

WHEN THE LAST CRUTCH IS GONE – WHEN ALL THAT’S LEFT IS GOD

Text: I Samuel 30 – 31

Setting: A battlefield in Philistia, a battle David couldn’t fight, and a larger battle that David couldn’t win without God.

David had been received with open arms by the king of Gath whose name was _____

The city was once the city of another great champion whose name was _____

It is interesting how God orchestrates the events of life. The most hated of adversaries is now the celebrated _____ of the Philistines. David, an Israelite, now fights their battles and champions their causes. David had become such a hero in Gath that King Achish gives him his own city named _____. The man without a country now owns a city where he and his men can call home. They all prosper there and become men of renown and wealth increases for all.

But a battle was in the making between the Philistines and _____. At the head of the Philistine army is King Achish and _____ was by his side. However, other Philistine leaders felt it unwise for David to fight the battle. After a convincing argument with Achish, David and his _____ men were sent home.

However, while they were away, the _____ destroyed and burned Ziklag and took all the women and children hostage. It was upon this scene that the last _____ is removed.

Let’s look back over the life of David and discuss together the removal of crutches and see if they relate to our lives and experiences

- The Crutch of _____ and _____ was removed from David’s life.
- The Crutch of the _____ of God and an _____ path to prosperity was taken away.
- The Crutch of a _____ life was replaced by a _____
- The Crutch of _____ and _____ were removed.
- The Crutch of _____ and _____ were left behind when he fled from Saul.
- The Crutch of _____ was a thing of the past.
- The Crutch of a _____ was sadly removed from his life.
- The Crutch of _____ and _____ seemed as distant as allies. There was no _____ for David.
- The Crutches of _____ and _____ were not in his nature.
- The Crutch of a loyal _____ no longer prevailed.
- The Crutch of the _____ of his men was the last crutch.
- David had nothing left to hold him up except _____.

I Samuel 30:6 in KJV says, “And David encouraged himself in the LORD his God. This may very well be one of the most important statements in all of Scripture. Jesus once asked His disciples if they were going to leave Him like everyone else had. Their response is critical to our thinking, “Where else can we go? You have the words of eternal life.” When everything is gone except God, it is there where we discover we have everything that matters most. It is there where greatness can begin if we are willing.

Eagle illustration: Life is about the removal of crutches. Eagles never learn to fly until forced from their nests, and they aren't invited to return to the nest. They have learned from their mother and father that things aren't given to you. You must earn what you have. You must build your nest and you must find your way. You will choose one spouse and live with that one spouse the rest of your life. You will never be disloyal to your chosen mate. You will learn to fly into the storms of life, when other birds flee, and you will soar to heights no other bird can soar. You are never given the option of fleeing because you are an eagle. Your position in life demands that you raise up other eagles and teach them to fly as you have been taught. You will be talked about in Scripture, chosen as the symbol of the greatest nations on earth, all other birds will wish they were you, and your name will always be spoken of when greatness is the conversation.

- Eagles never learn to fly until forced from their nest.
- Eagles are not invited to _____ to the nest.
- Eagles learn to _____ their own way in life.
- Eagles build their own nests and return to the same nest each year.
- Eagles choose one _____ for their entire life.
- Eagles are _____ to their mate.
- Eagles fly into the _____ while other birds flee.
- Eagles know that the storm will lift them to great heights.
- Eagles _____ other eagles.
- Eagles are spoken of in _____
- Eagles are the mascot of America.
- Eagles are revered by other birds.
- Eagles are the _____ of birds.

The Bible tells us to “mount up with wings as an eagle.”

David is now prepared. Saul will die in the battle against the Philistines. David will become the king of Israel. The thing to understand from this lesson is the preparation for greatness. Yes, the furnace is hot, but it is the furnace that refines the gold and makes it moldable.

Think of ways this is true in your life.

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Quote from Maria in the Sound of Music, "Mother Superior said, **When the Lord closes a door, somewhere he opens a window.**"

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Setting: At this juncture of David’s story, he has been received with open arms by King Achish of Gath, a city of the Philistines. The champion of Israel, with his 600 men, soon proves himself and becomes the champion of Gath, the very city of Goliath. This is not a short tenure and he serves his new king with the same expertise and loyalty that he had served King Saul. He also had the same outcomes in battle.

He becomes the darling of Gath and the favorite of King Achish. The King gives him his own town called Ziklag where he and his men prosper. During their time in Ziklag they become very wealthy and successful in war. One of their chief enemies is the land of the Amalekites, the sworn enemies of Israel. He plunders their cities and takes their possession.

The events that set the stage for I Samuel 30 is interesting. The Philistines, under the leadership of King Achish, and the Israelites, under the leadership of King Saul, were preparing for a major battle. David was prepared to fight with Achish on the side of Philistia. However, other leaders in the Philistine army thought it unwise for David to go to battle with them against his home country. Despite King Achish’s confidence in David, the other leaders prevailed and David was sent home to Ziklag to set out the battle.

When David and his men arrived at Ziklag, nothing but utter destruction could be seen. While David was away, the Amalekites had come upon Ziklag with force, vengeance, and fury. The city was plundered, the women and children had been taken captive, and the city was burned to the ground. Nothing remained but ashes.

Everyone wept until they could weep no more, and then the unthinkable happened - David’s mighty and loyal men thought, in their grief, to stone David to death. The last two crutches have been removed – Family and Friendship. Hold that thought before we move forward with the story.

Let’s digress and look back at David’s journey to this juncture. David came from humble beginnings, but he didn’t come from ashes. His story begins as the youngest born son in the household of Jesse. Though they were not rich in possessions, they were rich in love. They were healthy, well fed, and well respected in their hometown of Bethlehem. They prospered as a family in a town known as THE CITY OF BREAD. It was a farming community with green pastures and good water. What more could a shepherding family need?

When his brothers went off to become warriors in Saul’s army, David remained in the loving home of Jesse and took care of the sheep. He mastered skills with the weaponry he carried and with the harp he loved. He journaled his thoughts while keeping watch over his sheep. He formed a deep and lasting relationship with God into the wee hours of the morning. **But, as it is in life, the crutch of parental love and childhood innocence were soon to be removed.**

It is in that tenure of life that the Prophet Samuel arrives in Bethlehem to anoint the next King of Israel. The oil would flow down the cheeks of David. He was God’s man with God’s heart. Wow!!! Who would have ever thought that the youngest and smallest would be the chosen king? Who would have ever dreamed that a king could come from Bethlehem? But providence ordained it so, and David became the chosen one.

People do not forget such moments, moments where incredible things happen and God’s Spirit comes upon them in a mighty visitation. David wasn’t one to forget. The red carpet had been rolled out, but who would have ever dreamed that it would be rolled out over the road of adversity, hardship, and obstacles? Who would have conceived that the path to the throne would be by losing his country? Who would have conceived that the road

would be one of great loneliness and hardship? But, as we've witnessed, "God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts." **The crutch of the promises of God and an easy path would seemingly be removed.**

The next scene of David's story was playing the harp in the palace of King Saul. Saul's departure from God's chosen path had led to mental decay and moral failure. Insanity began to crop up in his life and evil spirits were regular visitors. Knowing the power of music and the skillful excellence of David playing the harp, one of Saul's servants convinced Saul to bring David to the palace to play music. David's skillful hand and the anointing of God upon his music caused peace in a palace of great turmoil. The change was so dramatic and powerful that David was chosen to live in a palace instead of in a field with sheep. The kingly lifestyle sure felt good, but in all things in David's life, this would end. **The crutch of a life of ease would soon be replaced by sleeping on battlefields.**

David was allowed to go home during the time he spent in the palace, and when he did so he would gravitate to the fields with the sheep he loved. During one of these times away from the palace, Israel found itself on a battlefield with a mighty Philistine army advancing into their territory. And to top it off, they had a giant as their mascot named Goliath. He was a mighty warrior who intimidated and destroyed hardened warriors.

It was on that battlefield where David was sent to deliver cheese and bread to his brothers. It was on that battlefield where he would stand where no one else would stand, fight where no one else would fight, and win a battle no one else thought could be won. It was there that the fame of David would go out to the ends of the earth. His name would become a household name and would be written down in the books of life. He would be propped up by the cheers and applause of a nation. But David's time at the top would soon end. **The crutches of fame and glory were never designed to hold up the people of God.**

Might and greatness deserve a platform and David would be no exception to the rule. His next crutch would be an army of men. True to form, David performed exceptionally. His military prowess was second to none and his exploits were so great that he soon became the darling of Israel and songs of his greatness were sung far and wide. Greatness and exceptionalism are great crutches to lean on, but King Saul would not allow anyone to steal his thunder. Forced by Saul to flee his homeland, David found himself living in caves with no guarantee of tomorrow. **The crutch of safety and security were left laying in the dirt.**

Job security and the hope for something better in life is a paramount need of life. David lost both. He couldn't return to the fields to shepherd his father's sheep. He couldn't go to anyone in all of Israel and expect they would risk their lives to provide him resources. He couldn't go to another country at that time because his reputation as a sworn enemy and proven warrior made him a threat. David had no place to turn. **The crutch of job security was a thing of the past.**

But David had hope in a friend. David had become the best friend of Jonathan, Saul's son, while in the palace. And Jonathan was the real deal. He was always faithful to David and never teetered from his faithfulness. He helped David against his own father when Saul wanted David dead. He was always there, always faithful, always a friend. Nothing could sever the tie. But the tie was parted by proximity. David lived in caves and Jonathan remained in Jerusalem. There was no internet by which to communicate. There were no cell phones to make a quick catch up phone call. Jonathan lived only in his memory. Sadly, Jonathan would die in battle before David would ever see him again. **The crutch of a best friend was removed.**

But a man cannot live life without crutches, and David's next crutch comes from an unusual place. It is in the form of the outcasts of society – the indebted – the distressed – the disillusioned – the disenchanted. As bad as they were, they were better than nothing. Despite their background and reputation, they proved to be loyal and mighty warriors. Under David's leadership they became men of renowned, feared by their enemies and adored by their commander. Through thick and thin, through hardships and toil, through battles and conquest they

followed David and became his most trusted allies. Their bond seemed unshakable. It was proven on battlefields and had never faltered. Could such a bond be challenged and altered? Sadly, as it is with all things, the answer is yes. The day would come where loyalty would be put to the ultimate test. We will return to this thought.

Weaponless and homeless, David sought the help of Ahimelech and his household. Ahimelech was the priest of the LORD and he gave David food and provision for his journey. The crutch of God's favor was rewarding to the one who seemed to be life's outcast. But the feeling of God's favor would be short lived when word arrived from the only survivor of Ahimelech's family in the camp of David. Abiathar, Ahimelech's son, delivered the horrid news of the annihilation of his entire family at the hands of Saul. The Prophet Samuel was nowhere to be found, the priests of God were no longer existent, no person in their right mind would give David aid. An enemy on one front and an Saul pursuing from behind. Was there any hope in such a hopeless situation? **The crutches of hope and help seemed but distant allies. There was no welfare system to be had in David's life.**

Religion is always a good fallback, but now that was no longer available. With the slaughter of Ahimelech and his household, no prophet or priest would dare help. Helping David was not allowed. He would have to fend for himself because everyone feared giving him aid. The only person who seemingly was fearless was the Prophet Samuel, but David hadn't been heard from since that day when he arrived to pour the anointing oil on the head of David with the promise of a throne. That seemed like a lifetime in the past. At this stage of the journey, the promised throne seemed an unlikely hope. A bed with a pillow seemed an unlikely hope. Even tomorrow's food seemed a distant hope to David as his stomach growled in the middle of the night. God seemed distant. **The crutch of hope and aid from the world of religion was lost.**

There was, however, another crutch. Justifiable vengeance. Saul was unfit to lead a kingdom. He was incapable of leading himself. He had given up every right to existence on earth by his slaughter of 80 priests of God from Ahimelech's house. Nothing about Saul deserved the position he held. Twice David could have killed him. Twice David had opportunity to take what was rightfully his – the throne of Israel. Twice David refused to act against better judgment and to live by a different guide in life – The Promise Of God. The kingdom was not his to take – It was God's to give. Twice he spared the life of the one determined to extinguish his life. Would God honor David's belief that Saul was God's originally anointed king? We know God did, but before He did, there were crutches to remove. **The crutches of justice and revenge were no longer under his arms.**

We are drawing closer to the final crutch being removed. David finds an ally in King Achish of Gath, a Philistine. Not only does he take David in as an ally, but they form a close friendship and bond. Under his leadership, David and his men prospered. His portfolio increased dramatically, his military prowess was again on full display, and he's given a city named Ziklag for he and his men to call home. But allies come and go, and, as we saw earlier in this story, David would not be allowed to fight alongside Achish in the battle against Saul. David, for the first time in his life, was sent home to watch others fight. **The crutch of an ally no longer prevailed.**

David went home. Ziklag was no longer just a town in the countryside – Ziklag was David's town. It was the haven for him, his men, and their families. It was a place of rest for the weary warriors and sojourners of life. Somewhat discouraged by being sent home, David sees smoke in the distance and he and his men pick up their pace to see what had happened. When they crossed one of the hills, they saw the ashes of Ziklag. Nothing remained. Their wives, children, possessions, and lives were ashes. It is there, in moments of great grief, that one of the last crutches is removed – His men thought to stone him to death. **The crutch of loyalty from the men who had been loyal through everything was jerked out from under his arms in one instant and David teetered as never before in life. Would he be able to stand upright without a crutch under his arms?**

This is the turning point of life, the point where we have nothing remaining. Nothing, that is, except God. In the New Living Translation we read these words in I Samuel 30:6 – “David was now in great danger because all his men were very bitter about losing their sons and daughters, and they began to talk about stoning him. But David found strength in the LORD his God.” I love the way the King James Version states the ending, “But David

encouraged himself in the LORD his God.” There was nowhere else to go. God was all he had left. This most grueling of endings was soon to spring forth into the most glorious of victories.

David would no longer need a countryside city to sleep in at night. He would no longer need the provisions he and his men had to struggle to attain. He would soon be sleeping in the palace as a king. His rightful position was soon to come. A true to life Rags to Riches story is ready to be told.

Life is about the removal of crutches. Eagles never learn to fly until forced from their nests, and they aren't invited to return to the nest. They have learned from their mother and father that things aren't given to you. You must earn what you have. You must build your nest and you must find your way. You will choose one spouse and live with that one spouse the rest of your life. You will never be disloyal to your chosen mate. You will learn to fly into the storms of life, when other birds flee, and you will soar to heights no other bird can soar. You are never given the option of fleeing because you are an eagle. Your position in life demands that you raise up other eagles and teach them to fly as you have been taught. You will be talked about in Scripture, chosen as the symbol of the greatest nations on earth, all other birds will wish they were you, and your name will always be spoken of when greatness is the conversation.

David was an eagle. God calls each of us to be the same. But before you will fly, you must first realize you aren't a cripple limping through life like an invalid. You must choose to rise and walk. You must choose victory over victimhood. If you don't, you'll always need crutches.

Here's the end of the story. When the crutches of life are no longer necessary, the throne is awaiting. It took the hardships, adversities, failures, trials, and breakings to come to a place where David no longer needed others to prop him up. God was the wind beneath his wings. With His aid, David was now prepared to fly to heights never before attained by any leader in Israel's history.

Once, while ministering in a local jail, I asked the question, “How many of you men have lost everything as a result of your decisions in life?” Every man lifted his hand. I responded, “When everything was gone, you looked over in the corner of the room of your life and sitting there was one lone Stranger. ‘Who are you,’ you asked. ‘I'm Jesus.’ ‘Why have I never seen you before?’ ‘Because all the other things were in the way.’” That evening was a glorious day in the lives of those men as tears flowed and hearts opened to the Stranger in the room. Sometimes it takes the loss of everything to understand you have the Main Thing. That's what David learned.

The story is for us.

Sidenote: The Amalekites' unrelenting brutality toward the Israelites began with an attack at Rephidim ([Exodus 17:8–13](#)). This is recounted in [Deuteronomy 25:17–19](#) with this admonition: “Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind [typically women and children]: they had no fear of God. When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land He is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!”