

Read also Acts 4:23-32. Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Do you remember your first home after becoming an adult? It might have been an apartment; you might have been newly on your own or newly married and establishing your first “place.” Remember how good it felt to arrange the furniture—you know, that *E.M. Furniture Brand* . . . commonly called “early marriage.”

Remember setting up a bookcase of two pieces of plywood and six cinderblocks?

And the “a la naturel” kitchen table that you bought at the resale shop? Then there was the hand-me-down bed and chest from your parents, with the living room chairs that the cat had clawed holes in the back that they were getting rid of?

My first apartment was about 350 square feet and we were so proud. It was home. (Wish I had pictures. ☺)

You had your own place and no matter what the size, with it came a sense of identity.

David and his men had been living in the wilderness for probably ten years. Little by little David’s followers had grown until there were six hundred men with him. These were not all single men. They had wives and children, living kind of a semi-permanent existence as they moved about to escape Saul’s army. They needed a place to settle down. So David, who couldn’t work things out with Saul, made a deal with the king of Gath, a Philistine. (See map) King Achish knew David was a successful soldier so in hopes of eventually being able to defeat Israel, he made a political alliance with him. David led Achish to believe he had left Israel for good.

This was certainly deceptive, but for self-protection and provision for his men, this is what David did. So David and his men were given the city of Ziklag in which to live. *Ahhh, finally—a place to settle*—David and his two wives and the men with their families.

Well, King Achish called David to battle alongside the rest of the Philistines in a planned attack against Israel, which put David in a huge bind. But when they arrived, the other Philistine kings said, “No way, we’re not fighting together with him; he’ll turn against us.” And they sent David and his army back home.

It took them three days to march back to Ziklag. They had marched for six days so were pretty tired. As they approached the village, they saw smoke rising on the horizon. As they drew closer and closer panic set in. A raiding band of Amalekites had come down on their town, captured their wives and children, carried off everything they owned, and burned the town to the ground.

Catastrophe.

The feeling must have been absolutely overwhelming. Everything they had was gone. They cried until they had no more strength to weep.

It would be like all of you living in one neighborhood and going away on retreat and then coming home and Duncanville was burning to the ground and your family was unaccounted for.

David lost everything, too.

Then his men turned on him because they were so bitter about the loss. They talked of stoning him!

So what did he do? What would you do? David found strength in the Lord.

He raced to the priest. Remember in Nob, how Saul ordered all the priests to be killed for harboring David and one escaped? And David took in that priest because he felt responsible for all of that? That priest's name was Abiathar. So now David sought his help saying, "We've got to pray!" And Abiathar grabbed his ephod.

Have you ever used something when you pray, like a cross or a rosary or a picture of Jesus or something that helps you feel more confident when you pray? A friend used to set out two mugs when she prayed—one for Jesus and one for her. That is like an ephod; or an icon. That was the habit at the time of David. David used the ephod. We don't know if it was a piece of cloth or picture or figure. But he prayed:

"Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?" God answered him, "Pursue; for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue" (1 Samuel 30:8).

Victory lies ahead, David heard in prayer.

Now is that your experience? Could you say confidently that you heard something in prayer and confidently accepted it as your reality? How much confidence do you have in prayer? Or, are you as anxious when you end prayer as you are before you pray?

Not that it is usual to hear so clear and distinct an answer, or that this is your average prayer. But think about the qualities of listening in prayer, and boldly obeying. Would you consider praying more open mindedly? *God, should I do this?* And then listening more for direction, with a willingness to follow?

That is how David found strength. He let prayer—closeness with God—strengthen and direct him at this time of huge distress.

So they all set out, but they were ill-prepared. They had just marched for six days; they were demoralized by the disaster; they didn't trust David, and so two hundred of them stopped short of the goal. Too exhausted, they gave up.

The rest pushed on and soon they happened upon the most unusual person; an Egyptian; an Amalekite slave, lying there right in their path, sick and abandoned.

How obvious is God?

Here's the answer! Most armies would have marched right over the man or made sport of him. But we don't have your average army. We have David and the Good Samaritan Army. So what comes next is predictable:

They feed him and give him something to drink and even give him desert of a fig cake and a couple of raisin muffins to nourish him back to health.

They are regular moms. He's revived and David talks to him, and he told them everything they need to know to find who had done this grievous thing.

See how God's ways always pay off?

See how God blesses those who follow him in action and attitude? Sometimes we think to trust God is so difficult and yet here God just throws the answer to a great disaster right in the middle of their path.

What is your disaster? Even though crisis may come, God greatly overcomes it all when we have confidence in Him and turn to Him in prayer.

The man in the road led David and his army right to the Amalekites who had taken their family members and while the attackers "were gorging themselves on all the loot they had plundered. . . David pounced." (Eugene Peterson, *The Message*) His victory was sure. He rescued his own wives and every single one of the wives and children, young and old, even down to every bit of what had been taken from them.

It was a great victory! All because of God!

But then as the four hundred returned and saw the two hundred men who hadn't gone waiting there to welcome them back, some of the four hundred wanted to keep all the bounty for themselves. But in God's world it's not that way.

David said:

"Families don't do this sort of thing! Oh no, my brothers!" said David as he broke up the argument. "You can't act this way with what God gave us! God kept us safe. He handed over the raiders who attacked us. Who would ever listen to this kind of talk? The share of the one who stays with the gear is the share of the one who fights—equal shares. Share and share alike!" From that day on, David made that the rule in Israel—and it still is. (1 Sam. 30:23-25)

Not only that, David sent portions of the plunder to the elders of Judah, his neighboring countrymen to the north with a note saying, "A gift from the plunder of God's enemies!" (vs. 26)

That's the way it was in the Old Testament. When we fast forward to the New Testament, that same spirit continues. You heard it. As the disciples worked on the front lines to share the gospel, in the up and down crises of life, they were all of one heart and soul, sharing with each other in generous spirit.

It's the same now for us.

David had growing confidence in God and confidence in prayer. Is your confidence growing?
May you experience great victory in prayer.

AMEN