

1 SAMUEL 2023
On the Burning and Building of Bridges
1 Samuel 30

David had been living in a land of COMPROMISE for one year and four months. It was time for his double-life to END. But David was playing his double-agent role until the very last possible moment. God had different plans. He was not only going to remove David from the service of a Philistine king, he was going to make it impossible for him to live in a Philistine city any longer. **God was going to burn a major bridge for David. In doing so, God was also BUILDING a major bridge for David's future.** These two go together. Sometimes, you have to burn some bridges before you can build others.

Do you like burning bridges? Are you willing to cut yourself off from the hiding places and the godless people that you have been USING for your own advantage? When we talk of burning bridges, we are saying that we will no longer consider using those resources to serve as our provision any longer. Burning bridges can be terrifying. **Who in their right mind would ever DESTROY something that might prove USEFUL at some point later on down the road?** Well, it is good to consider the fact that some resources might be useful now, but they might also take you down a road that will lead to your ultimate DESTRUCTION later. Such was David's case.

God did not want David relying on his own wits and power, or on the power and protection of the enemies of Israel any more. David may have had his own plan for burning bridges with the Philistines, but God knew that David's cleverness did not need to be credited with victory at this point. God is going to make an END of David's MESS. **David will NOT see this as a moment of deliverance or victory.** Instead, he will see it initially as a complete loss. This is often how it is for us as well. **1 Samuel 30:1-6a NIV**

1 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 . . .

This was a crucial TURNING POINT for David. **Everything that was precious to him was LOST in this moment. He had no homeland, no family, no army, and no friends.** We should not RUSH PAST this moment. It was a DEFINING moment for David. How would he respond? What would he do? The same is true for us. When you have been struggling for some time and then get hit with what feels like a FATAL BLOW, where do you turn and what do you do? So many people either give in to despair or lash out in anger in these moments. David seemed to have every reason to do either of these things!

*David was “Greatly distressed” because his men spoke of stoning him.

-David was in a very “tight spot.” **[Distressed = to be in narrow straits, to bind]**

David was not the only one who had been crushed by these events. David’s men were EMBITTERED because of the loss of their wives and children. David’s men QUICKLY became bitter AT DAVID & GOD for what had happened. **Bitterness seems to be a root word that is related to REBELLION and DISCONTENT.** It is a word that implies a CONTENTIOUS spirit (against God) when troubles or obstacles get in one’s way. We should note that “EACH ONE” of David’s men was “bitter in spirit” because of what had happened. David had no allies among his men at this point. **Remember, these men came to David in the first place because they were men that were ALL “in distress, in debt, and discontented” in their lives. (1 Samuel 22:2).** To them, this just looked like the same thing they had been facing before they came to David.

Bitterness toward our AUTHORITIES and ultimately toward GOD happens quickly when we see only the losses and problems without waiting to see what God can REDEEM out of the ashes. Things are not often as bad as they seem, but bitterness ASSUMES the worst and gives in to DESPAIR without a pause. **Despair comes when we ASSUME that we KNOW EVERYTHING about what has happened, and that it is all BAD.** Actually, this terrible event was the precursor to a wonderful change for David and all of his men. But they could not see that. So, they were about to do something to make this bad situation even worse by killing their captain! Let this be a warning to us all. Do not assume that “all is lost” until you gain the perspective and find the direction of the God of Heaven!

1 Samuel 30:6b-8 NIV

But David found strength in the LORD his God. 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."

David was certainly in a TIGHT SPOT, but this was just where he needed to be! His response would accomplish more for he and his men than they could ever have imagined. His response should instruct us! David “strengthened himself” in the Lord HIS GOD. **[[To BIND to, to adhere, to make strong]**

-This is a reminder of how Jonathan encouraged him earlier.

-This strength came FROM his PERSONAL relationship with the Lord HIS GOD.

DAVID DID NOT LET SORROW OR SHAME KEEP HIM FROM FINDING STRENGTH IN THE LORD.

It is probably important to note that David found this strength in the Lord after several MONTHS of living in a compromising situation. **It is often quite difficult for us to seek God when we know we have been living outside of God’s direct guidance.** We often let this KEEP US from seeking God because we do not feel worthy. We are

not ever worthy! The sheer desperation of David's heart worked to drive him toward the God that he had so often trusted. He knew there was nowhere else to turn. **God is quite good at using our own foolishness to put us in such tight spots that we can only look up to him for any possible help.** And how remarkable is it that God would choose to help us in moments like this. Oh, how great is his MERCY and LOVE!

This passage reminds me of a verse in Isaiah that encourages us to find our strength in God by WAITING on (Hoping in) him. **Isaiah 40:30-31 NIV**

30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

The STRENGTH that David found was demonstrated in several ways:

-He actively sought God. He did not just FEEL better. He REPENTED and turned to God for help. Here, his repentance is seen by how he turned to God. We have not seen him do this since chapter 26. Furthermore, David did not use his energy to seek OUTSIDE resources. He did not chase after other kings to help him fight the enemy. He did not look to false comforters. He turned his grief toward God and sought his FACE.

-He asked the right questions. [Not bitter questions, but action questions.]

We too often just ask, "Why did you make this happen, God? Why are you punishing me? Why, why, why? Instead, David asked, "What do you want me to do?"

*David called for the EPHOD and asked God, "Shall I pursue the raiders?"

God's response not only promised that David would overtake them, but that he would RESCUE ALL those that were taken. This was NEW INFORMATION that indicated that their families had not been killed and that they would indeed get them ALL back.

-The NASB confirms this by using the word CERTAINLY two times!

DAVID TRUSTED GOD'S GUIDANCE.

God's word seemed too good to be true, but David demonstrated a heart of FAITH by ACTING on God's words. He did not seek a second opinion, or spend time discussing with his men whether or not they should move forward. In fact, he moved forward so quickly that some of the men became too weary to continue pursuing the raiders. But David did not stop! **1 Samuel 30:9-19 NIV**

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. 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.**

David and his men were enabled by God to rescue ALL that was lost to them. This was a moment of great joy and celebration! **The men gladly declared, "This is David's plunder!"** David would later make it clear who the plunder actually belonged to.

1 Samuel 30:20-31 NIV

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." 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." 27 David sent it to those who were in Bethel, Ramoth Negev and Jattir; 28 to those in Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa 29 and Rakal; to those in the towns of the Jerahmeelites and the Kenites; 30 to those in Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athak 31 and Hebron; and to those in all the other places where he and his men had roamed.

200 of David's men had been too exhausted to continue on to the fight with the raiders, so they stayed with the baggage. When the battle was over, some of David's men wanted to punish them for not going to the battle, but David made a decree that those who **"stay by the stuff"** will receive an equal portion with those that go to war. This was seen EARLIER in David's practice in **1 Samuel 25:13**, when he left 200 men with the baggage and took 400 with him to fight Nabal.

DAVID DECLARED THAT THE VICTORY BELONGED TO THE LORD.

Some of David's men stated that they would not give any of the spoil to those that stayed behind because they alone had **"RESCUED"** their families and livestock themselves. **"Rescue" = "to deliver oneself, to snatch away."** This word indicates a sense of **SELF-ACHIEVEMENT** rather than a sense of **GRATITUDE** for God's

help and power. The ones that led the charge in denying spoil to the 200 that stayed by the stuff were described as “**WICKED and WORTHLESS.**” They were godless men who only wanted spoil for themselves. It is often people of base character like this who make the most NOISE. David did not stay SILENT at this point. David’s response to their proud and selfish words was decidedly different. **He made it clear that GOD had given them this victory and that the spoil they recovered had been GIVEN to them by God!** He used very clear language to ensure that the men knew that God had PROTECTED them and had himself DELIVERED the Amalekites into their hands. This was no time for boastful pride, but only for grateful generosity. David was indeed generous to his own men as well as to many in Judah who were blessed by the spoil God had provided. This was a wise use of the abundance that God had given to David.

The end result of this terrible event turned wonderful was that David was left with what was truly precious. **His hiding place was no longer livable, so he could no longer stay in the land of the Philistines. God burned that bridge!** But God had also done something else during another battle that would allow David to return triumphantly to his homeland. What had at once seemed like the END would soon be recognized as the BEGINNING. God built that bridge!

What are some bridges that need burning in your life today? **[Relationships/Hiding Places/Sketchy Resources/etc.].** What will it take to burn them? If God burns them, will you be BITTER, or will you find your strength in God and look for the bridges he is building for you?

Will you trust God for the burning and building of bridges in your life? Will you choose to find your strength in God when it looks like hope is lost? That is where God gets the most glory and we get the most good.

Let’s pray.

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Southaven Campus
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Start talking

Talk about a time you burned a bridge in your life that needed to be burned.

Start thinking.

Why does God so often allow us to face troubles in our lives?

Start sharing.

[Read 1 Samuel 30:1-6a](#). Why was this a crucial turning point in David's life? Why do you think we so often give in to bitterness and despair when hit with terrible troubles?

[Read 1 Samuel 30:6b-8 and Isaiah 40:30-31](#). What does it mean to "find strength in the Lord your God," and how do you do this? Why do shame and sorrow often keep us from seeking God? What do David's questions and his subsequent actions reveal to you about his faith?

[Read 1 Samuel 30:16-31](#). How was David's perspective about their victory and the "plunder" different from his men's viewpoint? Why were David's words and actions so important as a leader in that moment?

How was this story an end to David's double-life?

Start praying.

Ask God what he wants you to do in your current suffering.

Start doing.

Praise God for bridges he has burned (or is burning) in your life.