



Title: A Word for Desperate Times
Theme: Hearing from God in Bad Times
Series: A New Years Message

1 Samuel 30:1- 6, "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, and had taken captive the women and all who were in it, both young and old. They killed none of them, but carried them off as they went on their way.

When David and his men came to Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. David's two wives had been captured--Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. 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." Let the Holy Spirit of Christ place this truth deep into your spiritual heart, "...But David found strength in the Lord his God."

What we are seeing today

What we are seeing today is what is often described in Scripture as, "For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution..." (Isaiah 34:8) Considering that this world and everything in it is God's creation, Christians and nations are to heed to what is written in Psalm 2:11, "...Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling." Psalm 19:9 says, "The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous." The exhortation from the New Testament is "...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose." (Philippians 2:12)

The Word of God holds blessings for obedience and chastisement for disobedience. Serious scholars of God's Word know that there are times when God has a day of vengeance (*naqam*) and long seasons of retribution or recompense (*sillum*) for the sins willfully committed by people who live in a nation with the motto, "In God we Trust." (Leviticus 26:25; Deuteronomy 32:35, 41,43; Ezekiel 24:8; Micah 5:14; Isaiah 34:8; Hosea 9:7; Judges 5:8)

Isaiah 34:8 is the key passage for the introduction of this message which is placed under the heading "Judgement Against the Nations." God allows war to come and He allows conflicts to arise within the spiritual heart, (Romans 7:23; 2 Corinthians 10:3; Ephesians 6:12; 1 Timothy 1:18) to show us our great need of Him in every part of our lives. Romans 1:18-32 warns of the many sins that will be manifested in lives of people because they did not think it "worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God."

“Jesus” said, “...You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.” (Matthew 24:4-6) Jesus is describing the events leading up to His return from heaven and the events that will precede His second coming. In the Middle East we hear of wars and peace treaties and then in no time at all, again there is war. This world is seeing major natural disasters and financial instability.

Everything people find security in has been or may even now be stripped from them. People have lost jobs and homes, and many of our armed forces are out in some kind of battle. These service men are returning home to find that an enemy has invaded their camp. Their spouses and children have been dragged into some kind of captivity that includes bondage to the flesh, the world or the lies of the devil. While calamity strikes, everyone is blaming anyone in authority and rebellion of the tongue breaks out. Bitterness of spirit is found in the hearts of many today, just as in the time of David in Ziklag.

I would propose to you that David, the man after God's heart had illumination of the God he served and he sets before us truth that can be grasped in desperate times.

Just what is that truth and how can Christians live a life worthy of the gospel they proclaim? The Bible says, “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” (Philippians 1:27)

In our opening text David was a regular human being holding a place of leadership, a man chosen by God to do a work for Him. David was greatly distressed because his family was taken captive, his place of security or rest was burned by an enemy, and the men he led were considering killing him.

Christian or non-Christian, God in His sovereignty has given you a place of leadership or responsibility. Just like David, bad things are going to happen to you because we live in a sin cursed world. Someone is going to blame you and they will consider ways of destroying your credibility. The things you found security in will someday be taken away or at the very least be revealed to you as a false security.

Those for whom you have sacrificed time and strength at some time may be taken from you by the world, the sinful flesh or because of the lies of the devil. Those for whom you are responsible will speak against you. It is at that moment you can choose to have the heart of David (Acts 13:22) or be listed among those whose hearts grew cold (Matthew 24:12) or remained unmoved toward God. (2 Corinthians 3:14)

Let the Holy Spirit keep the veil off of your heart and trust in Christ as you prayerfully consider the following truths that will enable you to "...[find] strength in the Lord... God."

Believe what the Bible says about Him

The first step to finding strength in the Lord in desperate times is to believe what the Bible says about Him. Hebrews 13:5b – 6 says, ““Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’” Psalm 46:1 says, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” Psalms 18: 1-3 says, “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. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.”

Psalm 18 is a song offered by King David who sang this song to the Lord when God delivered him from his enemies. (The Treasury of David, Spurgeon; The Expositors Bible Commentary; Thru the Bible) This song of praise to God opens with a Hebrew word translated, “I love you (*raham*).” In its active verb form (*ruhamah*), it can mean to find mercy. The word pictures a deep, kindly sympathy and sorrow felt for another who has been struck with affliction or misfortune, accompanied with a desire to relieve the suffering.

This active verb occurs forty-seven times in the Old Testament, with God being by far the most common subject and His afflicted people the object. The Lord God is compassionate but it is not because any deserve His compassion. It is solely because God in His sovereignty shows it to whom He chooses. (Exodus 33:19; Romans 9:14-16; The Complete Word Study of the Old Testament) The phrase, “I love you” that David is expressing communicates a full understanding of this and it is an intimacy based on past experiences. (The Expository Bible Commentary referring to G.Schmutter and Eine Lexikalisce; 1 Samuel 17:37; 24:1-16; 26:1-2)

What the Holy Spirit wants you to grasp is that David was expressing a supernatural love that came from God to David and that enabled David to love the Lord with a true love. Therefore, finding strength in the Lord in desperate times comes with Holy Spirit illumination about who God is and an understanding of His love. Christians can know this love just as the beloved John did who wrote, “We love because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

Missionary David Brainerd was a soldier of Christ who knew God’s love and then passed the Lord’s love on to the American Indians in New York, New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania. By almost every standard known to modern missionary boards, David Brainerd would have been rejected as a missionary candidate. He was tubercular, and from his youth was frail and sickly. He never finished college, and was expelled from Yale for criticizing a professor and for his interest and attendance in meetings of the “New Lights,” a religious organization.

He had only a few converts, but became widely known because of writings about him. His personal diary inspired William Carry, Henry Martyn, Robert McCheyne and Jim Elliot. (School of Tomorrow; Wikipedia Encyclopedia)

God is still using his writings today to inspire and convict the Christians worldwide on matters of true Christian service. (Missionary Biographies, World Missions) Brainerd's first journey to the Forks of the Delaware to reach that ferocious tribe resulted in a miracle of God that preserved his life and revered him among the Indians as a "Prophet of God."

Encamped at the outskirts of the Indian settlement, Brainerd planned to enter the Indian community the next morning to preach to the Gospel of Christ. Unknown to him, his every move was being watched by warriors who had been sent out to kill him. F.W. Boreham recorded the incident. He writes,

"But when the braves drew closer to Brainerd's tent, they saw the paleface on his knees. And as he prayed, suddenly a rattlesnake slipped to his side, lifted up its head to strike, flicked its forked tongue almost in his face, and then without apparent reason, glided swiftly away into the brushwood. 'The Great Spirit is with the Paleface!' the Indians said; and thus they accorded him a prophet's welcome."

David Brainerd, like King David was a faithful servant of the Lord and that incident in Brainerd's ministry illustrates more than Divine intervention of God in his life – it also shows the truth that God shows His love to those who will love Him enough to trust Him with their entire lives regardless of the circumstances they face and the enemies who stand against him.

David Brainerd was humiliated by being thrown out of college, and he constantly battled bitterness and disappointment from his expulsion from Yale. However, in June of 1742 he began several days of fasting, prayer and seeking God and found himself totally focused on what the Lord called him to do even when people and circumstances were against him. (Missionary Biographies, World Missions)

Like David, Missionary David Brainerd, in desperate times found strength in his Lord. It all begins with being able to Biblically say, "I love you, O LORD, my strength. (Psalms 18: 1) Holy Spirit illuminated Christians are able to say to the Lord, "I love you" because they understand God's love for them.

Biblically seek God's will

Once Christians grasp the Biblical truth, "I love you, O Lord, my strength," they can begin to Biblically seek God's will for them. Taking you back to that time in Ziglag when David faced a desperate time in his life, the Bible says, "Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, 'Bring me the ephod.' Abiathar brought it to him, and David inquired of the LORD." (1 Samuel 30:7-8)

Christians who have been in deep study of God's Word find a truth that causes them to have a healthy fear of the Lord, and which enables them to "...[inquire or seek] the Lord." When Biblically considering leadership and responsibility, two names stand out. One, Saul, who was asked for by elders of sinful Israel (1 Samuel 8:4-9; 10:17-19) and two, David, whom God was with (1 Samuel 16:18). Both men were given responsibility and leadership, they are portrayed as men appointed by God to face desperate times. Let the Holy Spirit place this exhortation deep within your spiritual heart. Desperate times are opportunities to either show your love to God by seeking Him or surrender to the sinful flesh and a world view and listen to the lies of the devil as Saul did.

Saul was a man of leadership and responsibility who lacked the spiritual qualities necessary for pleasing God. His repeated failure to follow God's instructions given through Samuel brought him to a point where the Lord would no longer answer Saul.

In 1 Samuel 28, the "...Philistines gathered their forces to fight against Israel." (1 Samuel 28:1) The Bible says, "When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. He inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets." (1 Samuel 28:5-6) If Saul would have drawn near to the Lord with a contrite spirit, a heart after God's heart, if he would have approached in a true Biblical manner, the Lord would have spoken to him.

Saul was a man who did religious things even to the point of confessing sin. (1 Samuel 15:24) The Spirit of God came upon Saul and his men causing them to prophesy while they were searching for David to kill him. (1 Samuel 19) Saul obeyed righteous laws, he expelled the mediums and spiritists from the land of Israel. (1 Samuel 28:3) The Old Testament is very clear and presents a truth that should keep any man focused on truly seeking the Lord. Leviticus 20:6-8 says, "I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute himself by following them, and I will cut him off from his people. Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy."

Saul did what most people do in desperate times. He justified the disobeying of the Word of the Lord. He disguised himself so a woman medium would call up the spirit of Samuel for him. Saul even swore in the Lord's name that she would not be punished, when he should have been arresting her. (1 Samuel 28:8-10)

During this seeking the dead, Saul received the announcement of God's judgment, "Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?'

'I am in great distress,' Saul said. 'The Philistines are fighting against me, and God has turned away from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what to do.'

Samuel said, 'Why do you consult me, now that the LORD has turned away from you and become your enemy? The LORD has done what He predicted through me. The

LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbors--to David. Because you did not obey the LORD... the LORD has done this to you today. The LORD will hand over both Israel and you to the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also hand over the army of Israel to the Philistines.'" (1 Samuel 28:15-19)

Even though Saul was anointed by Samuel to be king, (1 Samuel 10:1) had been anointed by the Spirit of God to prophecy (1 Samuel 19:23) had obeyed righteous laws (1 Samuel 28:3) and was able to confess sin (1 Samuel 15:24) he is not the example to follow in desperate times because he did not find his strength in God nor inquire of the Lord in the prescribed way.

It must be understood that the spiritual use of calamity is for the prompting of man's heart to seek the Lord and our opening Scripture today shows us that David inquired of God. David looked to his priest and adviser Abiathar to bring him the ephod, which to David and Samuel represented God's divine presence. (The New International Dictionary of the Bible) Dr. Jay Vernon McGee writes, "The ephod was a portion of the high priest's garment which speaks of prayer."

It is believed that on the ephod mentioned by David was the urim and thummim of which very little is known. What is known is that they were passed on from Aaron to Eleazer and were seen as necessary symbols. The New International Dictionary tells us this, "they served as symbols of authority to seek the counsel of the Lord, God's will being revealed through inner illumination."

Dr. Jay Vernon McGee further explains, "...this garment was worn when the priest went into the golden altar of prayer. It had two stones on the shoulder, on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. In other words, the priest came to the altar bearing Israel on his shoulders. This is a picture of Christ our Great High Priest who 'lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood. Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede... (Hebrews 7:24-25)' for us."

The word "inquired" (*saa*) means to ask God for something and all Christians may pray according to the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God with an assurance the Lord will give guidance, especially in desperate times.

In Jeremiah 33:1-3 we see an invitation to prayer that is for us as well as for the weeping prophet Jeremiah. (Matthew Henry Commentary; The Pulpit Commentary) He has experienced and seen desperate times for himself and the people of God. Listen to this Word from the Lord to this faithful man of God in desperate times. Jeremiah received this word of promise while he is in prison. "While Jeremiah was

still confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the LORD came to him a second time: "This is what the LORD says, He who made the earth, the LORD who formed it and established it--the LORD is His name: Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." (Jeremiah 33:1-3)

All Christians may pray with an expectation that God is going to hear and answer their prayers in accordance with His good purposes. James 5:16 says, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." No captivity, affliction or situation can keep God from hearing our prayers or intervening in our behalf. The persecutor cannot rob his victim of knowing the presence of the Lord and God can repeatedly visit His troubled children.

Often it is in the continuance of trouble the Lord gives His most powerful revelations. Through the Apostle Paul's imprisonment and persecution we have a great amount of the New Testament epistles. Often it was through hardship and difficult circumstances the Old Testament writers were enabled to receive revelation from heaven to be passed on down to us. These revelations are filled with promises of God's love, provision and protection, especially in troubled times.

The Apostles prayed prayers that are still for the church today, one worth grasping is a prayer for revelation, Ephesians 1:17-23 says, "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way."

What the world needs to see is a Body of Christ which is able to get "revelation" from God in desperate times-- Christians who know Christ and unashamedly live by the Book, the Word of God.

The Greek word for "revelation" (*apokalupsis*) in Ephesians 1:17 means having, "a spirit which can fathom and unfold the deep things of God." (Complete Word Dictionary of the Bible) The New International Dictionary of the Bibles tells us, "Revelation is the theme central to Christianity... The theological concept is the trustworthy account of God's self-revelation in word and deed contained in the Scriptures. To call the Bible the Word of God is to claim that it is the unique and faithful statement of God's self-revelation to mankind. To use the word inspiration [is to reveal the truth] that the Holy Spirit guided the hands of the writers of the Bible,

to put down just what God wanted them to write. [It is] by illumination, the work of the Holy Spirit on the [spiritual] hearts and minds of readers and hearers of the contents [is man changed into the image of Christ]."

Let the Holy Spirit place this truth into your spiritual heart. When facing desperate times, Christians and mankind need a Word from God. The way of inquiring of God is prayerfully reading the Bible and inviting the Holy Spirit of Christ to do His faithful work within you. The church and mankind in general need a revelation of true love (*agape*) so they can say as David, "I love you, O LORD, my strength. (Psalms 18: 1) Holy Spirit illuminated Christians grasp through God's word just who Jesus Christ is, God's will, and His purpose, and are, therefore, enabled to know, love, trust, and obey Christ as Lord.

When a man becomes unhealthy and is battling some dreaded illness he must take the right medicine. When a baby is born, he must be fed healthy food daily if he is going to grow healthy and strong. When mankind is saved from the illness of the sinful flesh, rescued from this world's view, and discerning of Satan's lies, the Holy Spirit prompts him to feed on God's Word because it is the right medicine and food from heaven. Jesus said, "It is written: `Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4)

In Closing: *David Wilkerson wrote, "In normal times, I am able to draw advice from my godly wife, Gwen. She is always there to give me a good word, just what I need."* All of us have Christian friends, spiritual leaders, or a spouse whom God has used to give us direction. However, in desperate times, not friends, spouses, or the Body of Christ can touch the human spirit like the Holy Spirit of Christ can. (Romans 8:27) One spiritual leader whom the Lord used to minister to me in desperate times is Pastor David Wilkerson. This faithful man of God, often through his Holy Spirit anointed teachings, has taken my grateful attention off him to the Word of God. He points out a Biblical truth, "In the Old Testament we read of a phrase, "...the Word of the Lord came." (Genesis 15:1)

When David Biblically inquired of the Lord, (1 Samuel 30:7-8) when the prophets sought out God (Jeremiah 29:13) and when Paul trusted our Lord, revelations came (Galatians 1:12). So it can be with the child of God in this dispensation. Christians who stay in the Word of God in desperate times will be able to sing in his heart unto and about the Lord, "Through it all, through it all. I've learned to trust in Jesus, I've learned to trust in God. Through it all, through it all, I've learned to depend upon His Word."

Let us pray!