

HEROES
— OF FAITH —



George Liele

**Church Planting, Evangelism, and
Missions Sunday Sermon**

Sermon Manuscript

“Don’t Give Up Serving God”

By M. L. Ausberry Sr.

2 Samuel 22:1–7 (ESV)

And David spoke to the Lord the words of this song on the day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. 2 He said,

“The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, 3 my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence. 4 I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies. 5 “For the waves of death encompassed me, the torrents of destruction assailed me; 6 the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me.

7 “In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I called. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry came to his ears.

Introduction

It is often said that Adoniram Judson, appointed in 1812, was the first Baptist missionary from the United States. But in fact, the first Baptist missionary from the United States was a man named George Liele. It is said that William Carey is the father of the modern missionary movement, but in fact, that designation also belongs to George Liele, who left America and planted the gospel in Jamaica a full 10 years before Carey left England for India in 1793. Liele landed in Kingston, Jamaica, in January 1783. Taking nothing away from Judson or Carey’s work, it is more remarkable that George Liele was the first Baptist missionary from the United States. George Liele is indeed the father of the modern missionary movement. Why is this remarkable?

Judson and Carey were white freemen; George Liele was born into slavery on a Virginia plantation in 1750. Henry Sharp, the enslaver of George Liele, moved to South Carolina shortly after Liele’s birth. Liele came to Christ in 1773, at the age of 23. He was baptized by his white pastor, Matthew Moore. Sometime after Liele’s conversion, his owner, Henry Sharp, a Baptist deacon, released Liele from enslavement to follow God’s call.

George Liele was ordained on May 20, 1775, becoming the first ordained African American Baptist preacher in America. Liele, who was to become the first Baptist missionary to the nations, preached for two years in the slave quarters of plantations surrounding Savannah and South Carolina. He planted the first African American Baptist church in North America.

Henry Sharpe died in 1778. At the end of the Revolutionary War, Liele evacuated from America with British troops because Sharp's family was attempting to re-enslave him. To do so, Liele, who had a wife and four children, sold himself as an indentured servant in exchange for his family's passage to Jamaica.

Liele's life in Jamaica was not without trouble. He was persecuted for preaching the gospel by the plantation owners who ruled the country. Some felt Liele used his preaching to organize the enslaved for a rebellion. But he continued to preach.

Liele's work was anything but easy. As he planted churches and preached the gospel, many people came to faith in Christ. Still, there were times he was jailed, once for three years for preaching the gospel in Jamaica. But Liele continued preaching to the enslaved and free blacks and whites, and many received Christ as Savior.

Despite being jailed several times, Liele did not give up; he did not quit; he did not coast on his own freedom. What would drive someone to risk his life for preaching the gospel? I suggest to you it was his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! The life of George Liele tells us that following Christ is not a call to a comfortable life. When you go out in obedience to Christ, it may cost you—maybe even your life! Liele was imprisoned, accused of preaching sedition. He was chained with irons on his wrists and his feet. Despite the hardships, Liele continued preaching. By 1814, 8,000 Baptists were in Jamaica, and by 1832, 20,000 Baptists were in Jamaica. They came to faith in Jesus Christ—enslaved and free, blacks and whites. Many say that slavery was outlawed in Jamaica on July 31, 1838, mainly because of the influence of George Liele. Despite the hardships, Liele remained faithful to sharing the gospel!

Transition

What causes a person to press through adversity? What causes a person to not give up? What causes a person to keep moving forward? I suggest it is faith in God. And today I want to call to your attention David's words about the Lord that I believe helped David and will help us not give up in our crisis moments.

Movements

Background

Verse 1 reminds us that David's life was not without adversity. David had enemies along the way. He had those who wanted to see him fall and those who wished him harm. There were those who were jealous of him. David had to defeat a lion and a bear while tending his father's sheep. David had to confront Goliath, a giant of a man. David had to deal with Absalom, his son who wanted to take his throne. But maybe the biggest enemy of all was King Saul. Please note that of all David's enemies, Saul is the only one David named here.

In a reflective moment, David recites this praise poem to the Lord as He thanks God for all He has done. From this text, I want to present three reasons we can remain faithful in adversity and not give up.

1. The Lord Is My Rock (He Sustains)

David writes that "the Lord, He is My Rock." Just as David could stand against his enemies because of his sure foundation, because the Lord is his rock, you and I can stand on the Rock. The rock is a metaphor for a secure foundation, a secure footing, a solid foundation. When you travel to Spain, the southernmost tip is the British-owned territory known as the Rock of Gibraltar, a symbol of power and security. When people say that something is as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar, they mean it is very safe or firm. I was told an investment was as secure as the Rock of Gibraltar. There is an insurance company that uses the Rock of Gibraltar as their logo, with the slogan, "... the strength of Gibraltar."

So, when David says that “the Lord is my Rock!” He is saying his strength and security are found in the Lord! And you and I can stand on the strength of our Rock, the Lord Jesus Christ. When we face our enemies, those who want to do us in, those who attack us, we must remember that we are standing on the Rock! He is our firm foundation.

When you are going through the trials of life, the Rock will support you; the Rock will give you that sure-footedness; even in the midnight hour, you can stand on the Rock. When you are going through the perils and storms of life—don’t run from the Rock but run to the Rock!

I’m sure that George Liele was standing on the Rock, the Rock Jesus Christ. I am reminded of the Negro spiritual “Jesus is a Rock”:

Jesus Is A Rock (African American Heritage Hymnal #222)

Jesus is a rock in a weary land.

A weary land

A weary land

Jesus is a rock in a weary land

A shelter in the time of storm

Jesus is my rock

My rock, my sword and shield

And He’s my wheel in the middle of a wheel

He guides my footsteps and wipes away all my tears

Jesus is my rock, my rock, my sword and shield

My friends, we can stand on the Rock, Jesus Christ!

It is a matter of where you stand! Stand on the solid Rock. In times of trouble, stand on the Rock; when you are in a storm, stand on the Rock. When you are going through the storms, stand on the Rock. When you are being tempted to sin—stand on the Rock! And after you have done all you can do—STAND!

Stand on the Rock! Stand on His Word! Stand on His promises!

2. The Lord Is My Fortress (He Protects/Provides)

If the Rock is a symbol of a firm foundation, of strength, of security, David magnifies the picture of God as a fortress, saying, “The Lord is My Fortress.”

The fortress is a picture or symbol of protection. The fortress pictures a castle, a citadel. When we visited the old city in Jerusalem, it was striking that there was a wall around the city—to protect the city from its enemies. If there is a castle, a moat dug around it and a drawbridge as part of the wall allow in only those who belong inside the castle walls. The fortress is a picture of God’s protection, strength, and security.

Your homes are like a fortress in that you lock your doors and turn on the alarms and whatever else you have to protect those on the inside.

One of the best-known hymns written by Martin Luther, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” helps us to find strength in God’s love and salvation amid the woes of mortality:

*A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper he, amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
does seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.*

Because God is our Mighty Fortress, we can have confidence when the enemies attack us. God is our protector; a Mighty Fortress is He. Because God is our Fortress, in Christ, we are inside the Fortress, and inside the Fortress, we have God’s divine protection.

We are safe and secure in the Fortress. David understood this; God saved him time and time again against the attacks of his enemies.

My friends, as our Fortress, God watches over us, He knows all about your situations. And therefore, if you go through something, then God allows it not to harm you but to grow you. When you face a trial of some sort, the enemy wants to discourage you, but God wants you to remember that you are in the Fortress, where there is protection, and that He uses that circumstance to grow you. God's got a purpose for your pain!

James 1:2–4 (NASB95)

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Inside the Fortress, God protects you. You are inside the ark of safety. Remember, that greater is He who is in you than He Who is in the world. You are in God's household if you are in the Fortress. God loves you, and God protects you to accomplish His will.

There are times when you may face trials that bring you to your knees and break your heart. Remember, God is your Fortress. We run to the Fortress, and inside the Fortress, God protects us when we are the most vulnerable. God is our hiding place in times of trouble. When all is said and done, God is our refuge, our hiding place; God is our Fortress.

And when you look back over your life and just think about the things that could have happened to you—you can say, “a Mighty Fortress is my God.” The truth be told, God has brought you a mighty, mighty long way—you ought to say, “Thank you, Lord!”

Don't keep your stories to yourself. Share some of your stories with your children and with your children's children, so they can know that Mom and Dad and Grandmother and Grandfather haven't always had it easy. But when tough times came, they learned to go to the Lord because the Lord is our Mighty Fortress.

3. The Lord Is My Deliverer

When you observe the life of David, you can see time and time again that God delivered David from the hand of his enemies. He delivers him from a lion and a bear, from Goliath, from Absalom, and He delivers Him from King Saul, amongst a host of other enemies. God is our Deliverer. God has a way of showing up at just the right time. He shows up just in time when we need Him.

George Liele was threatened with death time and time again. He was imprisoned for preaching the gospel. And each time, God delivered Him. He went back to preaching the gospel, planting churches, sending out missionaries. He was undeterred, because time and time again, God kept right on delivering Him.

Being a follower of Jesus Christ does not exempt us from trials, hardships, and other life issues.

But God never leaves us or forsakes us, He is our Rock, our Mighty Fortress, and He is our Deliverer. David was no exception to the rule. George Liele was no exception to the rule. And guess what, you are no exception to the rule. We can rest assured that God is able to sustain us, to protect us, and to deliver us from our enemies.

Some people ask: Why did God allow the brutality of slavery in America? Well, even the Israelites were enslaved for 400 years down in Egypt until God delivered them. But it drew them closer to the Lord, and they knew without a doubt that it was God Who delivered them! Similarly, God delivered the enslaved in America, drawing the freed closer and closer to Himself and exposing the brutality and awfulness of sin in the American culture.

When I look back over our history, I see that God has brought us a mighty, mighty long way! And we still have a way to go. But we can honestly say that God has delivered us—from the bondage of slavery! I don't believe He delivered us so that we could be thugs, gang bangers, drug dealers, pimps, or wear our pants down to our ankles—but I do believe God delivered us so that we could glorify Him in every way!

The emancipation proclamation was signed by Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, the third year of the bloody civil war. The proclamation declared “that all persons held as slaves” within the rebellious states “are, and henceforward shall be free.” Lincoln’s proclamation was based on future military victories by the union army. It only dealt with slaves in the seceded states. And it was not an amendment to the constitution until the 13th Amendment passed to abolish slavery and involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for a crime. It was ratified on December 6, 1865, by the required number of states.

Conclusion

But another emancipation was signed 2,000 years ago. It was signed in blood on Calvary’s hill. It set us free from the penalty and power of sin, and one day even from the presence of sin. This emancipation was ratified on Calvary, Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead. All who believe in Him have eternal life!

If you have been set free through Jesus Christ—my friends, we should give Him praise, say thank you, thank you, and thank you! He is worthy of all praise, glory, and all honor! And if you are still under the penalty and power of sin, Jesus has made a provision for you. Won’t you invite Jesus Christ into your life, for whom the Son sets free is free indeed!

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