

Encouraging Yourself in the Lord

by Chuck Smith

David's example shows us the importance of turning to God in times of trouble and finding encouragement and strength in Him.

Duration: 31:43

Topics: "Encouragement"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the impact of terrorism on our lives and the fears it has brought. He acknowledges the loss of jobs and the economic downturn caused by these events. Despite the discouragement and uncertainty about the future, the speaker encourages turning to the Lord for comfort and strength. He emphasizes the importance of finding encouragement in the Word of God during times of disaster and highlights the goal of terrorists to instill fear in people's hearts. The speaker concludes with a prayer for those troubled by the state of the world, asking for God's help, guidance, and comfort.

Transcript

When people are mocking us and saying, where is your God now, that we can put our confidence in you, our trust in you, and truly, Lord, our hope is in you. We pray, Father, for those today who are troubled over the conditions of the world, that we, Lord, might turn to you for help, for strength, for guidance, for comfort. May your Holy Spirit minister to us this morning through the study of the Word.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen. You may be seated. Well, as Dave announced, we'll be finishing the book of Samuel this evening, chapters 30 and 31.

Next week we'll start 2 Samuel, and so we would encourage you to get into 2 Samuel and start reading the first three chapters, as we'll be moving on in our journey through the Bible. This morning we'd like to draw your attention to Samuel chapter 30, verse 6. Here we read, And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, and because the soul of all of the people were grieved, every man for his son and for his daughters. But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

It had been a very discouraging, stressful day, for David and his men had returned from the battlefield to the little village of Ziklag, and they found that their village had been pillaged by terrorists. In the absence of the men who had gone off to war, these terrorists had come in, and they had left the village in ashes. The men's families were gone.

All of their valuables were gone. There was nothing but ashes left. Somehow in a convoluted way, David's men were sort of blaming David for this tragedy.

Perhaps it was because David had encouraged them to go off to war. They were reluctant to do so, and when they get home, they find that their enemies had taken advantage of their absence, and had come in and destroyed their village, leaving it burnt with fire. Their families were gone.

They knew not what had happened to them. And the men, tough men as they were, wept until they could weep no more. And as they were even talking about stoning David, it said, David encouraged himself in the Lord.

We do read that David was greatly distressed. He felt that emotion that's created by the combination of shock and anger. Shock that their enemies would do such a thing.

Anger in the desire to retaliate against someone who would be guilty of such a dastardly thing. The emotions that David felt were probably somewhat akin to the emotions that we felt on September the 11th. As we watched in horror, as those planes were deliberately flown into the Twin Towers of New York and the Pentagon, my first reaction was that of unbelievable shock.

It was surrealistic. I could not believe what my eyes were seeing, that it was actually happening. My second response was that of great anger.

Anger against a people who could be so blinded by their religion that they could deliberately destroy innocent lives, somehow thinking that their God would be pleased and reward them handsomely for this dastardly deed. The next reaction was more of a rational response, when I thought that such irrational people must be stopped at any cost, for if they're allowed to continue in their murderous ways, the world would be safe for no one. I think that these were the emotions that were going through the mind of David when he came to Ziggag and found that the city had been looted and burned by the enemies.

The families were gone and they didn't know if they were dead or alive. David and his men wept until they could cry no more. It's interesting that our first response as a nation to this disaster in New York was that of national mourning.

You could feel it. There was a heaviness in the air as we all felt that sense of grief for those people who had perished in the Twin Towers. And then the grief for the wives and the families of those men who would not be returning home.

The wives and the families of the fire personnel that were caught and destroyed in that tragedy, weeping for the families whose daughters, wives, mothers were consumed in the tragedy. Mourning for those who had lost their loved ones. David weeping with his men until they could weep no more.

And it was at this point that David encouraged himself in the Lord. Certainly there was nothing in the situation that would bring encouragement or comfort. He had to turn to the Lord to find comfort, strength, and encouragement.

And so today in tragedy we learn to turn to the Lord for our comfort and for encouragement. And it's amazing how much encouragement we can actually receive from the Word of God in the times of disaster. The word terrorist describes exactly what they seek to do.

They seek to strike terror and fear in the hearts of the people. And you might say that they were very successful at this primary goal. For our nation has been gripped with fear and with terror.

Many people are now afraid to fly. Many people are now afraid to go into tall buildings. But in reality, the psalmist said in 118, the Lord is on my side.

What can man do unto me? Well what can they do? Well they could kill me. But so what? To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. If that's the worst thing that can happen to me, that's not bad.

Why should I fear? David said, I will not fear though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. I will fear no evil for thou art with me. Paul on his way to Jerusalem was warned by the Spirit of God that when he came to Jerusalem he would be bound and imprisoned.

So Paul's friends sought to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem. They began to cry and beg Paul not to go. And Paul said, what do you mean by these tears? I'm not afraid to go to Jerusalem.

I'm not afraid of being bound. I'm ready to die for Christ. For Paul had said, for me to live is gain.

Or for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. You know a lot of times if you just figure the worst thing that can happen to you and you look at it and say, well that's not too bad. It can give you encouragement and strength to do daring things.

When my brother and I were young, my dad used to park our trailer at a place called Camp Comfort near Ojai, California. And we would spend several days there fishing and swimming in the creek. And on the weekends quite often the large companies would have uh sort of company barbecues, steak fries.

And so when they would have these big company steak fries, my brother and I would smell those steaks were being barbecued there and I'd say, let's go over and we'll just mix with the kids. And they won't know, but we're part of somebody's family. And we'll just go up and get a steak, you know, have lunch.

The worst thing they can do is kick us out. So we would go and we would mix and we'd go up and hold out our plate and get our steak and just enjoy. Figuring that the worst thing thing is kick us out.

And we've been kicked out of better parties, so why worry? Paul the Apostle figured the worst thing they could do would be to kill him. But for me to live is Christ, to die is gain. How did David encourage himself in the Lord? Well, first of all, we read that he inquired of the Lord.

That is, he prayed. He sought guidance from the Lord. And through prayer he did receive directions.

The Lord said, you are to pursue after them. And then he received a promise of comfort, for the Lord said, you will overtake them and you will recover everything that was taken. Oh, how his heart was encouraged and strengthened through prayer and through the promise that the Lord had given to him.

Jesus said that men ought always to pray and not to faint. But how often we find ourselves fainting instead of praying. And the reason we are fainting is because we weren't praying.

Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

In the psalm that we read this morning, we saw David encouraging himself in the Lord. He asked himself the question, why are you cast down, oh my soul? Why are you disquieted in me? Why are you so discouraged and upset? Perhaps this psalm was written when David was fleeing for his life from Saul. Or perhaps this psalm was written on this very occasion when they came home to Ziggag, found the city burned, their families gone, the city had been looted.

And in this time of great distress, perhaps it was at this time that David said, why are you cast down, oh my soul? Why are you disquieted within me? For we read that he was greatly distressed and the people were ready to stone him. Here in the psalm, David speaks of the problems. And the people were saying to him, where is your God now? It's interesting that this was a question that was asked many times after the Twin Towers.

Where was God when this happened? Why did God allow this to happen? And people oftentimes ask that question in the times of distress or tragedy. David encouraged himself in the Lord. Having asked himself the question, why are you cast down, oh my soul? Why are you disquieted within me? He answered himself and he said, hope thou in God.

And that is the answer to our fears, to our anxieties. The answer is, hope thou in God. Put your trust in the Lord, for he shall yet deliver you.

Why do we become cast down and disquieted? It's because we are prone to leave God out of the equation. We are prone to weigh the problem with our strength. Measure the difficulty with our ability.

Consider the situation in the light of our resources. Yes, it is too heavy for me, but it isn't too heavy for God. Yes, it is beyond my capacity, but it's not beyond God's capacities.

Of course, I don't have enough resources, but God has enough resources. You see, if you put God into the problem, the problem is automatically solved. Hope thou in God.

Bring God into the equation. And the fear, the distress, the anxiety goes. Our enemies have displayed the power to strike us with a telling blow.

We are being warned that there can be other attacks, biological attacks, chemical attacks. We see the anthrax fear that has now gripped our nation. Just this past week, the post office behind us was evacuated because they found some powder.

Last night, after the service, some women came to Pastor Dave and there was some powder on one of the pews here in the church and they were all excited. People were standing back and all. And David went up and he put his finger in and licked it.

He said, that's okay. It was just talcum powder. Someone had powdered their baby or something.

Someone said the reason why they postponed the Emmy Awards is that the emcee was afraid to say, hand me the envelope, please. We're being warned that there is the possibility of limited nuclear attacks. And we at the present time are busily engaged in striking back at the enemy to restrict their abilities to continue the attacks against our nation.

But already our whole standard of living has been altered tremendously. Many of the liberties we once have, have been curtailed. Our finances have been greatly hurt by the attack.

This past week, because of the death of a very close friend of the family, we had to fly to Phoenix for the services. We went through a double security check at the airport. You can't go up to the gate without passing the security check and having a ticket to fly.

You can no longer go up to the gate to say goodbye to your friends. You can no longer go to the gates to greet your friends that are coming in on a flight. Our liberties have been greatly curtailed because of the fears.

Many have been laid off from work, lost their jobs. Our economy has taken a great hit. And it's quite possible that we'll never be the same again as we were before the terrorist brought terror into the hearts of so many people.

It is often discouraging to try to contemplate the future. What will be the outcome? Is there really an answer to terrorism? And as David, we have to often just encourage ourselves in the Lord. He will yet deliver us.

God has given to us so many wonderful promises in the scripture, promises to help us, promises to be with us in the time of our trouble. David had a lot to say about trouble because he was in a trouble a lot. He said, the Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

For in the time of trouble, he shall hide me in his pavilion. In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me and he shall set me up upon a rock. Thou art my hiding place.

Thou shalt preserve me from trouble. Thou shalt come pass me about with songs of deliverance. But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.

He is their strength in the time of trouble. God is our refuge and our strength, the very present help in trouble. For he has delivered me out of all trouble.

A lot of assurances for the times of trouble. God will be our refuge. God will be our strength.

God will deliver us. Listen to the promise of God in Psalm 91 verse 14. God said, because he has set his love upon me, therefore I will deliver him.

I will set him on high because he has known my name. He shall call upon me and I will answer him and I will be with him in trouble and I will deliver him and honor him. Note the conditions.

Because he has set his love upon me, because he has known my name, he shall call upon me. Those are the conditions. Loving God, knowing God, calling upon God.

What is the promise? I will deliver him and honor him in the time of trouble. Today it's quite possible that many of you have been personally affected as the consequences of the terrorist attacks. It could be that some of you have lost your jobs or are in danger of losing your jobs because of its effect upon our economy.

In the days to come, no doubt we're going to hear more reports of anthrax. And we don't know yet the source of the anthrax, whether or not it is the Muslim terrorist or if it's just some nut that's doing this. There will be many other things designed to strike fear and terror in our hearts, to create a feeling of distress.

And of course, the purpose of terrorism is to sort of immobilize you because of fear, to disable you. But because we have put our trust in the Lord, we need not fear, though we be led into the valley of the shadow of death. And in the times of distress and despair, sort of that feeling of helplessness and hopelessness, like David, you need to just encourage yourself in the Lord.

Turn to the Word of God and the promises of God, and you will find His strength, His comfort, and His deliverance. Let's pray. Father, we are living in stressful days, days of uncertainty.

And Lord, we need Your help. We need that kind of relationship with You, that kind of confidence that You're on the throne, that You're in control, knowing that if God before us, who can be against us? Lord, today there are those who are living in fear. We pray, Father, that You would comfort them.

There are those, Lord, who are in trouble, in trouble because of the economy and things that are happening in the world in which we live. May they find, Lord, encouragement in You, as they turn to You and seek You for that help. We thank You, Lord, that You've promised that You would hear us and You would deliver us.

And so, Father, in these days, help us that we would indeed encourage ourselves in the Lord, as did David, that You might lead us, Lord, into the recovery of all that the enemy has sought to take away. In Jesus' name, amen. Shall we stand? This morning, the pastors are down here at the front, and they're here to pray for you.

If you're in any kind of trouble at all, marital trouble, family trouble, financial trouble, physical trouble, our God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we could ask or think. And He has said, if two or more of you will agree on earth concerning anything, it will be done. And so they're here to agree with you that God will meet your needs today.

So as soon as we're dismissed, we would encourage you to come forward and let these men pray with you and pray for you that you might indeed experience God's help, God's guidance, God's strength. May the Lord be with you. May He watch over and keep you in His love.

And may you have that consciousness of His closeness and of His tender concern for you as His child. May you hear Him say, fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God, and I will strengthen you.

I will help you. And may you receive God's help and strength in your hour of need. In Jesus' name.

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

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