

VICTORY OUT OF YOUR CAVES

Key Verse: 1 Samuel 22:1-4

Key Thought: God allows the Caves for your Victory

“The Cave Dwellers” by Max Lucado.

“Long ago, or maybe not so long ago, there was a tribe of people in a dark, cold cave. The cave dwellers would huddle together and cry against the chill. They would loudly wail for hours! It was all they did. It was all they knew how to do. The sounds in the cave were mournful, but the people didn’t know it, for they had never known joy. The spirit in the cave was death, but the people didn’t know it, for they had never known life. But one day they heard a different voice. “I have heard your cries,” it announced. “I have felt your chill and seen your darkness. I have come to help you.” The cave people grew quiet. They had never heard this voice. Hope sounded strange to their ears. “How can we know you have come to help?” “Trust me,” he answered. “I have what you need.” The cave people peered through the darkness at the figure of the stranger. He was stacking something, then stooping and stacking more. “What are you doing?” one cried, nervous. The stranger didn’t answer. “What are you making?” one shouted even louder. Still no response. “Tell us!” demanded as third. The visitor stood and spoke in the direction of the voices. “I have what you need.” With that he turned to the pile at his feet and lit it. Wood ignited, flames erupted, and light filled the cavern. The people turned away in fear. “Put it out!” they cried. “It hurts to see it.” “Light always hurts before it helps”, he answered. “Step closer. The pain will soon pass. “Not I,” declared a voice. “Nor I,” agreed a second. “Only a fool would risk exposing his eyes to such light.” The stranger stood next to the fire. “Would you prefer the darkness? Would you prefer the cold? Don’t consult your fears. Take a step of faith.” For a long time, no one spoke. The people hovered in groups covering their eyes. The fire builder stood next to the fire. “It’s warm here,” he invited. “He’s right,” one from behind him announced. “It’s warmer.” The stranger turned to see a figure slowly stepping toward the fire. “I can open my eyes now,” she proclaimed. “I can see.” “Come closer,” invited the fire builder. She did. She stepped into the ring of light. “It’s so warm!” She extended her hands and sighed as her chill began to pass. “Come everyone! Feel the warmth,” she invited. “Silence woman!” cried one of the cave dwellers. “Dare you lead us into your folly? Leave us. Leave us and take your light with you.” She turned to the stranger. “Why won’t they come?”

“They choose the chill, for though it’s cold, it’s what they know. They’d rather be cold than to change.” “And live in the dark?” “And live in the dark.” The now warm woman stood silent. Looking first at the dark, then at the man. “Will you leave the fire?” he asked. She paused, and then answered, “I cannot. I cannot bear the cold.” Then she spoke again. “But nor can I bear the thought of my people in darkness.” “You don’t have to,” he responded, reaching into the fire, and removing a stick. “Carry this to your people. Tell them the light is here, and the light is warm. Tell them the light is for all who desire it.” And so, she took the small flame and stepped into the darkness.”

***“Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer.
From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint;
lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”***

Psalm 61:1-2

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by life? We all do from time to time! This scripture finds David is one of those times. He is in a dark, damp, dreary, depressing cave. He has experienced the loss of everything and everyone he leaned on in his life. He is alone, defeated and discouraged. David is in one of the cave experiences of life.

What David did not see at the time, but soon came to understand, was the fact that God was behind it all and in control of it all. David did not know it at the time, but God was going to use his time in the cave to help David grow stronger in the Lord. The day would soon come when David would emerge from that cave far stronger in the Lord than he was when he entered that time in his life.

There are times when we too find ourselves in one of life’s cave experiences. Such as anxiety, depression, addiction, or insecurity. We think all our help and strength is gone. We feel alone, discouraged, and deserted. Ever been there? Of course, you have! In fact, some are there right now! Well, like David, when we are dwelling in one of the caves of life, we often fail to see the hand of God in what we are facing. But I would remind you today that just as surely as God is behind all the blessings of life; He is behind all the burdens as well.

This passage contains some blessings that we need to consider today. Here, we can learn something about the cave experiences of life and how we can come out of them stronger than we entered them.

I. THE REALITIES OF THE CAVES

Fear depression loneliness addiction insecurity

There are times like that God ordained for each of us as well. We should not expect to get through this life untouched and unaffected by hardship and sorrow. In fact, the Bible is perfectly clear about this matter,

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

“Mortals, born of woman, are of few days and full of trouble.”

Job 14:1

Just as they were for David, sorrows are part of our earthly experience. Thank God for a home where they cannot follow us. What was the reality of David’s suffering?

- a) **The Reality of Suffering** – God allowed David to come to this cave, so that David might learn not to lean on the props of family, friends, finances, fame, the flesh, or the future. David was taught, through his sufferings, to only lean upon the Lord. You see, God was not trying to destroy David. He was not trying to discipline David. God was attempting to develop David in the man of God the Lord wanted him to become. The same is true in our lives. To teach us to look to Him alone, the Lord uses the hardships of life to develop us. God does not do this to break us; He does it to build us. However, times of breaking up and tearing down often come before the times of building up! As hard as it may be to understand and bear, God uses the times of affliction, suffering and pain in our lives to train us to become more like His Son, Jesus.

“And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,

***“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,
because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”***

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. “Make level paths for your feet,”¹ so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.”

Hebrews 12:5-13

- b) **The Reality of Separation** – David has been cut off from his family, his friends, and his followers. He is in a place that prevents fellowship with others. David was brought to the place where he had nothing and only the Lord God. That cave was a place of separation!
- c) **The Reality of Sorrow** – David has been brought to the absolute bottom of life! He is hurting, he is broken, and he is defeated. The Crown Prince of Israel is living in a cave! He does not rest his head on a sumptuous bed in the palace, but on the unyielding rocks of a cave! He no longer sleeps in the bed of the Princess, but he seeks rest in the damp darkness of a forsaken cave. He does not find comfort in the house of a friend, but he fights loneliness in a deserted, dirty cave.

We often find ourselves in the caves as well, don't we? God will bring us to the place where we are alone with Him and shut off from the rest of the world. We fear those times, but they often precede the times of God's greatest blessings in our lives!

David alone in the cave; Jacob was alone in his tent; Elijah alone by the brook; Job alone surrounded by his friends; Moses alone on the backside of that mountain; Jesus alone in the agony of Gethsemane and Calvary. Each of these experienced their greatest triumph after that time of being silenced and shut off by the Lord.

You see, there are lessons that are learned in the dark that cannot be learned in the light. There are truths that can only be understood by those who are cut off and shut up with the Lord.

The cave times of life can be a blessed time of instruction and growth. You see, we may not like it, and we may not understand it, but when the Lord has brought you to a place where you have no one and nothing but Him, He has done you a tremendous favor. Why? He is more than sufficient; He is more than enough; and He will never leave you, He is a faithful Friend and a very present help in trouble. After David seen the reality of the cave, God brings him some revelation of the cave.

II. THE REVELATIONS OF THE CAVE

Destiny Purpose Power Strength

- a) **The Revelation of His Call** - As David's props began to be taken away, one after the other, he probably began to doubt the promises that God had made to him so long ago. But, after a while, people began to show up at David's cave. First, his family came; then the defeated and faithful men of Israel began to show up. David's family came out of fear of Saul; the rest came because they believed David was God's man for the future. They all cast in their lot with David. God used this group of people to show David that He still had a plan for David's life.

I don't know how God will do it, but somehow, while you are in your cave, He will come to where you are and confirm His faithfulness and His promises to you! God will use your cave as a banner to write His love over your life! Elijah had his ravens; Moses had his burning bush; Jesus had His empty tomb. God has a way of showing us that it will be all right.

- b) **The Revelation of His Character** – When his family and the protesters of Israel showed up, it probably added to David's burden at first. But David rose to the challenge and the truth of his character was revealed in what he did during those times. He took measures to care for his elderly parents and he rose to lead his men. In other words, instead of breaking under the pressures of the moment, David's heart was revealed. The leader rose to the challenge and led! But it took pain and problems to squeeze that out of him!

Just as it did in the life of David, suffering and pain will reveal exactly what we have in our hearts as well. Take Job for example. He suffered! Satan said, “Let me squeeze him and I’ll get lemon juice from him. I will prove that what he appears to be on the outside is all a show. Let me squeeze him and he will get sour. I will get lemon juice from Job!”

So, he squeezed him and when he did, he did not get lemon juice; he got lemonade! Job did not get sour on the Lord; he just shouted in the devil’s face and got sweeter. (*Job 1:20-21*)

What comes out of you when you get squeezed? Do you get sour and bitter when trouble comes? Or do you display integrity and keep on praising the Lord; knowing that He is in control and will work all things out for His glory? Suffering will expose your heart like few other things can!

- c) **The Revelation of His Commitment** – In spite of what the circumstances said about David and his situation, David held on to the promises of God. David knew where to go to find refuge in the times of trouble. He did not give up, even when most others would have. He held on to the Lord and the promises of God. He knew that God would come through in His time!

III. THE REFRESHMENTS OF THE CAVE

Transformation, Renewed mind, Authority through Christ

Repentance caves make for hard living, but they are not altogether bad! There are some refreshing discoveries to be made in the caves of life.

- a) **The Refreshment of His Family** – David’s family comes to him in that cave. Here are people who used to doubt David. His own father ignored him! His oldest brother Eliab publicly rebuked David, criticizing him. Now, they see in the man before them God’s man and God’s choice for King. The one they formerly would have passed over is the one they turn to for help! *It seems that the caves of life have the potential to bring out our best.*

As a Pastor, I have seen many people suffer horrible things. I am always fascinated by how people respond to the pain they are called upon to bear. I have seen some crumble under the load. They have literally fallen apart and sunk down into the pit of self-pity.

But there have been others who, despite the great load of suffering they were forced to carry, rose to the challenge, and tapped into a source of strength they did not know they possessed. They were changed by their experience and others were changed by watching them go through it! You see, ***it is not the storms you weather that define you; it is the way that you weather the storms!***

I remember hearing a story of an older lady who had gotten sick very suddenly and she slipped into a coma; the doctors told her family that she was dying and that nothing more could be done for her. Her poor old husband sat near her bed in his wheelchair, and he would talk to his wife. He would plead with her to wake up. He would beg her to get better and stay with him. This went on for several days. Then, one night, that old man got up out of that wheelchair, stumbled over to his wife's bed.

He leaned over, kissed her cheek, and said, "*It's all right. You can go on now. I'll miss you, but I won't be very far behind you.*" He sat back down and within just a few hours that precious lady was in the arms of Jesus. Her husband rose to the challenge that night! He won a newfound respect in the eyes of all who saw him enter his cave and pass through it with grace and dignity.

b) The Refreshment of His Followers – These men who gathered themselves around David were there because they were fed up with Saul.

The *distressed* came to David. This word means "*to be under stress and under pressure.*" We are also told that those who were in *debt* came, speaking of those who "*could not pay their bills.*" The *discontent* also came. This word refers to those who are "*bitter and who have been mistreated.*" Here was a group of hundreds of people who have suffered under the tyranny and taxation of Saul, and they are fed up. They go to David because they believe that he is God's man for Israel.

I am sure that David could not see in his life what they saw. At that time, David could only see defeat and discouragement. *While David could only see the cave; those who came to him could see the crown.* They gathered themselves around him and believed in him, even when he was down!

Thank God for the encouragers of life! Thank God for those people who can see potential in our lives, when we can see nothing good in ourselves? Barnabas was that kind of a friend to Mark, and it influenced the young man's life and ministry. God has a way of putting people around us who can serve as encouragers in our lives!

I praise God for everyone who has looked at my life and seen potential there that I could not recognize. What an encouragement they have been to me!

By the way, there is a great need for that kind of ministry in the church today.

There is always someone who stands ready to criticize and cut down; but there are very few who will come along side you during the hard times of your life and lift you up. Maybe God is calling you into that kind of ministry for His glory!

- c) **The Refreshment of His Focus** – Going through the pain of seeing all his props taken away was a painful experience for David. Having to flee from the palace to hide in a cave was humbling as well. However, in that humble hide away, God began the process of transforming David into a great king. God took a group of simple men and, working through David, transformed them into “*David’s Mighty Men.*” These men, and their exploits, are named in 2 Samuel 23. Because God sent these men to David in that cave, David was able to get his mind off his problems and focus his attention on leading them and training them to be a fighting force. It was a humble beginning, but David was focused and soon he would walk out of that cave and accept the crown.

In closing, I want you to realize an important fact. If there is one benefit of the cave that stands out, it is the fact that caves can focus our priorities. When we go into a cave experience, we soon learn what is important and what is trivial. The caves help us focus like nothing else!

Remember Peter? He was unsettled; hot and cold; before he entered his cave experience. But when he came out of that cave he was focused like a laser. That is what the cave will do for you! *It will tighten your focus onto that which is most important: finding and doing the will of the Lord.* Sometimes, I think that is why the Lord sends us into the caves. How about Jonah? He was running from God, but a few days in a cave focused his attention and he began to run with God!

If the cave can do that, then it can’t be all bad, can it?

Take a second to think about David. He entered his cave a broken and defeated man. BUT he emerged as the captain of an army of mighty men. He went in running from a crazy king. BUT he came out reaching to take the crown.

The cave refined David’s life and helped to prepare him for the tasks that lay ahead. He matured in that cave because he submitted to the cave.

What about you? Are your cave experiences blessings to your life, or are they burdens that seem too heavy to carry? If you need some help dealing with a cave experience in your life, you will find the help you need in the presence of the Lord. Get to Him and get what you need today! Don't delay!

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30am

Date: August 13, 2023

After Service Song: See a Victory