**Strength In Weakness – 1st Samuel 29 & 30**

**1st Samuel 29 “**The Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek, and Israel camped by the spring in Jezreel. **2**As the Philistine rulers marched with their units of hundreds and thousands, David and his men were marching at the rear with Achish. **3**The commanders of the Philistines asked, “What about these Hebrews?”

Achish replied, “Is this not David, who was an officer of Saul king of Israel? He has already been with me for over a year, and from the day he left Saul until now, I have found no fault in him.”

**4**But the Philistine commanders were angry with Achish and said, “Send the man back, that he may return to the place you assigned him. He must not go with us into battle, or he will turn against us during the fighting. How better could he regain his master’s favor than by taking the heads of our own men? **5**Isn’t this the David they sang about in their dances:

“‘Saul has slain his thousands,
    and David his tens of thousands’?”

(pause)

**6**So Achish called David and said to him, “As surely as the Lord lives, you have been reliable, and I would be pleased to have you serve with me in the army. From the day you came to me until today, I have found no fault in you, but the rulers don’t approve of you. **7**Now turn back and go in peace; do nothing to displease the Philistine rulers.”

**8**“But what have I done?” asked David. “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?”

**9**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.’ **10**Now get up early, along with your master’s servants who have come with you, and leave in the morning as soon as it is light.”

**11**So David and his men got up early in the morning to go back to the land of the Philistines, and the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

Old expression; “*Can’t win for losing*”. Not exactly sure what it means, but it seems to sum up David’s experience in this chapter.

He was rejected by Saul because he was so successful, that he incurred Saul’s jealous wrath. So he took refuge in the Philistines and is now being rejected by them as well.

It was God’s providence however, because he was spared of having to fight *against* Israel.

Did you ever have an experience when things did not go as you had hoped, only to find out that because you were rejected, passed-over or even falsely maligned you ended up right where God wanted you?

This is what happened to David in this instance.

He did not want to go back home to Ziklag at this time, but that’s exactly where he was sent.

It’s a good thing, because Ziklag is where he was desperately needed and where he began to seek the Lord again.

**1st Samuel 30 “**David and his men reached Ziklag on the third day. Now the Amalekites had raided the Negev and Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag and burned it, **2**and had taken captive the women and everyone else in it, both young and old. They killed none of them, but carried them off as they went on their way.

**3**When David and his men reached Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. **4**So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. **5**David’s two wives had been captured—Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. **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.*

This was one of the worst days of David’s life.

He was rejected and maligned by Saul and the armies of Israel.

He was rejected by his current commander Achish.

His new home city was burnt to the ground.

His family and the families of all his men were taken captive.

His closest friends and allies are bitter at him and wanting to kill him.

What did he do?

What would YOU do?

**He found “Strength in the Lord His God”**

What do *you* do when you’re distressed, discouraged and bitter in Spirit?

Do you despair?

Do you look elsewhere on your own for support, in people, in resources, in distractions?

Do you try to muster up enough strength and self-determination to struggle through it?

OR, do you find strength in God?

David knew how to Find Strength in God, and that’s what he did.

**7**Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelek, “Bring me the ephod.” Abiathar brought it to him, **8**and David inquired of the Lord, “Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?”

“Pursue them,” he answered. “You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue.”

**9**David and the six hundred men with him came to the Besor Valley, where some stayed behind. **10**Two hundred of them were too exhausted to cross the valley, but David and the other four hundred continued the pursuit.

**11**They found an Egyptian in a field and brought him to David. They gave him water to drink and food to eat— **12**part of a cake of pressed figs and two cakes of raisins. He ate and was revived, for he had not eaten any food or drunk any water for three days and three nights.

**13**David asked him, “Who do you belong to? 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. **14**We raided the Negev of the Kerethites, some territory belonging to Judah and the Negev of Caleb. And we burned Ziklag.”

**15**David asked him, “Can you lead me down to this raiding party?”

He answered, “Swear to me before God that you will not kill me or hand me over to my master, and I will take you down to them.”

**16**He led David down, and 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.

The Amalekites were the enemy of both Israel (Judah) AND the Philistines. These are the ancient people who have been the enemy of the God’s people since the time of Moses. They are a tribe of mass-murderers who God determined should be wiped off the face of the earth. Saul’s biggest mission was to accomplish this task, and he failed. This is why his kingdom was stripped from him.

Here they *are “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.”*

David gathered his men and went on the attack.

**17**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. **18**David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. **19**Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back. **20**He took all the flocks and herds, and his men drove them ahead of the other livestock, saying, “This is David’s plunder.”

**21**Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow him and who were left behind at the Besor Valley. They came out to meet David and the men with him. As David and his men approached, he asked them how they were. **22**But all the evil men and troublemakers among David’s followers said, “Because they did not go out with us, we will not share with them the plunder we recovered. However, each man may take his wife and children and go.”

The ones who were not able to be part of the attack had stayed behind. Some of those who were with David when they plundered the Amalekites turned on them and wanted them to leave.

**23**David replied, “No, my brothers, you must not do that with what the Lord has given us. He has protected us and delivered into our hands the raiding party that came against us. **24**Who will listen to what you say? The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All will share alike.” **25**David made this a statute and ordinance for Israel from that day to this.

**26**When David reached Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to the elders of Judah, who were his friends, saying, “Here is a gift for you from the plunder of the Lord’s enemies.”

David went from being an unappreciated mercenary for the Philistines, who lost everything (family, home, friends, etc.), to a hero among the clans of his own people, rescuing his people and avenging their enemies.

God used David to do what Saul refused to do. Destroy the Amalekites.

His life went from slipping into failure and obscurity, to back on track to being the greatest King of Israel, all because he stopped operating in his own self-sufficiency, inquired of the Lord and found his **“Strength in the Lord His God”.**

**Sometimes God allows our weaknesses and even our failures to occur to cause us to turn to him so that we rely totally on His strength and not our own, because it’s at those times when we can clearly see His power operating in us and not our own self-determination (pride).**

The Apostle Paul was in many ways like David. He was gifted, accomplished and moved powerfully in the Spirit of God, both in his writings and his courageous exploits.

He was the most prolific writer, church-planter, miracle worker and apologist that the early church had ever known. He was highly-educated, extremely gifted and extraordinarily accomplished beyond any of his peers.

His temptation was very much like David’s was. He was tempted to become conceited and prideful, relying on his own self-sufficiency and strength instead of the Strength of the Lord.

The Lord loved him too much to allow that to happen, so he sent a “messenger of Satan” to help prevent that…

**2nd Corinthians 12:8-10** “Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. **8**Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. **9**But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. **10**That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

A closer look at 2nd Cor. 12:8-10;

* What? I was given a thorn in my flesh,

We are not sure what it was, sickness?, physical condition?, a person?, a spiritual, or emotional affliction, or a literal thorn in his skin?

* Why? “in order to keep me from becoming conceited,”

Regardless of *what* it was, Paul was certain that he knew *why* it was, to keep him from becoming conceited, to keep him humble.

* Who? “a messenger of Satan to torment me.”

This is hard to understand. It would seem that the “messenger of Satan” would be a person, which is a possibility. Just as God allowed Satan to torment Job ([Job 1:1-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job%201.1-12)), God seems to have allowed Satan to torment Paul for God’s own good purpose.

* His Response? Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

Whatever it was Paul wanted to get rid of it. He prayed once, nothing happened, he prayed a second time, same result. After praying a third time, the Lord gave him a response…

* God’s Response? **9**But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

There is so much in this answer;

1. The answer was NOT “yes Paul, I will take it away.” In fact it was more like “No Paul, you’re going to have to live with it.”
2. “My Grace is sufficient”. My Grace will help you. Yes you are weak, but instead of taking away the “thorn”, I will give you grace to be able to live with it, OR My power to endure or overcome it.”
* Outcome? Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

*“Therefore*”… (*Because of this, consequently, thus, hence, as a result, my conclusion is…),* I no longer will act conceited and proud, or think of myself as strong and self-sufficient, I will now “boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses” (identify myself as “weak”) SO THAT Christ’s power may *rest* in me, instead of my own power struggling to get me through.

* Summary?**10**That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Paul found a way to transform weak, destructive, negative and even damaging situations into strength. He delights in these things *because, as he says; “For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

*David was forced to do this in Ziklag. When he was overcome with* weakness, hardships, and difficulties, **He found strength, not in himself, but in the Lord His God.**

**Can we do this too?**

The next time we are overcome with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, difficulties, or you face other “thorns in the flesh”,

…like your home is burned to the ground, your family is taken captive and all your friends want to kill you,

Declare your weakness, not your self-sufficiency.

Cry out to God.

Seek Him, not once or twice, but as long as it takes.

If He responds with “My Grace is Sufficient”…

***Rejoice!***

***Boast all the more gladly about your weaknesses,***

***so that Christ’s power may rest on you.***

***For when you are weak, then you are strong.”***