Hope for a troubled world – the challenge

The world is dark. Children face pain, neglect and abuse. Hopelessness saturates families, communities, cities and entire nations.

Nevertheless, as followers of Christ, we should be filled with his hope.

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.* (Romans 15: 13, NIV).

David a life filled with HOPE

From shepherd boy to ageing king, David in the Bible has more adventures recorded of his life, than most Old Testament characters. Yet in all the trials and challenges he holds on; he never lets go of his hope in God’s care and love, “Sustain me, my God, according to your promise, and I shall live; do not let my hopes be dashed.” (Ps 119:116).

Let us consider just one of the exciting exploits of David, the account of when he is being pursued by King Saul and 3,000 elite soldiers. Surely, covered by prayer and guided by God, David enters at night the camp of his enemy, Saul. Abishai had volunteered to go with David. They discover that Saul and his men are all asleep. They take Saul’s spear and water jug but David refuses to harm his enemy. Later, from the hilltop, David shouts and shows the spear. Saul realises his sin, repents and goes home.

The Bible takes less than 900 words to elaborate this escapade. Read 1 Samuel 26:1-25 in a modern translation. Then share the World Weekend of Prayer animation of this story.

Let’s now examine how this adventure of David leads us to embrace HOPE better.

Hold. Hold on to the promises of God.

David had an intimate relationship with God. He understood how the LORD had already sustained him through many trials and testing times. David loved God and knew the promises He has made to us all. Do you know God’s promises? e.g. “I will not leave you nor forsake you,” Jos 1:5.

Consider three dimensions of holding on apparent in this story:
WWP 2019 HOPE - ADULT talk outline: David in Saul’s camp | Samuel 26

i) **Hunger for peace.** Don’t look for a fight. David wasn’t looking for confrontation. He was hiding away as far out of reach of his enemies as he could. But David stayed in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. 1 Sam 26:3b

ii) **Humility before God.** David did not immediately gather his men into an aggressive attack formation. Rather David explored Saul’s situation with spies and then approached the enemy campsite. “So David arose and came to the place where Saul had encamped.” 1 Sam 26:5 Moreover, knowing God is in control, David courageously takes just one volunteer to go down into the camp of the enemy. David could easily have sent someone else but he goes himself. He seems to say to himself, “God is still on His throne, I am just His servant, I am the one who has the faith.”

iii) **Hesitate at revenge.** David has a glaringly obvious opportunity to take Saul’s life. His right hand man urges him to be allowed to do so. “Abishai said to David, “God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear.” 1 Sam 26:8. David resists. He knows that God has promised to execute justice. To Him alone belongs revenge.

Open. Open up God’s word

The best place to figure out what to do when you come under attack is to consult the word of God, the Bible. Open up God’s word and read His assurance that He is working His purposes out in your life.

In this story consider three dimensions of opening God’s word for our instruction:

i) **Offer justice over to the LORD.** David knows that God alone will see that justice is administered by God.

   “Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD’s anointed, and be guiltless?” 1 Sam 26:9b

ii) **Operate within God’s wisdom.** We find wisdom in God’s words – let us make sure we live, serve and work within the bounds of God’s wisdom, not ours. See, the way David engages a very surprising next step, surely led by the Holy Spirit.

   “But please, take now the spear and the jug of water that are by his head, and let us go.” 1 Sam 26:11b

iii) **Observe how God’s plan unfolds.** Having rejected the violent opportunity of revenge by his own means, David and Abishai make their escape. Nobody wakes up. Contrast this with what would have happened if Abishai had speared Saul. Surely, the 3,000 men would have stirred and struck down David and his assistant. “and they got away; and no man saw or knew it or awoke.” 1 Sam 26:12b

   Break an escalating cycle of violence by opening God’s word and following His way of doing things. Jesus said, “But I say to you, love your enemies.” (Matt 5:44)

Pray. Pray to Jesus as Lord

Jesus as Lord and Master loves you with more devotion and depth of concern than any other friend. Pray to Him!

i) **Prosper from God’s provision.** Surely, David prayed before he went down into the camp and even whilst he was there. The Bible ascribes the deep sleep of 3,000 men to the hand of God:

   “For they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen on them.” 1 Sam 26:12c. Just as it was then, we can prosper from God’s miraculous intervention today as we step out in faith and with hope.

ii) **Proclaim God’s words from your heart.** We know that David was chosen because “God looks at the heart.” Having woken Saul and his servant Abner with shouts from afar, David calls Saul to listen attentively. “Now therefore, please, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant.” 1 Sam 26:19. As we turn violence to peace we garner increasing goodwill to be heard, to proclaim the words the Holy Spirit brings.
iii) **Praise the LORD for His deliverance.** As David continues his discourse, he gives glory to God not only for His protection up to this moment, but also, assuredly, for the deliverance to come. “And let Him deliver me out of all tribulation,” 1 Sam 26:24b. Praise is an important part of our prayers to Jesus. Hope is born out of praising the LORD even when the world seems stacked against us.

**Experience. Experience peace**

Experience peace in your heart and let justice be in God’s hands. All round the world, across impoverished suburbs, in dysfunctional families, pursued by violence, Christians can attest that hope in Jesus releases a deeper peace. *My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Jn 14:27.*

In this adventure of David there are three dimensions of his experience that herald an enduring and uplifting hope.

i) **Embrace the challenge.** If David had ordered his men to flee even further away from Saul he may have avoided violence for a while. By being led by God to go towards the problem using Holy Spirit inspired creative ways, David finds a lasting peace for him and his camp. His team of just two men, himself and his assistant, use words not war to confront 3,000 men. *David called out to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, “Do you not answer, Abner?”* 1 Sam 26:14

ii) **Earn the right to be listened to.** David’s actions were completely in character with the man whose heart God saw and liked. They were not the actions expected by those who saw him as a rebel and enemy. Even more so, the non-retaliation of Jesus in front of extreme provocation was not that expected by those who assumed that the Messiah would rid them of Roman occupation. Our hope in Jesus and our attempts to follow his ways often earn us the right to be listened to, from kings, politicians and judges to thieves, gang leaders and corrupt law enforcement. Saul listened to David and declared, “I have sinned. Return, my son David. For I will harm you no more.” 1 Sam 26:21.

iii) **Enter into the blessings on offer.** The culmination of David’s venture and withdrawal from Saul’s camp is a declaration of peace from his enemy. “May you be blessed, my son David! You shall both do great things and also still prevail.” 1 Sam 26:25.

**Recover your HOPE**

There are at least 30 different true stories concerning the adventures of David in the Bible, from shepherd boy to elderly king over all Israel. He is anointed as king-in-waiting because God looks at his heart not his outward appearance. That heart is always full of HOPE, even in the depth of his own foolish and outrageous sin. If you want to recover your HOPE emulate the heart of David: Hold on to the promises of God; Open up God’s word; Pray to Jesus as Lord; Experience peace, the ever deeper peace that comes from knowing Jesus better. As followers of Christ, we should be filled with his hope.

- A hope that brings strength.
- A hope in his wonders and miracles.
- A hope that will not be cut off.
- A hope that anchors us
- A hope in his name.

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him,” Col 2:6.