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THE SECRET OF COURAGE

BY: C. D. COLE

"...But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God," I Samuel 30:6.

Introduction: The passage before us describes just about as serious situation as could confront any man. David had just about reached the bottom of human misery and woe. And there was nothing hopeful in sight that this world could offer. Like Abraham he had to hope against hope. A crisis was upon him; the situation was entirely too much for him. He had long been hunted by Saul, king of Israel, to whom he had given every respect and loyalty. To escape Saul's rage and persistent persecution David had taken refuge in the country of the Philistines. He had gathered around himself as all leaders do, a band of desperate men, like himself, and was living much like a freebooter or outlaw. He had found hospitality in the little town of Ziklag, and he and his men had joined the army of the Philistines which was preparing to attack Saul and Israel. Naturally, the Philistines would doubt their ally and feared them, so David and his men were dismissed from the army and went back to their home in Ziklag.

But when he and his men reached Ziklag they found it a heap of smoking ruins. Everything was gone what had not gone up in flames had fled or had been captured and taken away. David's two wives, his children, the cattle and all were missing all was desolation. The Amalekites had attacked the city during the absence of David and his warriors. They had burned the city 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 humor 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.

The Need of Encouragement

I. 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 deathbed? Will the thought 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.

Who was David's God? It was the Lord--Jehovah--the self-existent and ever-existent God. David's God was Jesus Christ whom David delighted to call Lord. The eternal Word who became flesh was named Jesus, which means Jehovah saves, has been the only true hope of men in all ages.

II. 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

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CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

What It Is and How To Use It!

BY: C. D. COLE

Galatians 5:13-16, "For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

Introduction: In Galatians 5:1, Paul exhorts the Galatians and us to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with a yoke of bondage." And now in verse 13 he warns against the abuse of this Christian liberty. Here is ample proof that the doctrine of justification by faith apart from any works is true. Otherwise this exhortation would not be needed. If Paul had been preaching justification by works he would have had no reason for such an exhortation. We who preach salvation by grace through faith without works should also warn against the abuse of the doctrine. The man who pretends to be saved by grace and then uses the truth as an excuse for sinning, shows that he is not in grace. In Paul's day as in our day, there were those who said, "If the law is satisfied by Christ and we are saved by faith in Him so saved that we cannot be lost, then we can go on in a life of sin." To such an objector Spurgeon once said, "Man, you talk like that because you have not been born again." And we might add, that this is a beast-like argument. To say that because God is good I may act like a devil that because He saves me at infinite cost to Himself without any cost to me, I may feel I owe Him nothing that chosen in all eternity in Jesus Christ to be holy, I should see how unholy I can be--that being born again I

should show no spiritual breeding. Surely no man who has been born again, and is in a state of grace, thinks or argues like that. Paul gives the antidote for such reasoning in another place when he says: "We thus judge that if One died for all, then all died: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again."

What is Christian Liberty?

It is a state or condition the believer has before God in Christ, and a feeling that corresponds to this condition. "Free from the law, O happy condition; Jesus has died and there is remission." It is a state of justification and freedom from condemnation which we have in Christ. Romans 8:1, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*" See also John 8:36 and Galatians 5:1.

The feeling one has will be determined somewhat by the particular system of slavery he was under before he trusted Christ. The man who has been trying to be saved by keeping the ten commandments will feel relieved from the feeling of uncertainty and uneasiness he had while trying that way of salvation. The person who was in slavery to a heathen system in which he tried to appease the gods by self-torture will be happy to see the truth that salvation is the one sacrifice of Christ. Hebrews 9:26, "*For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*" In my own case a terrible load was lifted off my conscience when I saw that I did not have to establish my own righteousness by living a sinless life and that Christ is

made unto the believer wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. II Corinthians 5:21 tells us, "*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*" There has been much said and written about political freedom. All nations of people are freedom loving in regard to human laws and human rulers. The American Colonies could not stand any degree of slavery under England's laws, so they declared their independence and fought a war to win it.

Religious bondage is any system of religion that offers salvation at the price of human merit or works. Now Christ has made us free from bondage to any law that has a price tag on salvation. There was a price tag on salvation, but Christ took it off when He paid for it with His own precious blood.

How Are We Going to Use This Liberty?

A judicious interpreter says that Christian liberty is one thing and the way we use it is another thing. Christian liberty is an internal feeling we have in the presence of God; the use of it is the way we manifest it before men. The believer comes to God as Father, rejoicing in Christ, confessing his sins, happy in assured forgiveness, and hoping and longing to be perfectly whole. We enjoy our liberty in communion with God, happy that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, and that sin cannot have dominion over us because we are not under law but under grace. The Galatians were being pressured to give up their liberty in Christ and go into bondage to the law of man.

In telling the Galatians how to use their liberty in Christ, He says, "*Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by*

love serve one another." We shall try to lead you into the meaning of this exhortation and then discuss the motives by which Paul enforces it.

Don't use your freedom to gratify fleshly lusts, but by love serve one another. The flesh stands for human nature in man's fallen and depraved condition. It does not mean the body, but human desires as a fallen creature. The body is never the source of sin, but may be used as an instrument of sin. The human heart as the source of sin is never the physical organ. Matthew 15:19, *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies..."* Just as the heart is the receptacle of physical life, so the moral heart is the receptacle of spiritual life. Saving religion is heart religion in which there is love to God and man. And the way to use Christian liberty is to serve one another by love.

The two motives by which Paul enforces this exhortation are:

1. Love is the fulfillment of the law. As long as one is trying to be saved by keeping the law, he is not acting from love but purely from fear. But in liberty from the law as the way of salvation, the believer in Christ can act from the motive of love. And the way to fulfill the law as a rule of conduct is to love your neighbor. Paul quotes Leviticus 19:18, but does not use it just as Moses did. Neighbor with Moses is defined as "one of the children of thy people," that is a Jew or Israelite. But "neighbor" with Paul is equivalent to every man. Paul learned from Christ who our neighbor is. Christ tells us who our neighbor is in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:25) And in Romans 13:10 Paul tells us how love fulfills the law: *"Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."*

Another motive is drawn from the evil consequences of an opposite temper and disposition. *"But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."* The language here is highly figurative, although not obscure. By biting and devouring one another, the apostle refers to violent strifes and debates then going on among the Galatians because of the new views the Judaizing teachers had introduced. And

the result was that they were only hurting one another and also hurting the churches.

A quaint old writer says, "When dogs and wolves bite one another that is according to their nature, but it is sad indeed when sheep take to biting one another." And he also says, "I would rather be bitten by a dog outside the fold, than by a sheep in it. The bite of a fellow Christian is sharper than any other."

This sort of behavior will rend a church in pieces quicker than all the assaults of men and devils from the outside. Strife and contentions prevent edification within and conversion without.

J. Brown has said, "It is not the honest avowal of our convictions, but the unchristian temper in which they are avowed that produces so much mischief." Ephesians 4:15, *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."*

*"How sweet and heavenly is the sight
When those who love the Lord,
In one another's peace unite
And so fulfil His word.*

*When each can feel his brother's sigh,
And with him bear a part,
When sorrows flow from eye to eye,
And joy from heart to heart.*

*Love is the golden chain that binds
The happy souls above;
And he's a heir of heaven who finds
His bosom glow with love.*

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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 movie. 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 in the bed or at the movies or on the lakeside.

The How of Encouragement

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

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.

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, it came to that would be for his good.

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 smoldering 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.

"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.

Conclusion: 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!