their champion to do battle. When David showed up to challenge him he scoffed at such a youth coming to fight him. David confidently taunted the giant in return by saying he would kill him instead. David shouted among other things, "the battle is the Lord's" and then slew him with his sling and a stone. So once again David experienced a powerful deliverance by God.

Then there were various times when King Saul just about had David at his mercy when God intervened and rescued David from his clutch.

So we see that David had a lot of experiences to draw on to find strength in the Lord for the situation he was in when his men were about to kill him.

The lesson for us is to recall times in the past when we have been in significant, even life-threatening situations. Remember how concerned you were then and think about how the Lord delivered you at that time. Perhaps you should write down the good things the Lord has done for you and then compare them to the present problem. It may take something different on the Lord's part to see you through the issue in front of you but never minimize the resourcefulness of God.

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