

1 Samuel 30:1-31 | “Strengthen Yourself in the Lord”
Preached on June 19, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown

Good morning, please turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 30, as we are finishing up the book of 1 Samuel in the next couple weeks.

If you were thinking that there would be a Father’s Day-related sermon this morning, don’t worry.

There will be times where I’ll specifically apply our text to fathers, but it’s also for all of us. *[pauseee]*

Have you ever thought to yourself, “It’s just one thing after the other.”?

That is, you finally get relief from one issue, only to face another one.

Maybe you’ve had a serious health problem for a long time, and then finally it’s gone, great news!

But then shortly thereafter, another serious health problem arises. *[pause]*

Or maybe it’s a big project at your house.

You have finally finished it after months of working on it, only to have something else break and need to be repaired. *[pause]*

Those kinds of situations can be distressing and frustrating to us because it’s like wave after wave hits.

One wave hits, you feel like you get a little breather, but now another wave is breaking over you.

That’s the kind of situation that David faced when you read 1 Samuel 30. *[pause]*

In the previous chapters, if you remember, David had fled to the Philistines to escape from Saul’s constant pursuit of his life.

Then we found that the Philistines were on their way to go up to fight Israel, but the majority of the Philistine commanders didn’t want David going with them, and sent him back to Ziklag.

Through this situation, God had providentially prevented David from fighting against his own people and also prevented him from being in the war that would kill King Saul.

What a relief for David, as he starts to head back to his temporary home in Ziklag. *[pause]*

David and his men are probably thinking, “We get to go home, spend some time with our families, and relax a little bit.”

But what do they find when they get back home? Tragedy.

They may have had a temporary breather as they made their trek back home, but home wouldn't bring comforts with it.

Let's READ what they encounter at Ziklag, and what David does in response. [*read verses 1-8*]

Imagine coming home to that.

Your wives and children have been taken and your town is burned.

And this hits the men so hard that they weep until they can't weep anymore.

They are even so bitter that they started talking of stoning David, their leader.

They probably think, "If David didn't put us in this position, our wives and children would still be with us." [*pause*]

This causes David great distress, and understandably so.

But what does David do in response to such a distressing, hard, and tragic situation?

Does he try to defend himself?

Does he seek a medium like Saul?

Does he let his anger drive his actions?

Does he throw up his hands in despair and give up?

No, he "strengthened himself in the Lord his God."

That statement right there in verse 6 is the key verse to this whole chapter, and it's our main point this morning...

Strengthen yourself in the Lord!

What does this actually mean and how do we do it?

Well he *strengthened* himself, so this has to do with gaining strength, courage, motivation, and encouragement.

It was this strengthening himself that led him to step up and pursue the enemy. [*pause*]

The implication is that he was weak, so he needed to be strengthened.

He was exhausted from the trip, he was weary from weeping, and so how could he go onto the next mission? [*pause*]

Isn't that your testimony?

Have you ever felt weak? Have you ever weeped until you had no more strength to weep anymore?

Have you ever been distressed, troubled, distraught and you just felt frail and feeble?

Like, “How am I going to go on?”

Then you are in good company, for David felt those kinds of things, and what did he need? *Strengthened. [pause]*

But did David become strengthened by looking inward for strength?

No, for the second part of the statement is essential: he strengthened himself *in the Lord. [pause]*

The Bible never calls us to just muster up the courage within ourselves as if we had enough strength by ourselves.

We are not called to just “live courageously” as a vague statement with no qualifiers.

Instead, we are strengthened *in* the Lord!

We find our strength in God Himself.

Our courage comes from and in God.

This is why Psalm 46:1 says, “God is our refuge and *strength*, a very present help in trouble.” *[pauseeeee]*

David went from a distressed man, weakened by his circumstances to a man of courage and strength because of his faith in God.

He sought the strength that comes from God alone. *[pause]*

Fathers, as you go through life, you will face some hard, distressing moments that are overwhelming.

You have a lot on your plate when it comes to your job, your role in your family, and your role in your marriage.

But what will be your next step when you are distressed or weak?

Will you despair and just give up?

Will you try to look inward?

You don't have the strength in yourself, no matter how much physical weight you can lift or how many hours you can work at your job.

You must strengthen yourself in the Lord your God! *[pauseeeee]*

David knew that he didn't have the resources to face the future, but he knew the place where the resources ever flow and are never depleted - the Lord his God.

And fathers, the best thing you can do every single day is to strengthen yourself in the Lord.

But how do we do this? First...

A. By remembering who your Lord is.

Why does David strengthen himself in the Lord?

Wasn't it because he remembered who his Lord was?

It was "the Lord his God". *[pause]*

He had a relationship with the God of the universe.

God wasn't some distant, impersonal God to David, but it was *his* God, and he knew that in *his* God, there was power beyond all measure. *[pause]*

He had a confidence that God had the power, and therefore he could strengthen himself in the Lord.

While Saul was seeking a medium,¹ David was seeking God through a priest. *[pause]*

How do you strengthen yourself in the Lord?

You remember who your Lord is - He. is. God. *[pause]*

What a difference it makes when you remember who God is, and how He is *your* God!

The God who created the heavens and the earth is your God!

The God who delivered Israel out of Egypt through His mighty hand is your God!

The God who has no rival, no equal, and who reigns now and forever is your God!

How can I not be strengthened in the Lord, when I remember this! *[pause]*

"Yes, I'm weak right now, but I have the God of all Might who is my God." What a strengthening reminder! *[pauseeee]*

You may be facing something very hard in your life right now.

You feel your strength and resolve depleted.

¹ See 1 Samuel 28.

But the One who knows all things and can do all things is your God: be strengthened by this truth! *[pause]*

Fathers, maybe you're like me, and you feel exhausted, spent, and weak.

This isn't an abnormal part of the Christian life, but it's normal, and it pushes you into the Heavenly Father's arms.

Strengthen yourself in the Lord by remembering who your Lord is, He is God. *[pauseeee]*

How else do you strengthen yourself in the Lord?...

B. By seeking the Lord's direction.

Right after telling us that he strengthened himself in the Lord, the story tells us that that's when David said, "Bring me the ephod."

The connection here isn't a coincidence.

David was strengthened by seeking the Lord's direction.

He was determined to look to what God said in order to be encouraged and sustained.

Unlike Saul, who received no word from the Lord, and lived in fear - David heard from the Lord, and was strengthened. *[pauseeee]*

David was tired from the long trip home.

David was probably feeling overwhelmed after getting out of a tense situation, and now going to another one.

He was sorrowful, for his wives were taken.

His town was burned, and now he was being blamed for it all, and was being threatened with stoning.

Talk about the weight of leadership being heavy, yet he turned to the Lord, even amidst all of that. *[pause]*

And fathers: because you are the leader in your marriage and home, often the responsibility of bad things happening will be laid at your feet.

But what will you do?

Will you spend all of your energy trying to defend yourself and trying to blame others?

Will you try to skirt your responsibility as the leader, and become passive, distant, and not as involved?

Or will you turn to the Lord? *[pause]*

David as the leader didn't point fingers at others, and he definitely didn't blame God for the situation, but he turned to God. *[pause]*

When the responsibility and weight of leadership for bad situations fall at your feet, seek the Lord's direction, leading those who you lead to follow you there. *[pause]*

David sought the Lord through the prescribed way during the time that he lived: the priestly ephod.

But what about us?

We obviously don't live in that dispensation, so how do we seek the Lord's direction in our day?

Through prayer and Scripture. *[pause]*

David had the priest Abiathar, but we have the great high priest, Jesus, and since we have this high priest...

What does Hebrews tell us?... "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."²

We can boldly approach God the Father in prayer through Christ!

And we have His Word in our hands today in the Bible!

So let's seek the Lord's direction in prayer and in Scripture! *[pause]*

We also have the Spirit who comforts and helps us as we go through each day.

Do you seek the Lord's direction, even when times are tough and things look bleak?

Do you seek the Lord's direction through prayer and Scripture?

Do you seek Him when the weight of responsibility is heavy? *[pause]*

His direction is best!

And David didn't let his feelings drive him, for his sorrow and anger could have caused him to act on his impulses. *[pause]*

Wouldn't you be tempted to be driven by rage and revenge after your family was kidnapped?

David could have easily reasoned, "Of course, I need to pursue this group out of revenge!" But he sought the Lord. *[pause]*

² Hebrews 4:16.

Before he took the next step, he made sure what he was going to do was according to the will of the Lord.

This is because steps taken in revenge are often missteps, but steps taken in obedience are always in the right direction. *[pause]*

Don't let your emotions drive your next steps in distressing moments and times of weakness!

Emotions can't always be trusted, but the Lord's direction can be.

Seek the Lord's direction, and be strengthened by it! *[pauseeee]*

What an encouraging, strengthening moment when you seek the Lord, and He gives you an answer.

David could go emboldened by the promise and declaration of God about his mission.

And we can take courage in the Lord's direction, too. *[pause]*

Haven't you ever faced something difficult, so you sought out what God says in His Word, and you were so encouraged and strengthened by what you found?

Haven't you ever faced something hard, you prayed to God, and you got an answer?

What an encouraging moment!

Truly, as Paul says, when we let our requests be made known to God, the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guards our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.³ *[pauseeee]*

So to strengthen yourself in the Lord, you need to remember who your Lord is, seek the Lord's direction, but thirdly, we do so...

C. By trusting the Lord's Word and acting on it.

It's one thing to know who your God is, but you must trust Him.

It's one thing to seek the Lord, but it's another to trust His answer and act on it.

That's what we see David do in this chapter after hearing from God: he trusts and acts.

Let's CONTINUE READING starting in verse 9. *[read verses 9-15]*

This portion of the story is a mixture of lows and highs.

The low point is how 200 of David's men (which is a third of his men) are so exhausted that they can't continue any longer.

³ See Philippians 4:6-7.

David was already facing a tough mission, well now he has to do it with a third less the men than he had before.

But this doesn't cause David to fret, but he continues on in faith. *[pause]*

Yet right after this, there's a high point as they providentially come upon this Egyptian slave by himself, who belonged to the Amalekites.

They use this man to find out where the enemy is.

Let's PICK BACK UP in verse 16. *[read verses 16-25]*

They come upon the Amalekites, who have no idea what they are in for and are just living it up.

David defeats them, recovers all that was taken, and rescues his wives. *[pause]*

We find that David also takes some spoil from the enemy, and this is important for the rest of the chapter.

Why? Because they go back to the 200 men who were too exhausted to go further, and the question becomes, "Do they get any spoil?" *[pause]*

Wicked and worthless men say, "No, because they didn't actually fight."

But David, the great and gracious leader, steps in and declares that they should get just as much as those who fought.

And his reasoning is that since God actually provided the victory, then all should share alike.

Both those who stay with the belongings and those who go to battle are important, and they are all one people. *[pauseeee]*

Then verses 26-31 simply explain that David sends part of the spoil to the elders of Judah as a gift of gratitude for how they helped him during his time of exile. *[pauseeee]*

So what does this, the rest of the story, show us about David?

He trusted the Lord's Word and acted on it in faith. *[pause]*

David was showing that he was strengthened in the Lord by trust in the Lord.

This is where the strength that God provides truly starts to get real: when we believe God's Word. *[pause]*

It's one thing to hear that you shouldn't be anxious because your Heavenly Father knows your needs,⁴ but you are still anxious, if you don't actually trust God's Word.

⁴ See Matthew 6:25-34.

It's one thing to hear that you shouldn't be afraid for God is with you,⁵ but you are still fearful, if you don't trust that He is truly with you.

When do you actually become strengthened in the Lord? When you believe Him! *[pauseeee]*

Strengthening ourselves in the Lord is completed when we trust and obey.

Are you truly strengthened if you are still weak?

It's when you remember who your God is, seek the Lord, and then trust His Word - that's when we are strengthened in the Lord. *[pauseeeee]*

Have you ever felt discouraged, but then remembered and believed that nothing can separate you from the love of God,⁶ and you suddenly became so very encouraged?

You were strengthened in the Lord!

Have you ever felt the weight of guilt from sin, but then remembered and trusted that you are forgiven in Christ,⁷ and you felt that burden lifted?

You were strengthened in the Lord!

This is why Isaiah 40:31 says, "They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength." *[pauseee]*

Do you trust the Lord's Word like David did?

He didn't even let the setback of losing 200 men to exhaustion discourage him or make him weakened again.

He was resolute on God's Word once he heard it. *[pauseeeee]*

Christian, you have God's written Word, will you trust it and be strengthened in Him?

Will you trust Him, even when your emotions are driving you in the opposite direction?

Will you trust Him, even when your circumstances make it seem impossible for God to come through? *[pauseeee]*

Fathers, what about you?

Do you trust the Lord's Word when he shows you the proper way to parent your child,⁸ even if it seems like it won't work?

⁵ See Isaiah 41:10.

⁶ See Romans 8:35-39.

⁷ See Ephesians 1:7 as one example among many other passages.

⁸ See Ephesians 6:4.

Do you trust the Lord's Word when he shows you that you need to love your wife,⁹ but you want your own selfish way instead?

Do you truly believe that the sacrificial, servant leadership commanded in the Bible is the way to lead well?

Fathers, be resolute on God's Word once you hear it! *[pauseeee]*

Imagine a congregation of husbands and fathers who were strong, not in the world's fake way, displayed in bravado...

...But by their willingness to lay themselves at the feet of their Heavenly Father, trust His Word, and resolutely stand firm on it. *[pause]*

Imagine our homes when we have fathers who strengthen themselves in the Lord, and who act only according to the Lord's Word.

That's what you find with David.

He would only act according to what God said, and then once God said it, he acted. *[pause]*

Once we look to God and hear His direction, then we trust and we boldly act.

We are not to be hearers of the Word only, but doers of the Word, too.¹⁰ *[pause]*

Convinced of the truth of the Bible, we boldly act!

We don't sit around once we hear what to do, but like good soldiers, when we hear our orders, we follow them in obedience. *[pauseeee]*

For David, God told him to pursue and rescue, so he did it, even at great risk.

For husbands and fathers, we are told to sacrificially love and lay down our lives for our wives, so we boldly act.

We love and protect others, that's what we are called to do! *[pause]*

As men, we don't sit on the sidelines and watch our wives and children take the arrows for us, but we go on the front lines armed with and strengthened by God's promises!

We take risks out of faith-filled love and obedience...but we are also gracious leaders. *[pause]*

Did you notice that about David?

In this story, even being the leader, David treated every person he interacted with with grace.

⁹ See Ephesians 5:25.

¹⁰ See James' argument in James 1:22.

The Egyptian slave? He didn't torture him for information, but provided a lavish meal and kindness.

The men who stayed at the brook? He showed grace to them and graciously gave them an equal share of the spoil.

The elders of Judah? He was willing to share spoils with them and show gratitude for how they helped him when he was on the run.

That's grace-filled leadership! [pause]

He could have kept all the spoils for himself, for even the people were proclaiming that it was *his* spoil, yet he sacrificially and humbly shared it with others.

His humility was further shone when he didn't take the credit for the victory, but declared that God was the one who had given it to them. [pause]

How could such a strong leader such as David show such grace and humility?

Because grace flows out of us because of grace flowing towards us. [pause]

David recognized that since God had graciously given him the success, then he could show grace towards others.

And what's the result of such gracious and humble leadership? It cultivates peace and unity. [pause]

David was uniting the people, as the fight among the 200 who stayed behind and the 400 who went was quelled.

He was starting to unite Israel, as he sent the spoils of the enemy to various Israelite towns.

This is what humble, gracious leadership does: it cultivates peace and unity. *[pauseeee]*

Fathers, you can foster and encourage peace and unity in your home when you lead in humility and grace.

But when you selfishly, harshly, or passively lead then you foster selfishness and division in your family.

There is truly blessing when we lead God's way. [pause]

Do you trust the Lord's Word and act on it?

When you trust Him, you are strengthened in Him, and able to act boldly in faith. [pauseeee]

This story teaches us that...

God has all that you need, so strengthen yourself in Him!

You know, this story is helpful for us to learn from David, but really, David points ultimately to Christ.

David here is just a small glimpse of Jesus, the son of David and greater David. *[pause]*

Jesus perfectly obeyed the Father in all that He did.

He rescued his people, not temporarily like David, but once and for all on the Cross, conquering our enemies.

Like David in his victory, leading captives and giving out the gifts of spoils, so also, what does Ephesians say of Christ?...

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”¹¹ *[pause]*

Through his victory, we are rescued, and blessed by his gracious gifts.

And even greater than David, Christ is truly the perfect, gracious, and humble Leader and Savior that we need. *[pause]*

In Him, we have all that we need, so it is He who we turn to.

It is He who we remember, for He - our Lord - He is God.

It is He who we look to for direction, for He is the Savior, the One and only Lord of all, and the Head of the Church.

It is He who we trust, for in Him, there is life, peace, and joy forevermore.

And it is *in Him* that we are strengthened, capable of doing all things through Christ who strengthens us,¹² for he gives us the power.

Christ has all that you need, will you be strengthened in Him?

¹¹ Ephesians 4:8.

¹² An allusion to Philippians 4:13.