June 4/5, 2016

Desperate Times

Courage to Lead Series

1 Samuel 30:1-31

Pastor Bryan Clark

Sometimes life gets so confusing; it gets so hurtful; sometimes it just gets so desperate that you have nowhere left to turn except to turn to God. That's what we want to talk about this morning. If you have a Bible, turn with us to 1 Samuel, Chapter 30. Last we saw David, David got himself into a mess with the Philistines. It seemed like maybe there was no way out, yet God sovereignly superintends, basically through the Philistine generals, to get David out of a mess without David either having to betray Achish the king or without David having to fight against Saul and his own people. Now I don't know what David and his men were feeling. I don't know if they were relieved. I don't know if they were angry. I don't know if they were frustrated, but I do know that they could not have possibly known that God was also sovereignly superintending in their circumstances to get them home as quickly as possible because they were desperately needed at home. That's where we pick up the story in chapter 30, verse 1:

> **Then it happened when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negev and on Ziklag, and had overthrown Ziklag and burned it with fire; and they took captive the women *and all* who were in it, both small and great, without killing anyone, and carried *them* off and went their way. When David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive. Then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep. Now David's two wives had been taken captive, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite. Moreover David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.** (*NASB, I Samuel 30:1-6)

So it takes three days to go from Aphek where they were, down south to Ziklag. It's about seventy-five miles up north. I don't know what their mood was, whether they were excited about fighting with the Philistines, whether they were confused, whether they were frustrated, but it had to have been very difficult to make the march all the way up, find out they aren't going to fight in the battle, and now a three-day journey back. So, at the very least they were tired, they were weary, and they were anxious to get home to their wives, to their children, to their beds, to some food. So imagine being exhausted, frustrated, confused—whatever the mood was—but at least expecting to come over that ridge, to see home and finally be there among your loved ones, only to go over the ridge and see that your city has been destroyed. It has been burned; all the people are gone; everything's gone. It was absolutely devastating. As a matter of fact, in that short paragraph, three times the writer tells us the wives and children had been taken. It's a Hebrew technique to get you to slow down and process the level of devastation of what had happened to them.

The raiders were the Amalekites. This was kind of an ongoing enemy for Israel. In modern-day terminology, we'd refer to them as terrorists. They were violent; they were bloodthirsty, and they tended to attack and shed blood basically wherever they could. The first real encounter with the Amalekites is all the way back in the book of Exodus. As Moses was leading the children of Israel

out of Egypt to the land of promise, the Amalekites for no reason attacked them. It's a bloody war. Maybe you're familiar with the battle. It's the one where when Moses would stand on the hill and raise his staff, Israel would win. When he got tired and the staff would come down, the Amalekites would win, so two men had to come side by side with Moses and hold up his arm so that Israel could win the battle. That's the first encounter with the Amalekites, and in that encounter God promises one day the Amalekites would be judged for what they had done.

Saul had the chance. God declared a holy war under Saul with the Amalekites in chapter 15. Part of a holy war is they didn't gain. They didn't go in there to take the spoils and the people but rather it was a judgment from God. But if you remember the story, Saul didn't want to obey God's rules, so it didn't turn out to be a holy war. Saul kept the spoils. He kept some of the people, and that was the battle where God led Samuel to confront Saul and say, "Saul, you're determined to disobey God. Therefore, you're out, and God's going to anoint a new king, a king after His own heart." So in chapter 28 when Samuel comes back from the dead and confronts Saul, if you remember it was the battle against the Amalekites that Samuel specifically identified as that moment when God had had enough, and Saul was out and David was in. So there's a long history with the Amalekites.

So they come in and they attacked Ziklag. Maybe they knew that David and his men and the Philistines had all gone north. The text says there is such a level of devastation that they weep until they are so exhausted they cannot even weep anymore. Well, whenever people grieve, grief always has anger, and that anger has to go somewhere. In this case it gets targeted at David, and they are considering stoning David to death. I think it would be accurate to say that in the decade in the wilderness for David, this is the lowest moment. We were fearful that David was perhaps going to be killed by Saul. Then we were concerned that maybe David was going to be killed by the Philistines, but what a strange turn of events it would be if David was ultimately put to death by his own men because they were now just so frustrated! Remember, this was a gathering of misfits and losers and strugglers that he had gathered together into this band of fighting men. But now they were frustrated; they were exhausted; they were brokenhearted, and in this moment of grief, they are considering killing David. It's a very difficult leadership moment.

But the text tells us that **David strengthened himself in the Lord his God**. The end of verse 6 is worded very carefully. As a matter of fact, the NASB, which is what I'm using, captures it very well. If you have an NIV, it says something like, **"***David found strength in the Lord***."** That's actually very poorly worded. The Hebrew is reflexive. It carries this idea that David strengthened himself by a deliberate choice to trust God. You have to capture that part of the text where David's now in his moment of desperation. There is no one in David's group that knows whether their loved ones are dead or alive. We know it as readers, but they don't know that. It's possible that they have lost everything. After all this difficulty in the wilderness, they at least had found families—wives, children, some sense of something to give life meaning. Now it appeared it was all gone in an instant, and in that moment of devastation, David has nowhere to turn—it's possible he has just lost everything—other than to turn to God, and that verse captures that really well.

Also may I draw your attention to verse 6 when it says: **Moreover, David was greatly distressed.** That's the same phrase that was used to describe Saul in chapter 28. Saul was greatly distressed when the Philistines gathered for battle. Now it's difficult to maintain the chronology because these chapters aren't in chronological order. But if you understand that when David and his six hundred men go from Aphek and go south about seventy-five miles, a three-day journey, and at the same time the Philistines are moving north to Jezreel where Saul sees them gather to battle, it would be about the same distance, about the same amount of time. So when you factor chapter 28 when Saul

looks out, sees the Philistines, is greatly distressed, it is likely that's happening at almost the exact same time as David is greatly distressed in the south. Many scholars feel like this was happening simultaneously—Saul in the north, David in the south. It is interesting that in this battle where Saul and his sons will die (and that will be next week) that God moved David as far south as possible so he couldn't possibly be accused of being a part of that in any way. So Saul is way up north. David is way down south. Both of them are greatly distressed on the same day. This is that ongoing comparison of the two leaders. Saul in his distress turns to a spiritist, to a medium. David turns to God. In a nutshell that is the difference between these two leaders. Verse 7:

> **Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Please bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?" And He said to him, "Pursue, for you will surely overtake them, and you will surely rescue *all*." So David went, he and the six hundred men who were with him, and came to the brook Besor, *where* those left behind remained. But David pursued, he and four hundred men, for two hundred who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor remained *behind*.** (Vs. 30:7-10)

David's inquiring of the Lord through Abiathar, through the ephod, is so pronounced in this text. It gives great support to our conclusion from chapter 27, for example, that when David got himself into the mess and God's name wasn't even mentioned in the chapter, that it is a way of saying David was operating out of his own self-sufficiency. Now when David inquires of the Lord, it's not a comment made in passing but it is a pronounced moment in the story! So we get it. David is desperate; he has no self-sufficiency to solve this problem. He has nowhere to turn but to God, so in his desperation he turns to God. He asks God what to do, and God tells him, "Go."

So with six hundred men they take off going south, but two hundred of them are utterly exhausted. They've been traveling for three days with little food or water. They are emotionally exhausted—they just don't have it in them—so two hundred of them stay there at the brook with the baggage. Four hundred move on to fight the battle.

> **Now they found an Egyptian in the field and brought him to David, and gave him bread and he ate, and they provided him water to drink. They gave him a piece of fig cake and two clusters of raisins, and he ate; then his spirit revived. For he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights. David said to him, "To whom do you belong? And where are you from?" And he said, "I am a young man of Egypt, a servant of an Amalekite; and my master left me behind when I fell sick three days ago. We made a raid on the Negev of the Cherethites, and on that which belongs to Judah, and on the Negev of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire." Then David said to him, "Will you bring me down to this band?" And he said, "Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring you down to this band." When he had brought him down, behold, they were spread over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing because of all the great spoil that they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah.** (Vs. 30:11-16)

So they're headed farther south. They find this Egyptian slave, and they give him food and water, revive him and then ask him for information. One of the interesting parts of the text here is: why is there such detail around what they fed him? Again, you think about these stories and how little detail we have about so many things. Why does it matter that we know they fed him raisins and a

fig? I think the answer is because it is a demonstration of David's compassion. David is emerging in this chapter—which is the last chapter in which we will see him in 1 Samuel—as very kingly, and you get this sense that things are about to change dramatically in Israel. So this is a moment of kindness, a moment of compassion, a moment of integrity. You get a sense that the way the kingdom will be run will be very different from Saul. They could have just given him a little water and threatened him and worked him over and tried to get information, but this is full of compassion and kindness. They actually gave him the best that they had because he had need. He tells them what they want to know; in agreement they aren't going to kill him.

So the story goes on then that David and his men find the Amalekites, and when they look down on them, the text is very careful to tell us the Amalekites were having a party. There was food; there was drink; there was dancing. Now David's men are exhausted. They're physically exhausted; they're emotionally exhausted; they're in great pain, and the text is telling us that the party is at their expense. It's their food; it's their wine; it's their stuff that is the substance of the party which just adds fuel to the fire. Verse 17:

> **David slaughtered them from the twilight until the evening of the next day; and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled. So David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and rescued his two wives. But nothing of theirs was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that they had taken for themselves; David brought *it* all back. So David had captured all the sheep and the cattle *which the people* drove ahead of the *other* livestock, and they said, "This is David's spoil."** (Vs. 30:17-20)

So David and his four hundred men win this great victory. We're not told how many Amalekites there were, but the text tells us that it is a fraction of the Amalekite band that escaped, and that fraction was four hundred, so whatever it was, it was dramatically more. Scholars think a thousand, two thousand, three thousand—a large enough number that you would say only a few escaped—and that was four hundred. It would probably be right to say this is David's greatest victory. Four hundred ragtag soldiers against probably a thousand to several thousand Amalekites who basically were professional warriors, but God gives them a great victory! No lives are lost. David wins. Everybody lives. They gather all the spoils. It's a major victory for David!

It's very interesting when you read the text. Even though there are four hundred fighting, the text says, **David slaughtered them…David recovered…David brought back…David captured…David's spoil.** What's being said there is that when all of David's men were despondent and desperate and even wanted to kill him, there was one man that turned to God in his hour of desperation and that was David, and not because of the faith of the four hundred but because of the faith of one, God gave them a significant victory. They got back their wives; they got back their children; they got back their stuff; they got back everything! It's a great leadership moment that God can do amazing things that affect many people if someone will just have the faith and courage to trust God, and that's the emphasis…David, David, David, David. This was about David's faith in God and God rewarding that with this great victory.

> **When David came to the two hundred men who were too exhausted to follow David, who had also been left at the brook Besor, and they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him, then David approached the people and greeted them. Then all the wicked and worthless men among those who went with David said, "Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have**

recovered, except to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead *them* away and depart." Then David said, "You must not do so, my brothers, with what the LORD has given us, who has kept us and delivered into our hand the band that came against us. And who will listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down to the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike." So it has been from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day. (Vs. 30:21-25)

So they have the spoils; they come back; they meet the two hundred. The two hundred come out to greet them, and the four hundred say, "You can have your wife; you can have your children, but that's all. You didn't fight; you don't get any of the spoils." And this is another great leadership moment where David steps up and says, "We aren't going to do it this way." As a matter of fact, it's really important to notice in verse 23 David is very clear. "The Lord won the victory. The Lord got your family back. The Lord got your stuff back." David realizes this wasn't him; this wasn't them but this was God. Therefore, he needs to do the right thing with what they have brought back. This is again one of those great leadership moments. In the Hebrew world, we would call this *shalom*. It's an idea that we're in this together, that we all flourish together, we all fight together, we all trust God together, and we're going to do this together. That's the idea there.

But you have again this moment where David seems really kingly. He's emerging as a king even to the degree that he makes a statute; he makes a law. Now he has no authority to do this, but by virtue of his character, who he is, he institutes the statute that is still in effect all the way down the road at the time of the writing of 1 Samuel. That's really quite remarkable. "This is how we will do it—together." You get this sense that, after a decade in the wilderness that has been so difficult for David, this is now the final exam in the *Wilderness School of Leadership*, and David is passing with flying colors. You get this sense that David is finally ready to be king. The last sense of that then is in the last paragraph.

Now when David came to Ziklag, he sent *some* of the spoil to the elders of Judah, to his friends, saying, "Behold, a gift for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD: to those who were in Bethel, and to those who were in Ramoth of the Negev, and to those who were in Jattir, and to those who were in Aroer, and to those who were in Siphmoth, and to those who were in Eshtemoa, and to those who were in Racal, and to those who were in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to those who were in the cities of the Kenites, and to those who were in Hormah, and to those who were in Bor-ashan, and to those who were in Athach, and to those who were in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to go." (Vs. 30:26-31)

So David collects all these spoils, and now he's extremely generous. He begins to give back to these cities, to these places in Judah, which would be southern Israel, places in need, places that have been raided, building relationships, building trust. David now by and large has the favor and the trust of Judah. You get this sense that David is one step away from being king. It's interesting the last city mentioned is Hebron, which is the very place where David will be crowned king, and that will happen in 2 Samuel, which we will get to in September. But you definitely get this sense at the end of 1 Samuel, after all of this struggle, that David is ready to be king. David emerges as a strong leader, as a godly leader, as a benevolent, kind, faithful king, and you get this sense things are about to change dramatically in Israel.

As we kind of wrap up the David story in 1 Samuel, it's really helpful to remember when we get to 2 Samuel and David is king and all this good stuff happens and he prospers and enriches and he will become the greatest king in Israel's history, it's easy to forget there were ten long years of suffering, of struggle, of growing, of refining in the wilderness that were necessary before it would be possible for him to be a great leader. We go all the way back to the first moment when we met David. He was just a shepherd boy all alone out in the field with the sheep, the youngest of several brothers, but as a shepherd boy, he had cultivated a heart for God. When he encountered a lion and a bear, he killed them with his own hands, trusting God to do that. But in those moments, nobody applauded; nobody wrote a song about him. It was David all alone with the sheep trusting God, learning some fundamental lessons.

Next thing you know, Samuel shows up out of nowhere, anoints David to be the next king of Israel. Next David is fighting the giant Goliath, and he actually says in that moment, "God gave me victory over a lion and a bear. He'll give me victory over this Philistine windbag." And he wins the great victory and everybody celebrates. Saul puts him in charge of the elite forces, and David wins victory after victory after victory after victory, and the people absolutely love him. They're celebrating him; they're applauding him; they're writing songs about him. It's a great moment. In that moment David was trusting God and God was delivering, and David's great reward for that was Saul declared him public enemy #1, and for the next decade he would live in the wilderness, struggling to stay alive, fleeing for his life.

There's just no way that could have made any sense to David. You trust God. God gives you victories. You're trying to do the right thing, and your reward for that is you end up fleeing for your life for a decade. He had to have been hurt. He had to have been confused. He had to have been disappointed, but in the midst of that, he kept running back to God because there was nowhere else to turn, and in the wilderness God cultivated a deep faith. He cultivated courage. He taught David God's part and his part and what it means to lead and to follow and to trust Him. God refined and grew David in order that David would become the greatest king in the history of Israel.

We're reminded in the David story and again in this chapter that David had to make a choice to keep turning back to God. It's not automatic. Just because you spend time in the wilderness doesn't mean you come out better. Many people don't come out better; they come out bitter. They don't come out stronger; they come out destroyed, and a lot of it has to do with your fundamental theology, what you really believe to be true about God.

I encouraged you last week to think about this. Some of you, perhaps after thinking about it for a week said, "You know, I've really given it some deep thought, and I've kind of decided I think a ride on the love boat is really okay. I'm going to pick the cruise ship so my life doesn't matter that much. No big deal. I just don't want pain and suffering, so I'm on the cruise ship. I'm going to cruise into the sunset." If that's your thinking, you've misunderstood me. I'm not saying if you choose the cruise ship you can avoid pain and suffering. Pain and suffering are part of life on a sin-cursed earth. The question is whether it's going to make you better or make you bitter, whether it's going to make you stronger or it's going to destroy you, and it has to do with your core theology.

If you've convinced yourself or perhaps someone convinced you that basically if you're a good Christian, you're a good boy, you're a good girl, you do everything right and you give God some money and you try to follow all the rules, the return for that is no pain and suffering, no struggles, no tragedies. It's supposed to all work out. And so you believe that and then pain and suffering come into your world and you're devastated. "This isn't right. It isn't fair. It wasn't supposed to be

that way. We had a deal, and the deal was: I do my part and God would do His part. But God has betrayed me. God has turned His back on me. God let me down. God didn't do His part. That wasn't the deal!" And God in heaven is saying, "What deal? *I* didn't make that deal. *You* made the deal." And frankly, if that is your reason for following God, you're not really following God; you're following a good deal.

But the Scriptures couldn't be clearer. No deals! You just have to trust God. This journey will include pain and suffering and struggles and times in the wilderness. There will be times when nothing will make sense, and you don't understand. "Where's God, and why does it have to be this way?" And in those moments you have to decide, "Do I turn my face toward God and trust Him, or do I turn my face away from God and become angry and become bitter and begin a life of destruction?" I cannot promise you that when you go through pain and suffering your questions will be answered. Most of the time they will not be. I can't promise you that it will make sense. I can't promise you that you'll ever know the purpose for which you went through the wilderness. What I can promise you is in those moments, if you turn your face toward God, God will meet you there, and He will remind you that He is good and He is faithful and He is compassionate and He is kind and He is going to get you through the journey in the wilderness, but you have to choose to trust Him.

It was about, I think, a year and a half ago when I first met Ben. Ben and I had lunch together, and he shared his story with me. It's a very hard story. We shed some tears together at lunch. I have to be honest; I came back to my office, and I shed some more tears as I talked to God about Ben's story. Ben's story is hard. I'd give anything to be able to change his story. So would he. But we don't have that power. This is his story and so either he trusts God or he doesn't. Ben is a remarkable Christian. He's made a very deliberate decision to trust God. He has turned his face toward God even though it doesn't make sense, even though there aren't answers. Ben is positive; Ben is strong. He's faithful. He's inspiring. You spend an hour with Ben; you do not come away depressed. You come away inspired that you're going to trust God.

We are sharing Ben's story this morning with the hope that no matter what you're going through, no matter how hard it is, no matter how confusing it is, no matter how much it doesn't make any sense to you, that you will choose to turn your face toward God, that Ben's story will inspire you to do that. I have no doubt that when Ben's story is over, his faith will have dramatically affected his wife, his children, and thousands of others in ways that will matter forever. This is Ben's story.

Video:

"You wouldn't know it by looking at me, but I'm literally dying inside.

I had a grandfather, my mom's father Bill Kropp, who was a legendary basketball coach here in Nebraska. I had an uncle, Tom Kropp, who played in the NBA, and my father was also a professional basketball player. My whole life was basketball, and all I wanted to do was play in the NBA. In high school I had a scholarship and an appointment to the United States Air Force Academy to go and play basketball out there. So as a senior in high school, I felt like I had a real plan with the next five to ten years of my life.

I was in a movie theater on Christmas Eve night, and I really started to feel pain in my heart to the point where every beat hurt. Christmas night we made it all the way back to Bryan Hospital here in Lincoln, and they called in a bunch of physicians and staff into the emergency room and they said,

'Ben, by the looks of things, you've been having a massive heart attack for about a day and a half.' From that point on, that plan of five to ten years that I had laid out, started to change. I no longer had an appointment to the Air Force Academy because I had been medically disqualified. I could no longer play basketball, so right there two of my loves that I really felt made me kind of who I was were taken, all in one fell swoop.

I would jump down a couple steps, and a leg would just give out from under me, and I'd hit the ground, something that six months before was perfectly normal for someone my age to do. I went to Mayo Clinic six or eight different times for them to study and try to figure out what was going on. To me that time in my life was extremely hard because I could feel what was going on in my body, that things weren't right, yet medicine couldn't give me an answer. At that time I was newly married to my wife Tara, and we had just found out that she was pregnant with our first child. I went in and had another muscle biopsy here in Lincoln, and that was when they gave me the official diagnosis of limb-girdle muscular dystrophy, and they said, 'Eventually your heart and lungs are muscles, and they're going to be affected. Your long-term survival looks like it's going to be in the five- to six-year range.' And I remember calling my dad and breaking down and then I remember getting home and trying to talk to Tara, who was seven-months pregnant, and explain to her, 'This is what our life may look like,' and pleading with God to take it away.

I knew that I was a Christian, and I went to church on Sunday mornings, but it was a superficial relationship between God and me. Truly it was at that time when we found the Berean Church, and I remember hearing Bryan Clark, and a couple times it felt like he was talking directly to me. Like, once you go through something like that where you don't know if today or next week is your last day, it focuses that relationship with Jesus, and it also clarifies what Jesus did for us because we're saved by grace through faith and that Jesus paid that debt for us and that He was the one who made that sacrifice so that all of this is really insignificant in comparison to what that reward is later on.

Today my life doesn't look anything like what I had planned out fifteen or twenty years ago, but in certain ways it's so much better. I get to do a lot of public speaking on dealing with adversity and help middle school kids and high school kids through that time, or to different groups in the community that are dealing with hard things. Bryan talked several times about how going through the wilderness can be taken both literally and figuratively. I worry that I won't be able to walk out on the basketball court when Evan's a senior for parents' night, and I worry that I won't be able to walk my daughter down the aisle when she gets married.

(singing and playing guitar) Somewhere over the rainbow, bluebirds fly… *(song continues in background)*

So every day when I deal with this struggle, the question is never far from my mind, 'Can I really trust God?' To be real honest, I've learned through this that it isn't really a question. It's assured to us. God is there. God cares for us. God walks with us, and when we can no longer stand or we can no longer walk, He will carry us."

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June 5/6, 2016

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I Samuel 30:1-31

Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. Are you more likely to trust God in the good times or the bad times? Why?

2. Sometimes we only really surrender to God when things get so bad there seems like no other way out. Has that ever happened to you?

3. Is the issue whether or not you will have pain and suffering in life or how you will respond to it when it comes? Does pretending you're on the Love Boat make it less likely you'll experience hard times? Why or why not?

Bible Study

1. Review what transpired in I Samuel 29. How did God get David out of his mess?

2. Read I Samuel 30:1-6. God worked through the Philistine generals to get David out of having to fight his own people and get him sent back to Ziklag. David could not have possibly known at the time how desperately he needed to get back home. How do you see God at work in all this? Have you experienced a time when God was working behind the scenes in ways you did not know or understand until later? How often do you think God is at work in ways we won't know or understand at all on earth?

3. Read I Samuel 30:7-10. Contrast David in this chapter with David in chapter 27. Why does he turn to Abiathar in chapter 30 but not in chapter 27? What might David be learning? How desperate was he in chapter 30?

4. Read I Samuel 30:11-31. How does David seem very "Kingly" in this text? Does this feel like a final exam before graduation from the wilderness school of leadership? What has David learned again according to 30:23?

Application

1. How does your core theology effect how you process pain and suffering in your life? Is it an unfair interruption of your dream of using God for health, wealth and prosperity or is it a necessary part of your story that God can use to grow you to accomplish your mission in life? Does how you view pain and suffering effect whether you will experience it or not?

2. Many Christians in times of pain and suffering become disillusioned with God and feel betrayed by God. They feel God didn't keep His end of the deal. Where does the Bible say God makes this deal? Doesn't the Bible promise pain and suffering as part of life on this sin cursed earth? Does turning away from God in anger and bitterness make the pain go away? Does it solve anything? What is the better approach?

3. Is it healthy in times of pain and suffering to pretend to be so spiritual that bad times don't bother us? Are hurt, disappointment, anger, confusion, and struggle normal and healthy emotions in times of pain and suffering? How do the Psalms help inform your answer? Is the big issue having those emotions or getting stuck in those emotions? What are some practical steps people can take to keep working through hard stuff and moving forward?

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