

Finding Ultimate Hope in the Midst of Ultimate Evil

II Samuel 22:6-23

When we are confronted with ultimate evil, our soul demands a response of ultimate hope.

When you see an Isis soldier remove a man's head from his body because he is Christian – you long for hope.

When you are the sister, father, or mother of that man who is martyred – your soul **cries out** for ultimate hope.

When you heard about the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary – you silently ached for hope, but ...

If you are a parent who lost a child at the school – your soul screams for hope – ultimate hope.

When Dylan Roof killed the 9 members of Emanuel Church in SC last year after he sat with them in their bible study for an hour – I know I searched for hope as I talked to family and friends about this evil.

When you are a friend of the family that lost a loved one that night – your soul demands that there has to be a greater hope than the evil your friends and you are living through.

When we are confronted with ultimate evil, our soul demands a response of ultimate hope.

In the face of evil, we wrestle with this reality:

As Christ followers, will we be a hopeless people who have nothing to offer others in the midst of evil?

Or, ...

As Christ followers, will we be a people of ultimate hope who give real hope to others in the midst of evil?

We must answer this question because we live in a world that demands an answer to this question.

The sad truth is – much of the church in our country has no answer or such a soft answer – *that it provides only a tiny hope which gets crushed in the tsunami of an act of ultimate EVIL.*

1) There is a whole mass of the greater church in our country that is so focused on how we get more blessings from God – that any storm or trial in their life sets them reeling. When that storm is ultimate evil – *the ship that is their life is capsized and destroyed by the perfect storm that has crashed upon them.*

2) Even the other portion of the church that teaches sound doctrine focuses mostly on intimacy with Christ and talks little of suffering, evil, and the sovereignty of God. NOW HEAR ME – It is good and needed to teach, discuss, and embrace that our God is a relational God who is good, loving, comforting - intimate. But, if we never talk of evil and suffering and God's sovereign role in this world even His supreme reign over things like evil and suffering – we risk becoming a people who will resist our loving God when He comes to comfort us after we have been wrecked by evil. If we don't have a deep anchor in God as the ultimate ruler over all, who has a purpose for all things – even evil, our lives will be shipwrecked when evil falls on us like a powerful storm.

So today, we are going to address evil – ultimate evil head on – building God's answer to the question –

How do we become people of ultimate hope in the midst of ultimate evil? On this truth ...

Anchoring in the cross – we are filled by the sovereign and loving hand of God with ultimate hope.

01. A response of ultimate hope in the midst of ultimate evil. (God's Spirit in David in I Samuel 22)

02. How does the cross fill us with ultimate hope by the hand of God?

03. How does ultimate hope call us to practically respond to ultimate evil?

01. A response of ultimate hope in the midst of ultimate evil.

I Samuel 22:1 (ESV) David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam.

David is on the run from Saul – the King of Israel – who is convinced David is conspiring against him and so Saul is set on killing David. So, David has left Jerusalem run for food and direction from the Lord at God's tabernacle among the priests. He left there – and being desperate beyond belief – he goes to Gath, the main city of the Philistines (the army he slaughtered) where he feigned being crazy after he found out they really didn't want to kiss and make up and they were about to kill him.

I Samuel 22:5 (ESV) Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." In the midst of suffering, evil, and death all around him – **God is still speaking to David.**

I Samuel 22:6 (ESV) Now Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men who were with him. Saul was sitting at Gibeah under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him.

One day, Saul hears news about David and where he has been. But we quickly learn that he doesn't hear this from his men which leads him to go off on all those in earshot.

1 Samuel 22:8 (ESV) "No one discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day." **Then someone speaks up ...**

1 Samuel 22:9-10 (ESV) 9 Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who stood by the servants of Saul, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, 10 and he inquired of the LORD for him and gave him provisions and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

Doeg, the chief herdsman of Saul – was there when the priest Ahimelech gave David the holy bread for his men, the sword of Goliath, and inquired of the Lord for David. **This was Saul's response ...**

1 Samuel 22:11-13 (ESV) 11 Then the king sent to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests who were at Nob, and all of them came to the king. 12 And Saul said, "Hear now, son of Ahitub." And he answered, "Here I am, my lord." 13 And Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?" **Ahimelech is stunned** because no one is conspiring against Saul – not even David. So he responds to Saul ...

1 Samuel 22:14-15 (ESV) 14 Then Ahimelech answered the king, "And who among all your servants is so faithful as David, who is the king's son-in-law, and captain over your bodyguard, and honored in your house? 15 Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? No! Let not the king impute anything to his servant or to all the house of my father, for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little."

Saul, who is consumed with jealousy, bitterness, and anger – is led to this ...

1 Samuel 22:16-19 (ESV) 16 And the king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house." 17 And the king said to the guard who stood about him, "Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because their hand also is with David, and they knew that he fled and did not disclose it to me." But the servants of the king would not put out their hand to strike the priests of the LORD. 18 Then the king said to Doeg, "You turn and strike the priests." And Doeg the Edomite turned and struck down the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five persons who wore the linen ephod. 19 And Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword, both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep, he put to the sword.

Saul commits an ultimate act of evil in a state of paranoia and rage. (Twice the word conspired is used in this passage and twice he had to ask someone to kill the priest and he doesn't stop with the priests – he slaughters a whole town of defenseless people – some believe up to a 1000 people lived in Nob.) **This was a mass murder.**

1 Samuel 22:20-23 (ESV) 20 But one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. 21 And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. 22 And David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house."

David first responds with regret – He believes somehow he is responsible. Either because of his lie to the priest that left Ahimelech, all the priests, and their families open to this attack by the king or by not killing Doeg.

Yet David's ultimate response is one of hope - ultimate hope.

*David was close to the priests. He probably went to them every time he had a mission from the king to seek out God's wisdom and blessing. He knew these men and specifically he knew Ahimelech, the high priest. And, Ahimelech made that clear when he said this isn't the first time he had inquired of God for David. So - this act of brutal evil was personal to David. And, he responds with ultimate hope. How? He does not have some great lecture ready for Abiathar in his trauma and grief, he didn't share powerful theology, he didn't drop some great wisdom bomb full of care and love. But what he did - was full of ultimate hope. **He did two things. Look at vs 23 ...***

23 Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping." **HE TOOK HIM IN** and said **DON'T LOSE HOPE.** Don't be full of fear. **You will be safe with me.**

David knew God had a plan for him to be King. He knew this and believed God would do this. The evidence, the proof that David had ultimate hope was that ... **He gave hope to another.**

From hope, he gave hope to Abiathar when – said, DON'T LOSE HOPE and TOOK HIM IN.

How do we have this kind of ultimate, greater hope in the face of ultimate evil? *Back to anchor truth*

We must anchor our soul in the sovereign and loving hand of God – long before we face this evil.

02. How does the cross fill us with ultimate hope by the hand of God?

David had anchored his soul in the sovereign and loving hand of God.

Sovereignty of God – God is in complete control, accomplishing His will, for His greatest glory.

God is All-powerful, All-Knowing, and has a perfect will. God's sovereign hand brings all these together to shape events for His fame - to show He is the Greatest Power and Treasure of all.

Love of God – God is unconditionally and faithfully committed to the good and care of those He chooses.

God's love is not an emotional response to our love but rather it is who God is toward us no matter how worthy or responsive we are.

David experienced the sovereign and loving hand of God.

- * David was protected and cared for as a boy in the wilderness who realize the LORD delivered him from all.
- * David was chosen by God to be King of His nation even though he was a simple and common shepherd.
- * David was empowered by God to destroy Goliath and many of the enemies of God.
- * David was protected from Saul and cared for by God so God's plan could be carried out.

David knew and believed God's Word that declared the sovereign and loving hand of God.

- * God allowed Job to be tested and revealed His glory – in the midst of Job's suffering.
- * God chose Abraham, blessed him, and made him a blessing for all people – despite his sinful ways.
- * God protected His nation by which Jesus would come even though there was:
 - evil amongst His people (Jacob's deceit, his son's selling Joseph into slavery)
 - slavery in Egypt for all God's people
 - constant rebellion amongst His people even after He freed them from slavery

David had anchored his soul in the sovereign and loving hand of God long before this evil came.

David was anchored in a shadow of the cross in all the scripture and acts he knew.

We have an even deeper rock to anchor our soul to – the actual cross.

"Anchor deep" – Solidly anchor the boats in the bay or the storm will destroy them. Anchor deep church!

The cross is the greatest anchor for our souls against evil - fully revealing the sovereign and loving hand of God that fills us with ultimate hope.

Acts 2:23-24 (ESV) 23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. 24 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

- God planned from before time that evil men, would commit the greatest act of evil ever – *to accomplish the greatest good ever.*

Eph 1:4-6 tells us that from before time began, God had a plan to bring you to Him through Jesus. The cross was the culmination of an eternal plan for God's glory and your good. It wasn't plan B, C, or D. It was plan A from the beginning. And in God's sovereign plan – he would use evil to destroy evil. In God's sovereign plan – many believers would lose their lives through the ages to accomplish this plan and reveal the glory of God. In God's loving plan – this ultimate evil – the murder of holy God – would bring ultimate hope to this often hopeless world.

- This good would redeem God's name as the Greatest – *hopelessly defamed by our sin. Phil 2:9-10*

Brother of martyr at the hands of ISIS – worthy to suffer with Jesus. Sense time begun, men and women have found it a worthy cause to die for king and country. In our human minds – we often believe something or someone is worthy the sacrifice of our lives. When God's name is small – and our name or those we love is great – we cannot believe that our life – whether taken by a sword or cancer – could be for our KING's glory. We don't see that there could be a greater plan to give our God greater fame. But when God's name is greatest – and our name is small – we can begin to trust (thru great tears) that our lives and those we love – are for His glory.

- This good would reconcile hopeless sinners – *giving us sure hope to be with God and become like God now and forever.*

*How great is our hope to become like God in the midst of an overwhelming evil world? When Dylan Roof murdered the 9 members of Emanuel Church in SC – his goal was to start a race war, but it failed and it failed for two reasons: 1) **The people he murdered and much of their family were anchored in the sovereign and loving hand of God.** This was proved at Dylan's arraignment where each family represented stood up and quoted God's Word declaring his sovereignty and his love for their slain loved ones. But there hope didn't stop with their family. They each gave hope to Dylan the murderer – forgiving him. Stunning!*

- This good would forever seal the defeat sin and evil forever – *giving us ultimate hope now as we endure its last days.*

*Dylan Roof's race war failed in Charleston 1) Because the family's anchor and 2) **Because of many other believers in the city (black and white) who were anchored in the sovereign and loving hand of God.** Several churches came together – to care and serve the hurting church. 100s of meals, hours of standing with them, pastoral care (bc there pastor was killed), and a unified stance in the community that brought 1000's to march and pray in the city center instead of riot. They had an ultimate hope and they gave ultimate hope in the midst of ultimate evil and hope won.*

Our call ... Is to be people of hope who can give hope. Anchoring in the cross – we are filled by the sovereign and loving hand of God with ultimate hope.

03. How does ultimate hope call us to practically respond to ultimate evil? *Note: **Spectacular Sins: J Piper***

Three ways we can be people of hope who give hope as we anchor in the ultimate hope of the cross:

1. We will expect evil and give thanks together for the refining effect of evil – *when it comes.*

When people commit ultimate acts of evil like Saul or Dylan – *murdering a small child, school shootings, destroying whole people groups – we want to believe these are unique individuals - that there are only a few in the world who could do this. Truth – God says all of us are totally sinful, depraved, and full of evil potential.*
Colossians 1:21-22(ESV) 21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, **22** he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death

"If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

*Expect Evil – it still lives in this world because this is a world that is still full of broken people. Evil is on its last leg. What we see are dying embers of a once raging fire. Don't forget this – live in ultimate hope. Remember, it is still out there. **Expect it and give thanks together for it's refining effect.***

1Pt 4:12-13 (ESV) 12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to **test you**, as though something strange were happening to you. **13** But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings

2. We will stay connected with the body of Christ and war together – *when evil comes.*

Acts 3:23-24 (ESV) 23 When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. **24** And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord ... **26** The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed. ... **28** to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. *The enemy seeks to isolate you and destroy you.*

3. We will trust that God is totally for us – *when evil comes.*

Romans 8:35-37 (NLT) 35 Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?

36 (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") 37 No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

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