



Sermon – February 14, 2021
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Verses Covered This Week

1 Samuel 30

Well, amen. It's good to see you this morning, church family. Those of you in person, those of you who are joining us online. And what a time to be alive. What a time to be alive. Storm of the century and, and all the other things you see happening around the world. And it presents, as a child of God, presents really a question which is: how do you and I walk with a supernatural strength and courage? Where we are persistent in seeking the direction and will of God so that we would live out a faithful Christ-like witness to the world. How do we find that strength? How do we come to that? Especially when we live in days where things are discouraging, challenging, where there is real opposition, where there is tiredness, where there is fatigue. And praise the Lord there's an answer to that. So if you grab your Bibles, we're going to turn to 1 Samuel, chapter 30. 1 Samuel, chapter 30. And we're picking up at a time when David is going to hit rock bottom. You see in the book of 1 Samuel, we find in 1 Samuel 15, King Saul has been rejected as king by God because he has feared the desires of his men more than honoring what the Lord has laid out. There was a lack of strength, a flaw in his character that he yielded to and God pulls the kingdom from Saul and Saul's family. We find in 1 Samuel 16, David steps on the scene. He is anointed as the future king of Israel. We find in 1 Samuel 17, he walks out courageous on the battlefield, takes on Goliath and the Philistine army. The people flock to him. But then we find in 1 Samuel 18 that Saul who initially loves David will now spend the rest of his life hunting David down. David will live on the run for his life. And for really the next probably 15/16 years hiding in the wilderness. Slowly, men coming with him. And ultimately all this builds up where we find in 1 Samuel, chapter 27 where David not only is on the run, but now he has to flee to the Philistine nation for protection. Once the people, who they would look at David as their greatest enemy, now he has had to go seek protection there. And he and his men have gone up to meet with the Philistine king in chapter 29. See, the Philistines are about to go to battle with Saul and the people of Israel. And they've gone up and they've gotten ready to go to battle and the king wants David and his men to come to battle. But the Philistine lords say, "There's no way, king. We're not going to go into battle with somebody who could easily turn because those are his own people." So the king of the Philistines sends them back to their city of Ziklag and that's where we pick up.

It says in 1 Samuel 30:

¹Then it happened when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, they had been marching for 3 days, that the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negeb and on Ziklag. And had overthrown Ziklag and burned it with fire ²and they took captives, the women and all who were in it, both small and great. Without killing anyone, and they carried them off and went their way. ³And when David and his men came to the city, behold, a shock, it was burned with fire and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive.

You can imagine David and his men, we'll find out later, 600 men, they've made an 80-mile journey over 3 days back from the capital of the Philistines, back to their journey in Ziklag, and you can imagine with me as they walk up, as they're excited to see the skyline of home, as they're expecting maybe their kids to run out. And what they see is smoke from the distance. And as they get up, they find not the wonderful home they left, they find an empty, burned, ghost town. No trace of their wives, their children. No knowledge of who took them, where they went, how big of a group was it, can we get them back? And there is a shock when they see this sight. And you see in verse 4 their reaction.

⁴Then David and the people who were with him, they lifted up their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep.

You can see them. Here are these men, hardened, wilderness trained, battle-hardened warriors. And the sight of their city and their homes burned and not knowing where their wives and children are. Are they OK? Have they already been sold into captivity and slavery? Are they being abused and battered? Now what do they do? They just cry out and they weep. And they weep until there is no more ability in them to weep. It says in verse 5, mentions David, two of his, his two wives and his children were taken. But then look at verse 6. It says more than this.

⁶David was greatly distressed, he was cornered, he was placed into a predicament because the people, his own men, spoke of stoning him for all the people were embittered, were literally, they were in total despair in the core of their being, each one because of his sons and his daughters.

So here's David. Can you imagine? Here we are, let's rewind the clock. David, Samuel shows up, anoints David. You are God's. The man after God's own heart. You're going to be the king. David steps out in confidence in the Lord. Slays the giant, Goliath. Leads the people of Israel over the Philistines. People flock and love him. He has no desire to usurp Saul. And then in a moment Saul becomes jealous and envious and insecure and starts to hunt David. And David is now running for his life. He has spent 15 years living in the wilderness, bouncing from place to place, having to fall under the protection of peoples that are not God's people. All because he's God's man. God's allowed him to have some men around him that were loyal, that would honor his leadership. But now, even in this moment, here we are, those men now, no longer are they loyal. But they're sitting on the side looking up going, "This is all David's fault. We need to take him out." Can you imagine the anguish, the concern, the perplexity that is in David? But look what it says about David.

But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

David strengthened himself. For that verb elsewhere, David took courage from the Lord his God. You don't find David all of a sudden falling before the Lord, bemoaning God, "Why have You abandoned me? God why would you let this happen? God where are you? God?" What does David do? David goes confidently before the Lord and takes strength, takes courage. How does David do that? Well, I was going to mention several places. You can imagine some the Psalms David has written. You can imagine as David hears the whispers, him praying prayers like Psalm 34.

I will bless the Lord at all times and His praise will continually be in my mouth. I sought the Lord and He answered me. He delivered me from all my fears.

Or maybe you can imagine him sitting there praying Psalm 37 as he thinks about Saul who's safe, who has power, and he says to the Lord:

Do not fret because of evil-doers, David. Do not be envious towards wrong-doers. They will wither like the grass. They will fade like the green herb. David, trust in the Lord. Do good. Dwell in the land. Cultivate faithfulness. Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in Him and He will do it.

Or maybe it's places like Psalm 52.

Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The loving-kindness of God endures all day long.

And speaking to the evil man, but God will break you down forever. He will snatch you and tear you up from your tent and uproot you from the land of the living. The righteous will see and fear and will laugh at the wicked saying, "Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge but trusted in the abundance of his riches. But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the loving-kindness of God forever and ever. I will give you, God, thanks forever because You have done it and I will wait on Your name for it is good in the presence of Your godly ones.

Think of these Psalms, these prayers of David, as there he is in that moment getting before the Lord drawing strength. How do you and I find strength in the Lord? It is an intentional action. To be still before God. To meditate on the truth of His word. To guide our thoughts. To consider the truth of who He is, of what He has done, of how He acts, and specifically our relationship to Him. Because if we are His children it is because we have been purchased and bought with the precious blood of Christ. We are not of minor value to God; we are of utmost value to God. We take courage in the Lord by making a choice to approach God with a confidence. To take courage from who He is. To take courage and confidence from the unchanging character and nature of God rather than trying to take courage and confidence from the ever-changing reality of our circumstances and situations and from anyone who is less than God. You see, church family, it's a struggle to do this. It's a struggle because we have constant noise. Because rather than quieting ourselves and seeking courage from God, we've got opportunities to have music non-stop in our ears. To turn to the media at any moment. To pull up social media. To turn to other people. There is no place for solitude. And you and I are

addicted to busyness. Whether it's busyness of the mind or busyness of action. Sometimes we want the instantaneous gratification. I want to quote a Bible verse and instantly feel better. And that's not how God works. Sometimes it's because we are, if we're honest, we want courage from our present circumstances. Is that not what David's men, where they're at? David's men, they want courage from their present circumstances. Their present circumstances are terrible so what are their thoughts? It's not about taking courage from the Lord, it's about taking out David. Sometimes we don't take courage from the Lord because we don't really know who He is. If you don't know Him personally, you can't take courage and strength from Him. Or if maybe you know Him personally, you've been saved by the blood of Christ, you've been bought, you've been saved by the grace of God, but you don't really know who God is because we're so illiterate and unfamiliar with His word and His revelation to us. Or maybe for many of us, the reason we don't take courage from God is because we actually doubt who He is. Here's the sad reality as I reflect upon this passage. Rarely do any of us face a situation as absolutely rock bottom as David. But here's a man living in a time where the Holy Spirit does not indwell him, where he has little to no access to the written word, and he demonstrates more confidence and faith in who God is and what He does than you and I who have access to all of that. See, taking confidence isn't taking courage from the Lord, being strengthened from the Lord. It's an action we're supposed to take. And it's not in the absence of grief. I'll remind you, David wept just alongside his other men. This isn't casualty in the face of hardship going "Uh, I'm just going to feel better and act like that's not there." No, David's not acting like the pain isn't there. But in the midst and the face of that pain and the reality of what that means, he is taking courage from the unchanging character of who his God is and what that means in his life. And because he takes courage, watch what he does next. Verse 7.

⁷Then David said to Abiathar the priest, son of Ahimelech, "Please bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. ⁸David inquired of the Lord saying, "Shall I pursue this band, this army? Shall I overtake them?" And God said to him, "Pursue, and you will surely overtake them and you will surely rescue all."

Now what does he do? He says, "Bring me the priest and bring the ephod." It was a priestly garment that could be used to seek the Lord's will. And he says, "Here's what I'm going to do. I've taken courage from the Lord so now I'm going to seek the Lord. I'm going to seek, seek His direction. I'm going to seek His will. I'm going to ask the Lord, 'What, how do You want me to respond in this situation?'" Because he is strengthened in the Lord, because he is confident of who the Lord is, he is quick to run and seek the Lord's guidance. Not the opinion on social media. Not the consensus of the masses. Not what another book says. Not what all his peers say. But to go before the Lord and to seek what the Lord's direction is. To seek God's solution to the situation, not his own.

There's many times you and I face in this world, aspects where we are slow to come to the Lord for His guidance and wisdom. And may I suggest that part of the reason we are slow to come is because you and I will never be quick to seek guidance from someone in whom we have little confidence. That's why you see David strengthen himself in the Lord and then you see him seek out the Lord's direction. But watch what happens. The Lord gives him direction. The Lord says, "Go after them. Go after them, you're going to overtake them." So you see David get up. He and his 600 men, verse 9, they cross the brook Besor, and when they get to that point, about 15 miles south of Ziklag, when they get to that moment, when they get to that point, 200 of his

men are so exhausted, physically and emotionally, that they cannot go on. And before you go, “Wow! What a bunch of wimps.” Remember, these are battle-hardened soldiers. These are the guys who looked at David and said, “Oh, you’re thirsty? We’re going to go run in that city full of our enemies, we’re going to go get a cup of water out of the well in there and bring it back to you without spilling any of it.” These are the guys who, when you read their exploits, slaughtered hundreds of people in battles. These are not pushovers. They are wiped out at what has happened. And 200 of them say, “We can’t go a moment further. We are unable to even go try to get our wives and kids back.” David, not knowing how big, here’s the first challenge. He’s strengthened in the Lord, he’s got the Lord’s direction, he can go, “Wow! Now we’re down to 400 men. That may not be enough.” But notice what it says:

But David pursued.

And you find in the rest of the story, David is obedient to pursue, even though he’s got to leave men behind. You find them come across an Egyptian slave of the Amalekites in a field. And in verse 11, they not only give him water to drink and some bread to eat, but they actually go beyond that offering him fig cakes and clusters of raisins. Delicacies. I’m sure all of you, that’s what you went and bought at the store this week to get ready for, to get ready the snowpocalypse coming. Raisin cakes and fig cakes. But they revived this man back to health. They treat him with kindness even though he was part of the raiding parties of some of the cities. And he agrees to help them. And we drop down to verse 16.

¹⁶And when brought him down, behold, they’re looking out on the Amalekites spread over all the land, eating, drinking, dancing because of all the spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and Judah.

They are so arrogant in their victory that they don’t even have any lookouts. And so it says,

¹⁷David slaughtered them from dawn until evening the next day, and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred who rode on. ¹⁸David recovered all the Amalekites had taken, rescued his two wives. ¹⁹There was nothing that was missing, small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that they had taken back for themselves. David brought it all back.

What we find as David as strengthened himself is he has sought the will of the Lord. We find now the resolve and conviction of David to walk rightly regardless of the circumstance. I don’t know how big this army is, I just know it’s bigger than ours. We’ve lost two hundred men. We’re not going to stop though, God said, pursue, so we pursue. Here’s a person who’s hurting. In the midst of our hardship, in the midst of our pain, we can treat him ugly, we could overlook him, but no, we will treat him as an honored guest. We will feed and restore him to health and treat him with kindness. They show up and they see the army laid out in front of them. What do they do? They charge into battle. They charge into battle. God delivers everything and they not only receive everything they had lost, but they take even more from that which the Amalekites had taken. When you get into verse 21 and 22, part of his men say, “All of this spoil, it’s going to only be for us who fought in the battle.” Everyone who stayed behind can’t have it. And you’re going to watch, verse 23, David shuts that down. David said, “You must not do this, my brothers.” With what the Lord has given us, who has kept us and delivered into our hand, the

band that will come against us. David's argument is this. We didn't take this. This isn't ours. God delivered this into our hands. So everyone gets a part. You watch whether the circumstance is frightening, losing two hundred men, or whether the circumstance is incredible, having all the spoils of victory. David walks righteously. Because he is living out the direction of the Lord that was given to him as he strengthened himself in the Lord. So you and I, church family, we are called to walk in a godly manner no matter what the circumstance is. We are called to walk in a godly manner. We are called to be consistent. To be consistent in the way that righteousness flows through us. Neither hardship nor blessing is ever a reason for you and I to act unbecoming a follower of Christ. But it's going to be difficult to walk out the righteousness of Christ when we do not seek His guidance and direction for the situation because we are weak and unconfident and have a lack of strength in who He is. See, David is able to take strength. To be, to take courage, to find courage in who God is. He is driven to seek the Lord's direction and the Lord's deliverance to the issue rather than his own. There is a calmness and consistency in how he lives out the righteousness of God no matter the circumstance. And the reality is, it is because there is a bigger picture than just simply his actions in the text. Because when you look at this text which you find is God's sovereign hand over everything that takes place. And it's because David is confident and trusts the Lord fiercely because David actually believes that God is shepherding his life for God's own glorious purposes. This is why David is driven to seek strength, to seek direction, to walk consistently.

You see, when you walk through this text, there's another lens to see. Because the next chapter after this is going to record the battle of the Philistines and Saul. And what's going to happen in that battle is the Philistines are going to slay Saul and all of his children, or all of his sons that are in battle, save one. This is going to open the doors, the beginning of 2 Samuel, for David to come in and for the men of Judah, the tribe of Judah, to make David king and then for David to exert that kingship and ultimately the rest of the nation to come in and honor his kingdom. You see, what you find here in this passage is you find God preparing, protecting, and providing for what his purpose is for David's life. Here's why I say preparing. Because David's not the first king of Israel to fight the Amalekites. Do you know who Saul was fighting in chapter 15 when he lost the kingdom? Because he did not obey exactly what God said, because in his own words he feared the voices of his people? The Amalekites. What cost Saul the kingdom? He didn't really believe God was who He said He was which made him insecure in terms of what God called him to do as king which is why he feared the voices of his people rather than the voice and command of the Lord. So God allows David to find a place at rock bottom. David can't go ask the Philistines for help. He can't go recruit more to his army. His own army has turned against him. The only thing the Lord can do, that David can do is look to the Lord. See, this is a test. There's a preparation. David, are you going to be the king that's truly driven after My heart? Are you going to be the king that will trust in Me, that will seek direction from Me, that will find your strength, not in the consensus of your people, but in the pleasure of My heart on your life? That is what God is going. He is preparing and He is testing David. But it's not only that, He is protecting David. What a situation. If David goes up to battle with the Philistines, what does David do? If he turns and goes with the Israelites, Saul's going to kill him afterwards and the Philistines aren't going to keep him safe. But if he fights with the Philistines, he has to go against Saul and the Lord's people. And the situation that looks like rock bottom and they is no hope is actually a situation where God is protecting David and his men because God has something bigger in store. God's not only protecting, He's providing. David takes the end of the chapter, when you look at verses 26 through 31, it talks about David takes some of his spoil and

he gives it as gifts to various people, various cities of the tribe of Judah. Now why is that key? Because that tribe of Judah is going to look and go, "We just saw our king killed in battle. We know God's hand is with David. We now see David is the victor. He has delivered all of this spoil. It's time that we recognize God's hand and make David king. God provides the very means through which the people are going to begin to honor and set David as king.

See, church family, when it comes to our lives, God is in control. Now we don't have time to unpack all the mysteries of His sovereignty in our lives. I'm not saying that everything happens is because God causes it but everything that happens is at minimum because God allows it. And there is nothing that touches your life or my life where God is not in some way preparing us where God is not in some way protecting us, and where God is not in some way providing for His purpose in and through our lives. Emphasis on His purpose. This is not a path that guarantees health, wealth, and prosperity just because we know it works out for David. David's strength wasn't in knowing how it would all turn out. His strength was knowing that His God was good and His God was for him and His God was going to work out His purpose in and through his life. My senior year of college I missed out on a job that I was the most qualified candidate for. Would have been, in my mind, really the perfect job to go to seminary. You work half days, you make a full salary, you have free room and board for to be the RD for a dorm at DBU. And not only was I not brought into the interview process I wasn't even asked even though months prior they literally said, "If this job ever opened up, would you want it?" I said, "Yes, I would." I wasn't even approached. They actually hired a guy that I trained. And then as things went on, the president of DBU who we had formed a relationship over time, he would come to me and say, "I just feel, Wes, God has laid it on my heart, I'm supposed to help you somehow with a job." But everywhere that he had recommended me didn't pan out. And there was nothing he could have on campus to offer me. And I remember there being this distinct, "Lord, what is going on? I do not understand. How will I pay for seminary? How will I live? What is happening?" And unfortunately, I did not draw the level of strength that David did. I was kind of 50/50. I drew some strength but I also drew a lot of worry which played itself out in some negative ways. Because here's what I couldn't see. The path that I had laid out, "I'm going to do this RD job, I'm going to go to seminary, I'm going to get the two years I needed in seminary, and then I'm going to go where I feel like God's leading overseas and never come back." Or when Dr. Cook sent the recommendation letter to the organization that I was looking to work for in seminary and he got a letter back from the head of that organization who pastored a local church and said, "I'll put Wes's resume in." What I didn't know is that the place that God would take me wouldn't even be open until June. But the place that God would take me to go become a youth pastor at First Baptist Carrollton, which I never dreamed of, whose pastor was the one that back in February, Dr. Cook wrote the letter of recommendation to. Which is why he knew who I was which was why he approached and said, "Would you be willing to come and talk to us about this reality?" Which is why as I worked through and prayed through and the Lord said, "This is where I want. This is where you go." Understand, church family, that protection, that reaching a point which was for me as a senior in college a rock bottom moment of having no future direction. That moment was God's protection from that which looked like a great, godly plan. For what His purposes were which were beyond I could ever dream. Because I will tell you this. If that job had opened up, I would not be your college minister at Central. I'd be somewhere in Eastern Europe; not in the will of God. See, church family, God is sovereign over our lives. He is preparing, He is protecting, He is providing for His purposes so as you and I walk through and uncertain and challenging world, whether it is COVID, whether it

is a job loss, whether it's a salary reduction, whether it's the state of our country, the state of our world, whether it is in personal opposition, whether it is in family issues, as you and I walk, may be do so drawing our strength from who God is, seeking His direction to every situation so that regardless of the circumstance, we would live and walk in a Christlike, God-fearing manner.

Let's pray.

Father, there is no one in this room, no one watching online that has not had some level of challenge realistically in the last year. And, Father, it is easy to get caught in the fast paced reality and the intensity of where things are at and it is easy to grow discouraged. It is easy to grow weak and miss out on the opportunity to take courage and strength from You. But Father, if we don't take courage and strength from You, it will impact our desire to seek Your direction. If we don't know Your direction, it will hamper our ability to live out the calling You've placed on our lives. So, Father, may we be confident. May we settle it in our spirit today that You are who You say You are. That You are over our lives and with a loving care in the way that You say You are in Scripture. That You are preparing, You are protecting, You are providing, and Father may we draw strength. So, Holy Spirit, as we move into a time of response, You know where every heart is. May we respond obediently to You. It's in Your name that I pray.