



and taken much spoil. But this was not all that David had to face. His men rose up against him, a mutiny broke out and they were about to stone him. And our text tells us what David did in the crisis. To all appearances he did nothing. Was he agitated? No. Was he cast down? No. Did he try to humour his men and plead with them to remain loyal? No. Did he defend himself before them? No. What did he do? He encouraged himself in the Lord his God. His soul found hope where there seemed to be no hope. He endured as seeing One who is invisible. He was strengthened when there was nothing tangible to lean upon.

## I. THE NEED OF ENCOURAGEMENT.

1. I am not asking anybody to cross the bridge before he comes to it--I am not suggesting that you worry about the future--but all of us have streams of crises to cross and in many cases there will not even be any bridge over the stream. But there will be something better than any bridge if we can say, "The Lord is my God."

There are crises--desperate situations--awful emergencies for us all out yonder in tomorrow's future. I cannot name many of them for certain. It may be financial adversity, lack of employment without compensation. It may be a fatal illness in which you may linger without hope of healing. It may be shame and disgrace brought upon you by Godless children. It may be rebellion in your own home. I can name one crisis that confronts us all--the crisis of death and the grave. To whom will you look in that hour? Where will you find courage for that ordeal? Will you look to this world and its pleasures? Will you turn to those who now turn you away from God and His house? Will you find comfort and courage in the hour of death where you are finding pleasure in these days of life? Will the thought of the Sundays you have spent outside of God's house of worship fill you with peace? Will the thought of money wasted on such things as cigarettes and other trash give you a peaceful death-bed? Will the thoughts of the vulgar and impure speech you laughingly spoke fill your soul with joy and peace when you come to enter eternity? David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

2. The emergencies of God's people are in the present day of grace; the emergencies of the lost will be in the day of judgment. As a rule, lost people who are what we call moral people--people who live what we call respectable lives--are apt to have less trouble than the saved. It is written that many are the afflictions of the righteous. Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom. In the world ye shall have tribulation, etc. David once stumbled on this point. He saw the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper and his feet began to slip--he became skeptical--but when he went to God's house and saw their latter end--when he saw the miseries of the wicked in the other world, he understood.

Think of the burdens lost people do not have here. They do not have the burdens we saints have. They have no conscious responsibility of supporting the church of God. They can spend all their money on themselves. They have no conscious burden of providing a church house and supporting the ministry at home and abroad. They have no light bills to pay and no janitor to pay to take care of God's house. Think of the financial burden they escape. Couldn't some of God's

little children have a big vacation on what they give in tithes and offerings? The lost seem to have a freedom that we saints do not seem to have. We do not feel free to follow the lusts of the flesh and lie up in bed on Sunday morning or leave for the lake or go to see a show. We are constrained to do different. It is a constraint of love so that after all we are just about as happy in the Lord's house as the lost are on the bed or at a show or on the lakeside.

## II. THE HOW OF ENCOURAGEMENT.

How to meet the crises of life. David encouraged himself in the Lord. How did he do this? How can we do it?

1. We are to realize that God is the master of every situation. What was too much for David was not too much for the Lord. What is too much for us is not too much for the Lord.

2. David realized the truth of Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." This truth had not been written in a book, but it had been written on the heart of David. If Jehovah was his God then nothing could ultimately hurt him--but all things--loss of family and property, loss of loyalty of his men, loss of life if it came to that, would be for his good.

3. David called Jehovah his God. In the crisis the only possession David had in all the world, except his clothes he had on his back, was his God. Everything else was gone--his property carried off by raiders, his home a smouldering ruins, his wives and children captives and in the possession of other men. But the Amalekites had not stolen his God. He could no longer say, "My house, my city, my possessions," but he could still say, "My God." Whatever else we lose as long as we have him, we are rich and ready for any crisis.

4. "Trust in the Lord and do good." Trust in the Lord will keep us from turning to other expedients--sometimes sinful expedients--in the hour of trial and trouble. If we trust in the Lord we will not let financial difficulties keep us from his house. If we trust in the Lord we will not try to drown our troubles in drink or pleasure--we will cast them upon Him, and He will care for us. Man's reaction to trouble reveals what he is.

In conclusion it might be said that the darkest moment in David's life was the moment before the darkness broke. Three days after this there came a fugitive into the camp with the news that Saul was dead and that David was the king. "Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag; It came even to pass on the third day that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance. And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped. And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered,

That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also!" (II Sam. 1:1-4). "And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah" (II Sam. 2:4).

We may not be able to rejoice in present conditions, but we can rejoice in hope of a better day. And this hope will give patience and steadfastness in the day of affliction, for hope sees an end to them. And while hoping and suffering, we can keep on praying. Just as David did, we also can encourage ourselves in the Lord our God!

— By the late C. D. Cole