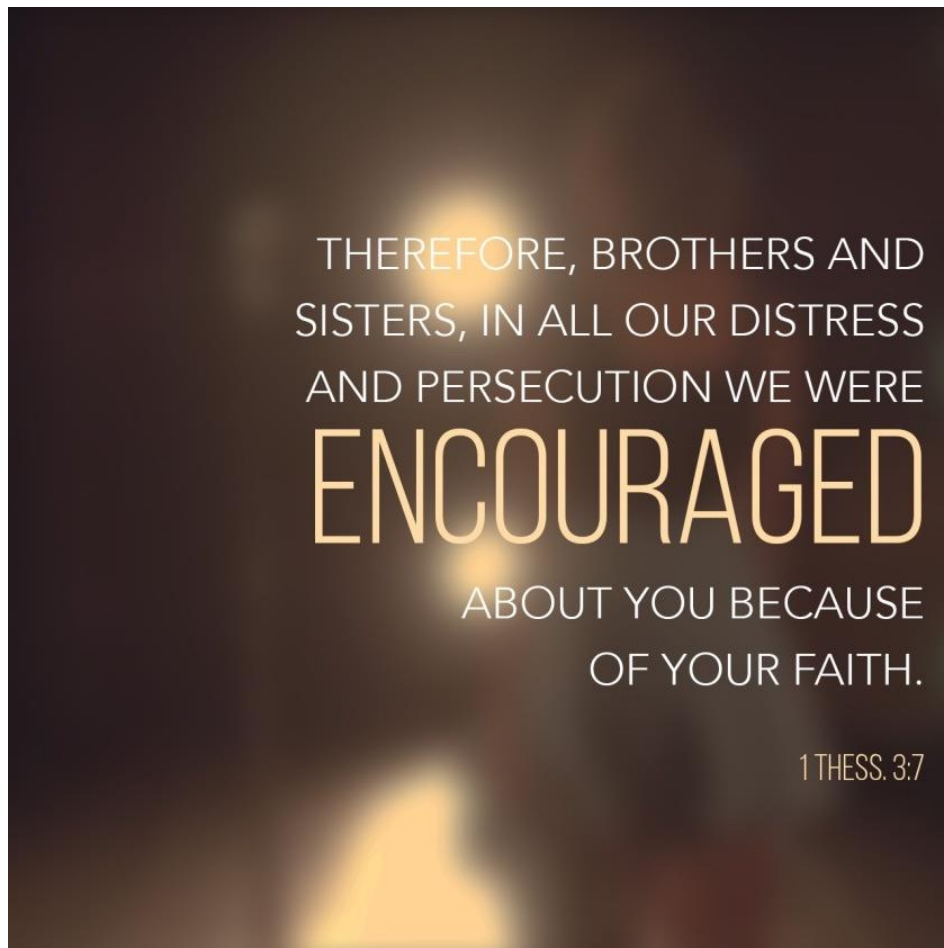


HOW TO ENCOURAGE YOURSELF IN THE LORD THY GOD



This is a continuation of the article entitled "**What is Courage?**"

Are you a person who is undergoing a state of depression right now? Are you afraid, disappointed, full of problems or on the verge of losing hope due to life's stresses? Or perhaps you are a minister who needs encouragement from the Word of God. Or are you a person who wanted to be strong and courageous in facing your fears either they're problems, sins that have long been controlling you or your doubts in life?

If you are experiencing one of these, then this article is for you.

FACING VERY DIFFICULT PROBLEMS

Have you already experienced falling and it's too hard to stand up again and fight because the people around you are pulling you down and it seems that you can't hold a minute longer? Well, this is what King David had experienced in 1 Samuel 30. As believers and as often told to us during our Sunday schools when we are still little children, we have always been amazed at how brave David is in facing Goliath without fear. That's indeed the best story of bravery.

But there is also one story of David that told us that he is not only a brave person but also a courageous one. And I think this story is more amazing than that story of him facing Goliath. Because in this story, David's enemy is not just a physical Giant, but his self and his friends.

Let's take a look at the story...

After just confronting the Army of Philistines, David and his men went back to their home in Ziklag, and they were really surprised at what they had found.

1 Samuel 30:1-2 says: *"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."*

Ziklag in Cruden's Concordance defines as **"a place of good measure"** and **"pressed down"**. Ziklag was home to David and his men and it was the place of God's blessing for them. But now, it has already been 3 days since the enemy has destroyed it by fire and taken captive their wives and their children.

The worst thing is, even David's two wives Ahinoam (whose name means beauty and grace) and Abigail (source of joy) were also taken by the Amalekites. The very two people that brought beauty, grace, and joy to David's life were taken from him, and it broke David's heart! Oh!

Even if verse 2 told us that the Amalekites did not slew any of their captives, David and his men did not know it during that time. Many things are running into a person minds knowing that his wife and children are being taken by the enemy. They are not sure if their wives and children are still alive at that time. The burden and stress of not knowing anything about their loved ones are upon each and every one of them.

So while they are looking at the remains of Ziklag, 1 Samuel 30:4 says:

*"Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, **until they had no more power to weep.**"*

They wept until they had no more power to weep! I don't know how long or how many hours did they wept during that time, but one thing is for sure, they are so distressed that their strength was gone due to weeping.

Have you already experienced this? That your strength was all gone out due to extreme weeping? If not, then what you have been gone through is nothing compared to what David and his men had experienced.

WHEN EVERYTHING TURN AGAINST YOU

Because of great sadness, anger and weeping that the men of David are experiencing that time, they turn their anger to David.

I Samuel 30:6 says, *"And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved..."*

We must remember that, just like them, David had also lost his love ones. He is with his men in every battle that they have faced. He is with them in confronting the Philistines before they went back to Ziklag. In all angle of the situation, we can say that it's not David's fault why they have been on that situation and that they should not blame him. All that he did is actually to lead them to victory in every battle.

Let's pause for a while here.

Have you been in this situation before? Where you have not done anything wrong, you have not sinned against God but still, the odds are not with you and everything around you seems to fall out of place? You have been fired in your work, your business goes to bankruptcy, your health dwindled in spite of healthy living, your own family persecutes you even if you have not than anything wrong! If you have been here, then you know this very situation! This is the situation where our Lord wants to show you how great He is! He wanted to remind you that despite of this seemingly uncontrollable situations, still, He is the God in control of everything. When you are facing this kind of situation and you have done everything to turn out the tide to your side but to no avail, remember my friend, give it all to the Lord! He wanted you to trust Him with it.

So if ever you will encounter this kind of situation, be thankful. Be very thankful. It is because through this kind of situations in life that our Lord wanted us to grow!

I realized this lesson when I first watched my son Von Elkhatee started to learn how to walk. As his parents, we don't want him to get injured in this phase of his life. We got a walker to guide him, we also bought a helmet and other body protectors to protect him from the impact of falling. But this gears actually just hinders him from learning how to walk. He gets uncomfortable with those. So what we did is, we get rid of those protectors and just let him learn how to walk. Yes, he did fell several

times, but we are there to catch him. That's actually our role as his parent. We are there to catch him. And despite of the several failures he had been through while practicing, did he ever stop learning how to walk? Did he ever complain to us that he doesn't want to practice walking anymore? The answer is No! Despite of so many failures, he still goes on and continues. And that's how what other children also are doing. They don't stop. They continue.

Just like our parents, our Father in heaven also wanted us to be able to walk with Him in this life. He wanted us to walk with Him just like what Enoch did in Genesis 5:24 so that we can be with Him also in the rapture. But in order to do this, we need to grow first. So in order for us to grow, He will put us in situations where we can't control everything. Situations where all are against us. This way, we will feel uncomfortable in our current comfort zone. And if we are already uncomfortable in our comfort zone, that's the sign that we need to break through it and move forward to grow.

So always remember this:

Each time you are facing an uncomfortable situation, that's the sign that our Lord is encouraging you to grow. Without those discomforts, you will stay small, you will not grow, you will not be able to walk. That's why be very thankful every time you are in those situations.

Now let's go back to the story...

What we have here is the scenario of David's men trying to stone him because their souls were grieved. Now we should take note that these men with David were all brave and mighty in battles. These are the people who are always with David in battles. Among them are his 3 best of the best and his 30 best captains.

David's **Best of Best** are the following:

1. **Adino** the Eznite who is the Chief among the best three. According to 2 Sam.23:8 *"he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time."* That's one versus 800 for you in one setting!

2. Next is **Eleazar** the son of Dodo the Ahohite. Which is known as **"the standing ground against Philistine"**. When the rest of the Hebrews ran away, he successfully defeated the enemies (2 Sam. 23:9).

3. Third is **Shammah** the son of Agee the Hararite. Who alone fought the Philistines in the "field of ripe lentils" when all the others fled. (2 Sam. 23:11)

And not to mention David's Best 30! Indeed, these people are brave and mighty!!! But what did they do when they are facing that situation in Ziklag? What did they do?

In King James translation it says,

"... the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters."

In Goodspeed translation it says,

"...David was in a serious predicament."

All of them turned their anger to David and they wanted to stone him! Oh!

Well, we can't really choose the quality of character that controls the people around us. We can't also choose the family that we are born into, or exercise complete control over the events of our lives. But **we can definitely choose how to react to the events and to the people that come against us.**

Now let's see what will David do in this situation.

Faced with dire circumstances, with no one to turn to for help, the rest of verse six says, **"...but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God."**

Yes, you read it right. **David ENCOURAGED himself in the LORD his God!** Now, that's the true courageous man!! Now, this kind of circumstances will separate the courageous from the brave. Others are just brave men but it was only David who is a truly courageous man. That's the Man of God!! That's the true Bride of Christ! Praised be the Name of the Lord!!!

What's the difference between David and his men? It is how he reacted in the situation!

Circumstances do not make the man, they REVEAL him! How you react in times of trouble reveals what has always been in your heart!

If we will only learn to encourage ourselves in the Lord our God no matter what situation we are in, **our Lord can turn into our own good those evil things that have been brought to us by Satan.**

Your success does not depend upon people around you, neither is it controlled by the negative words that are spoken against you. **Your success is BASED UPON THE LORD AND HIS WILL FOR YOUR LIFE!**

Now, let's look deeper upon this verse...

The phrase *"David encouraged himself"* comes from the Hebrew verb #2388 "**chazaq**" which means *"to strengthen and harden yourself, to become courageous, firm and resolute."*

It is used to describe the repair of broken-down walls, rebuild strongholds, and **to mend what has turned into pieces**. It is used 290 times in the Old Testament to describe the person that becomes resolute and determined during hard times, to strengthen weak hands, and taking a firm hold on the task at hand.

While others are letting their anger and sadness control them, David, on the other hand, encourage himself in the Lord his God. He became proactive with his faith and decided **to seek God for the answer to his problems**.

What did David have? His men had turned against him. His family was gone. Ziklag was burned. **All David had during that time was his faith in God. And that is more than enough.**

When people turn against you, and life lets you down, you can still stand strong and be encouraged because Hebrews 13:5 says that God,

"...will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

So, David turned his attention to the only One that could truly help in his time of need. I Samuel 30:8 says,

"And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them? And He (the Lord) answered him, Pursue; for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all."

THE ENEMY WILL STILL STOP YOU

Let's continue the story...

Because David encourages himself in the Lord his God and the Word of the Lord told him to pursue because he shall surely recover those that were taken from them, along with 600 hundred men, they pursue the Amalekites. **But sometimes things get worse before they get better.**

When they arrived at the brook "Besor" (which means good news), David received "bad news" from some of his men. I Samuel 30:10 says,

"...for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor."

Just when you have decided to encourage yourself to the Lord your God and continue to go on, that's also the time that other people around you will try to pull you down. Not every one that decides to go on with you at the beginning of the battle will actually finish the battle with you. Some will lose heart and change course, others will lose strength and lag behind.

If Satan cannot bring you down, he will actually use the people around you to break you. We should not allow other people's weaknesses to become our failures. If you focus your attention on what people are saying or doing, you will become discouraged and faint on the road to victory. But the man that continually encourages himself and keeps his confidence in the Lord will see his hopes realized.

Refusing to be discouraged, David and his shrinking men of 400 pursued hard after the enemy.

In I Samuel 30:11 they came upon an Egyptian slave of the Amalekite's army who had fallen sick and was left behind to die. After nourishing him, David asked him into leading them to the enemies camp. And the slave leads them to the camp. Upon arriving at the camp of the Amalekites, 1 Samuel 30:17,18 says, *"And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day.... **And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away; and David rescued his two wives.**"*

Amen!!

If David had given up from the beginning, he should have not recovered what the enemy has taken away from him. If he hadn't encouraged himself in the Lord his God and never harken to His word to pursue the enemy, they should not have recovered their love ones. If he would have succumbed to the thoughts of discouragement and failure that must have been running through his mind, he never would have come across the slave who would lead him to the Amalekites camp and victory.

How we react to difficult times determines our growth in life.

DO SOMETHING COURAGEOUS TODAY!!

In John 16:33, our Lord said,

*"These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. **In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.**"*

It is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself that told us that in this world, we will be going to have tribulations. But we need not be discouraged because He had overcome them all! And if He who has overcome them all is with us, then we should also overcome.

A true believer will never escape the tribulation! He faced them! Like David, He encouraged himself to the Lord his God by harkening to His Word. So don't be discouraged in your situation today, instead, be courageous and encourage yourself in the Lord and He will bring you through to victory!!!

Praised be the Name of the Lord!!

May He continue to guide us into all His truth is my prayer.

