

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

What is Yahweh Doing?

I Samuel 30:1-6

Intro: In his declaration against the sin of Israel & her stubborn refusal 2 repent, the prophet Amos uses a graphic sermon illustration (5:19). He talks about a man who flees 4 his life from a lion only 2 run into a bear! Then, as he escapes into his house, panting & heaving as he leans against the wall – a snake bites him! He thought he had reached the safety of home only 2 discover that the enemy was already there. This is a man who can't win 4 losing. If it weren't 4 bad luck, he'd have no luck at all! This is what it must have seemed like 4 David & Co in ch30. For 16 months, they had so successfully deceived Achish concerning their raiding activities that he ordered David 2 fight **w/** the Philistines against Israel in the upcoming invasion. David couldn't say **no** & he couldn't say **yes**; he's stuck! But, thanks 2 God's mercy working thru Philistine suspicions, David escaped the trap of fighting **4** the enemies of God.

It must have been w/ great relief that David & his men made their way back 2 Ziklag. Even a 3 day, 60 ml journey is a delight when you've dodged a bear or a bullet like they had. But, having escaped the bear, when they arrive home, that's when the serpent strikes! No families, no possessions, no town – everything has either been burned 2 the ground or carried off. As far as David is concerned – the hits just keep on coming! It may have seemed 2 David that he was living in a pit of despair but what do you do when even the bottom drops out of the pit? How much more can a person take? More important – what is God doing in this scene? B/4 we answer that, let's nail down the text...

1-2- *it happened*- it certainly did, but not by accident. David is the divinely anointed future king of Israel, God's chosen people, so we automatically know that anything that occurs in his life must go thru the God filter. It must be approved by **YHWH** Himself. Surely, God had a purpose 4 all of this in David's life but *what purpose does it serve?*

Amalekites- remember these guys? They were supposed 2 have been eliminated by Saul back in ch15 but Saul's victory over them was woefully incomplete. Saul failed 2 obey the Lord's command fully & the enemy was still free 2 attack God's people. So, like desert pirates, they swoop into town & carry off everything that's not nailed down.

3-4- *wept*- It's almost impossible 2 imagine the shock & overwhelming sorrow that David & his men experienced. Imagine going on a business trip, being away 4 several days. You get some work done & get 2 see some sights but it's not long until traveling gets old, you miss: being w/ your family, eating regular food, sleeping in your own bed. Now imagine, after a long hard trip, you arrive on your street 2 find the whole neighborhood has burned 2 the ground & there's not a soul in sight 2 tell you what has happened! It's no wonder David & his men wept. At the time, what else could they do? The text tells us that they wept themselves 2 the point of exhaustion – until they had no more strength 2 cry & scream. Have you ever been 2 that place, where you reach the limits of energy & emotion? It's a terrible place 4 anyone 2/b but it was even worse than that 4 David

5-6a- *distressed*- These are manly men: when they ran out of energy 2 weep they turned

what little energy they had left into blaming David & trying 2 muster the nerve and/or consensus 2 **stone** him. Grief was changed into bitterness & rage. Everyone was distressed but the text says David was **greatly** distressed (pressed into a tight corner). Why?

At this point in his life, David has absolutely nothing 2 support him. No 1 in Israel can help him; the Philistines don't want him; his wives are gone; all his possessions are gone; his closest companions 4 the last 16 yrs want 2 kill him. "Well, at least he has his health!" The rocks are going 2 take care of that. Every source of support is gone except 1 – the Lord! As horrific as we may think David's situation is, that's actually a **good place** 2/b in, not a bad place.

6b- strengthened- Here we see the core difference between David & Saul. When Saul was terrified by the massive Philistine invasion (greatly distressed) he foolishly & rebelliously turned 2 a witch (necromancer) 4 support. When David was greatly distressed, he finally & confidently turned 2 the Lord 4 support. Different people react in different ways 2 the same circumstances. What life does 2 a person depends mainly on what life finds in a person. We've all heard it b/4, whether it's hard work or the disciple of sports or rigors of military training: "It builds character." But that's not quite true b/c these things don't so much build character as they reveal the character that's already there. When it came down 2 brass tacks, David knew his only resource was **YHWH** & he finally turned himself over 2 God.

B/4 we make applications from the text, I'd like 2 ask the question again: What is **YHWH** doing w/ David here? Is this the judgment of God against David's self-confident mind set? Back in ch27, David convinced himself that Saul was eventually going 2 kill him so his best logical move was 2 flee Israel altogether & take his chances w/ the Philistines. 4 the last 16 months, he's operated under the premise that he must secure safety & provision 4 himself & his men. Are we now witnessing God's judgment against David's lack of trust? It's a legitimate question b/c anytime tragedy strikes, there's always someone who pipes up & claims it's the judgment of God against man's sin. It happened after Katrina; b/4 the flood waters abated, some TV preacher declares its God's just judgment on NOLA's great sin. Really? Was it only sinners who were affected? On the Sunday the storm hit, there were over 200 churches in the lower 9th Ward. Still today, some 10 yrs later, there's less than 20. If God was judging NOLA's sin, why wasn't Bourbon St wiped clean. If God wanted 2 wash away sin, He'd make the MS River run right thru the French Quarter!

Did God make this happen b/c David chose 2 leave Israel 4 Philistia? We can't even say that b/c we'll find out later that the Amalekites made similar raids into Judah as well. Actually, the Amalekites were just doing what Amalekites do – they raid, pillage & plunder wherever they find opportunity & what better opportunity than a walled city full of women, children & plenty of wealth that is poorly defended b/c all the fighting men are off trying 2 dodge the draft? Hey, sometimes bad things just happen – like hurricanes. God didn't create that storm. In fact, God didn't create the earth 2 have hurricanes – they are a direct result of man's decision 2 choose sin over love. Doesn't God control the storms? Yes, but He does so 4 His divine purposes – not 4 our comfort or 4 our convenience.

Was David now suffering the consequences of his sin? There may be a hint of truth in this, at least 2 the point that on top of everything else, David may feel some personal responsibility 4 the loss of all the families & possessions. But I believe that the Lord is doing

something greater than just smacking David around here. I realize that paints an awful picture but the sad fact is that many Christians feel just that way when trouble comes to their life. They think God's out to get them for some failure or sin but that's not how a loving Father treats his kids, not even the goofy ones.

Let's make some applications from the text & maybe we'll discover what it is that **YHWH** is doing in David's life.

This 1st thing we need to consider is, this disaster in Ziklag is not an isolated incident in David's life. David's been taking a pounding since ch18! This disaster would be unbearable by itself but look at the larger context. In ch27, David's so exhausted & depressed, he decides to leave Israel & finds some relief in Gath. But then in ch28, he faces the worst scenario of his life: having to fight w/ the Philistines against Israel. He then receives a marvelous deliverance from that great difficulty only to face what really amounts to the worst possible scenario of his life. The yo-yo effect makes it that much more excruciating: a tight situation, a moment to breathe & then right back into the pit. All David ever wanted to do was serve his God, his king & his country. But in wave after wave of difficulty, as the designated king of Israel, David is certainly now seen as a suffering servant. There's a lesson here for us today.

Have you ever got to the point when you said, "It can't get any worse than this?" Ch30 tells us, "Yes, it can." That's what's so disturbing about this passage. David, God's special servant, is overwhelmed w/ trouble & the implication is: this could be true for any of God's servants! The text teaches us that our difficulties & troubles could always get worse.

That's the realism of the Bible: it doesn't hide the truth or teach half truths or offer false advertisements. As God's servants, we may be overwhelmed w/ troubles. We may receive more than we think we could ever handle. But God tells us this up front – you can **trust** a God like that, you can depend on a Bible that tells you this. When **J** said, "**In the world you will have tribulation**," He didn't put it in small print or try to hide it in the footnotes. He wants us to be prepared, He wants us to trust Him & we should b/c He has proven Himself to be trustworthy!

6b- What does it mean to **strengthen** yourself **in the Lord**? Before we discuss what it is, let's 1st determine what **it is not**!

It's **not** Bible hocus-pocus; it's **not** a quick fix. It's **not** realizing the pressure is on & deciding to seek relief in religion. The Lord is **not** some genie in a bottle that you rub just to make you feel good in your troubles. He's **not** your own personal pain reliever to help get you thru the aches & pains of life. It's not so superficial or superstitious as that.

Nor is it just venting your emotions (vs4). There's a big difference between pouring out sorrow & **strengthening** yourself **in the Lord**. Saul's in great distress in 28:15; he could express it & grieve over it but he didn't **strengthening** himself **in the Lord**. There's nothing wrong w/ venting your emotions but there should be more to it than just that. Does our distress bring us before God? You may get it all off your chest & still not **strengthening** yourself **in the Lord**.

So where do we start? Same place David did – w/ a **personal** God: **the Lord his God**! In Israel, there was always the danger of simply upholding the official covenant faith w/o having a vital personal faith. It was possible for someone to speak of the "**Shepherd of**

Israel & yet not be able 2 say, "***the Lord is my shepherd,***" just like churchy people can declare **Jesus** 2/b the Son of God but never "***the Son of God, who loved me & gave himself 4 me***" (Gal 2:20). David could no longer say, "my city," "my house," or "my possessions" but he could still say "**My God!**"

But, how does 1 strengthen themselves in the Lord? **I Sam 23:16** will shed some light. Jonathan, at great risk, went & found David & strengthened his hand in God. Clearly, this was some kind of encouragement, but what kind? Vs 17 tells it, "Saul will never find you & **you** will reign over Israel" Jonathan's simply reaffirmed & emphasized the promise of the kingdom that **YHWH** had previously made 2 David. That's what ***strengthens: remembering*** the promises & affirmations of Scripture – specifically the promises that pertain 2 you & the affirmations concerning God's character. David ***strengthened himself in the Lord his God*** by 1) recalling YHWH's promise 2 him & by the testimony of 2) how **YHWH** had been faithful 2 uphold His words in David's life thus far.

God's people have strengthened themselves in the Lord thru-out history in the exact same way. By 1 persons estimation, the Bible contains **3573** promises. When difficulties come (& they will) it would behoove each 1 of us 2 familiarize ourselves w/ at least a few of these: **Ps 138:8; Nahum 1:7; Phil 2:13, 1:6; Rom 8:38-39**. There's another famous promise in **Rom 8:28** but what is "***His purpose?***" vs29 qualifies it. Now we can answer our initial question. What is God doing w/ David? He's ***conforming*** him into the image of **JC**. He's making David a picture (type) of what Christ would be. Tho David was in imperfect picture (like us), the Lord was still conforming him into that image. This shows how great the Father's love is 4 the Son. He delights in His Son so much that He has called millions of sinful human beings 2 Himself so that Jesus might be reproduced in them & the universe can be populated w/ multiplied millions of Christs. Not that we will become divine – no way – but we do become "***like Him.***" We will show forth His character as we are conformed (transformed) into the image (likeness) of Jesus Christ.