

Living under Oppression

We live in a world where oppression is rife. Stories of human rights abuses from throughout the world flood our lives. In some cases it is an oppression of the poor, in others it is religious oppression, whilst in others it is an ethnic oppression. In some cases it is an oppression of those who claim right to a land and are seeking freedom and liberation from their oppressors. In other cases people have fought a hard battle to get this liberation only to be oppressed by someone who they fought alongside and are now worse off than before. Some governments claim to be liberators and promote democracy and human rights yet go ahead and advocate and legitimize the use of torture of suspects who may or may not have been found guilty at the time of torture.

Then we get to a more personal level of oppression. We may have tyrannical boss, an oppressive family or community that we live in and amongst.

It all amounts to oppression.

Some synonyms for oppression are: domination, coercion, cruelty, tyranny, repression, subjugation.

The question is: "How do we live, and respond to oppression as Christians?"

1 Samuel 8: 1 – 22

1) The Rise of Oppression – some reasons why leaders oppress those under their leadership.

- The Israelites were a nation formed under oppression
 - Their oppression started because of **fear** in the new leadership.
 - Exodus 1: 8 – 10 Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. ⁹ "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. ¹⁰ Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country."
 - Often insecure leaders become oppressive and dominate their subordinates.
 - Example of a new bank manager who laid down the law on his first day and told everyone that they could do things his way or resign. A petition was signed by all and the new manager was transferred after his first day.
- Oppression arises due to a **lust for power** – rooted in pride
 - Empires – Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek, Roman, British
 - The attitude of "I will get to the top and I don't care who I have to trample on to get there"
- Oppression arises due to **false ideologies** that need to oppress the people to adhere to them
 - Communism
 - Islam
- Some oppressive leaders started off well but were diverted from their original task of leading their people on the way.
- Some ideologies, such as communism, were well meaning and are good in theory (on the social not the religious aspect of it), but are unrealistic in practice and needed to dominate the people to work.
- David lived under the oppression of Saul due to Saul's **jealousy**
 - ¹Samuel 18: 6 - 8 When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. ⁷ As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

⁸ Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?" ⁹ And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

- Joseph was also oppressed because of his brothers' jealousy

2) Living under oppression

- Aspects of David's life under oppression of Saul
 1. Life under Saul's leadership did not start with oppression (1 Sam 16: 22)
 2. Saul started getting angry when the people accredited David with more than himself. (1 Sam 18: 6 – 8)
 3. Saul also feared David (1 Samuel 18: 29)
 4. Saul tried to kill David
 5. David fled his oppressor
 - There are times to flee and times to face our oppressors
 - Mary and Joseph were warned to flee with Jesus because Herod wanted to kill him
 - Jesus withdrew from places when he was aware that the Pharisees wanted to kill him (Matt 12: 14 – 15)
 - Saul fled Damascus when he discovered that the Jews wanted to kill him.
- **However**
 - At the right time Jesus headed for Jerusalem knowing that he was going to die on a cross there
 - Paul knew that persecution awaited him in Jerusalem and still went even after he was warned.
- 6. David did not hold his oppressor's sins against those close to him
 - He retained a close friendship with Jonathan
 - It is easy to become embittered against everyone related to the oppressor
- 7. David served and saved the people of Israel even whilst he himself was running from Saul
 - It is easy to have the attitude that "I am suffering so why should I look after anyone else". David didn't have such an attitude.
 - There are many stories, including Corrie Ten Boom, who served others whilst in concentration camps.
- 8. David never sought to harm Saul even when he had the chance.
 - He left vengeance to God
- 9. David lamented Saul's death
 - We ought to long for the salvation of our oppressors rather than for their death.
 - God is patient, not wanting anyone to perish but all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3: 9)

3) Oppression always has an end

- The Israelites were in Egypt for 400 years and then God set them free.
- Israel was in exile for 70 years and then God took them back to their land
- David was patient and at the right time he was released from his oppression under Saul and became king of Israel
- Communism in the Soviet Union eventually crumbled and people were liberated from that oppression.

Psalm 30: 5 Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.