
“Strengthened In The Lord”

1 SAMUEL 30:1-8

MAY 17, 2026

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AT A GLANCE

Just when you think things can't get any worse, boom! That must have been how David felt in this episode of his life. He's lost everything in his world – identity, purpose, family, possessions. Where did he turn? Where we all need to turn – he strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

ROCK BOTTOM

There are moments in life when everything caves in at once. The job falls apart. The marriage strains. The diagnosis comes. The anxiety overwhelms. The consequences of our own decisions finally catch up to us. And suddenly the things we leaned on for identity, comfort, or security are stripped away.

That's exactly where David finds himself in 1 Samuel 30. His city is burned. His family is gone. His men want him dead. He has hit absolute rock bottom. But sometimes rock bottom becomes the place where God finally gets our full attention.

And what we discover in this passage is that what made David “a man after God's own heart” was not that he never failed. It was that when everything collapsed, David turned back to the Lord.

If you've ever felt exhausted, ashamed, overwhelmed, spiritually dry, or like you've made too much of a mess to recover from, this passage shows us where real strength is found: not in ourselves, but in the Lord our God.

1 SAMUEL 30:1-8

Verses 1-2 Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid against the Negeb and against Ziklag. They had overcome Ziklag and burned it with fire ²and taken captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great. They killed no one, but carried them off and went their way.

David and his men covered over 50 miles in that period, wasting no time returning to their families.

The Amalekites were no philanthropists. They took the **captives** as slaves.

Verses 3-5 And when David and his men came to the city, they found it burned with fire, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. ⁴Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep. ⁵David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel.

Imagine the roller coaster of emotions: you narrowly get relieved of the task of going to war against your own people. You b-line home to reunite with your family and just as you round the top of the hill, you see the columns of smoke.

As you frantically draw closer, you see the charring on what is left of the walls of your house. The air is thick with smoke and eerily silent. Where is the laughter of children? Why are they not running out to greet us?

You rush into the city and your greatest fears are realized. You've lost everything. When Job lost everything it was a tragedy. Now multiply that by 600. These warriors were brought to their knees. They **wept until they had no more strength to weep**. It's hard to imagine the scene becoming any more grim. And yet it does, at least for David.

Verse 6a And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. David is getting a taste of his own medicine. The Amalekites did to David what David had been doing to countless cities for 16 months - reaping what he sowed.

David hit rock bottom. When Saul was at the bottom, he turned to a witch. Where did David turn? **Verse 6b But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.**

Finally, David seeks the Lord! David's world has collapsed. Rejected by both Saul and Achish, his identity is stripped from him. His wives are kidnapped. And all his men turn on him, ready to kill him.

He's got no one and no *thing* in the world. And David finally turns his eyes back to the Lord. Folks, this may be the most important thing for us to take away from this series *Life of David*. What made David a man after God's own heart? It is clearly not that David never turned away from the Lord.

It was his repentant heart. His recognition that he needed the Lord and turned to him. Even if it was only after the loss of everything his world revolved around. I know what it feels like to be stripped of the things that I thought gave life, meaning, and identity. And I praise the Lord for it because it was when these were stripped away from me that I found real life in Jesus.

David wasn't looking first and foremost for what God could do for him, though. That will come next (v. 7). Nor was he primarily venting his emotions. That already happened (v. 4). After all the tears were cried, and before David asked a single question, he strengthened himself in **the Lord His God**.

This is where strengthening oneself in the Lord begins: personally.

STENGHTENED BY HIS PERSON

I appreciate Dale Davis drawing this out for us in his commentary. It's one thing to speak of the Lord as Israel's shepherd, as Asaph does in Psalm 80. It's another to speak of the Lord as 'my' shepherd, as David does in Psalm 23.

Just as it is one thing for church people to call Jesus the Savior of the world and another to say Jesus is "*the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.*" *Galatians 2:20*

These are not semantics. The difference in where you will spend eternity is not religious activity, devotion, and certainly not emotion. It is *relation*. Do you know Jesus and does Jesus know you? Is He *your* Savior and *your* Lord?

It is from this personal relationship with the Lord that we are invited into His presence.

STENGHTENED BY HIS PRESENCE

Verse 7 And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David.

It has been seven chapters since David asked for the ephod. (cf. 23:9) David's seeking the Lord is what spared the city of Keilah along with David and his men. When David sought the Lord, people

were safer because of him. When he let fear or emotions drive him, people were endangered. How much clearer could this be for us?

When we walk by the flesh, we're a liability to ourselves and others. When we walk by the Spirit, we're an asset.

Now, you may be saying to yourself, "I wish I had a priest of Aaron and an ephod like David." What?! In Christ, you not only have a great high priest (cf. Hebrews 4:14-16) who calls you to enter into His presence and find grace in your moment of weakness, but you also have the very Spirit of God dwelling within you! (cf. Romans 8:9)

And the Spirit of God who dwells in us not only gives us power, and not only does He intercede for us, but listen, He reminds us we are children of God! *"You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."* Romans 8:15-16

The Spirit of God is constantly reminding you, "Child, come to Him!" *"For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father."* Ephesians 2:18

We are strengthened when we enter His presence and because from His presence we are reminded of His promises.

STRENGTHENED BY HIS PROMISES

Recall from chapter 23, *"And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God."* 1 Samuel 23:16 I made note that later David would strengthen himself in the Lord. Do you remember what Jonathan told David that strengthened him? It wasn't sentimental platitudes.

Jonathan brought David back to the promises of God. This is what you need; this is what I need: to be reminded of the promises of God. Because the battle is for the mind and the enemy is a deceiver. If he wins it's because he got you to believe a lie of some sort. So, what we need is not warm fuzzies, but truth in love.

When we get into the presence of God in a personal way, we pray not to some divine force, but to our heavenly Father who loves us and gave His own Son for us. And we read not some religious textbook, but the word of Truth.

Not every promise in the bible applies to us. But where the Bible speaks of God's character and His attributes, we need to remember our God does not change.

So, for instance we read, *"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."* Isaiah 41:10

That was written to Israel. But we also hear Jesus say, *"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* Matthew 28:20 and the author of Hebrews quotes the Lord, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you."* and draws the conclusion, *"The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"* Hebrews 13:5-6 quoting Psalm 118 and Psalm 56.

Furthermore, Jesus told Paul, *"My grace is sufficient for you."* 2 Corinthians 12:9 Do you doubt it is sufficient for you in your trials and hardships?

Jesus promised we will have tribulation. *"But,"* he says, *"...take heart; I have overcome the world."* John 16:33

This is what makes the Bible so powerful – it doesn't cater to us and it doesn't lie to us. It tells us the Truth. We know trials will come. But we also know God will work powerfully through our trials. *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good..."* Romans 8:28

They not only work for our good, they produce good in us. (cf. Romans 5:3-5) God uses our trials to sanctify us, to make us more like His Son. And that work will continue until we see Jesus face to face.

And how can we be certain He will keep us to the end? This beautiful promise: *“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”* *Philippians 1:6*

Once we find strength in the Lord our God and enter His presence, we are postured to ask for His guidance.

STRENGTHENED BY HIS GUIDANCE

We get this twisted. We want God’s guidance before we get into His presence and remind ourselves of His promises.

But David did not ask for guidance until he first reconnected with the Lord.

Verse 8a And David inquired of the LORD, “Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them?”

This is so opposite of David’s response in chapter 27, where *“David said in his heart, ‘Now I shall perish one day at the hand of Saul.’”* *1 Samuel 27:1* In David’s mind, or in David’s understanding, he couldn’t see anything else happening even though God told him he was to be Israel’s next king. Fear blinds us. It confuses us.

Which is why we’re told to *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding...”* *Proverbs 3:5–6*

The Spirit that dwells within the life of every believer Jesus calls “Helper.” *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever... You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”* *John 14:16–17*

And then He tells us, *“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...”* *John 16:13*

If you have the Spirit of God dwelling in you, you have His guidance. You have His direction. He is willing to lead you where He wants you to go.

And *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”* *James 1:5* I am so thankful for the “without reproach” comment there.

That means God isn’t going to say to you, “You asked for wisdom or guidance last week and you didn’t use it. Why should I give it this time?”

I think that’s a lot of our fear and hesitation in going to the Father. We know how we respond when people ask us for advice and don’t take it. After the umpteenth time we’re like, “I got nothing for ya.”

And we imagine that’s what God is like. Not so. So, ask. Nothing speaks to this more than the following verse.

Verse 8b He answered him, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue.”

Notice what the Lord did not say. He did not say, “Well, well, well...look who finally came crawling back!” Nor did He say, “What are gonna do to make it up to me?”

He didn’t say any of the things we imagine He might say that makes us hesitant to turn back to Him. He simply answers David’s question.

No matter how far we’ve strayed, no matter how low we’ve gone, or how long we’ve stayed away, the Lord offers forgiveness and restoration, which is another way we are strengthened in the Lord.

STRENGTHENED BY HIS FORGIVENESS AND RESTORATION

One of the most comforting verses in the bible to me is *1 John 1:9*, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us..."* Notice this does not say he is soft and gullible. It does not say He is easily manipulated. Our forgiveness is a factor of God's faithfulness and justice! Those are rock-solid. No more would God violate His own character than He would choose not to forgive sincerely confessed sin.

And more than forgiveness, our God is a God who restores. He rebuilds. *"I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten..." Joel 2:25* We may reap consequences in this life for our sin, but even so, God is able to make something beautiful out of our messes. He can restore our joy, our peace, our marriages, our families, our stability, our reputation, and more. He is a restoring God!

We shouldn't put Him to the test but for those who find themselves sitting at the end of a string of bad decisions I'm here to tell you our God is a forgiving and restoring God.

David spent the last 16 months living in fear and walking in the flesh, and when he returns to the Lord, the Lord just restores him to right standing instantly.

Once again, we get this so twisted. We imagine for every season of living in our flesh we need to give God X amount of penance – whether that's in self-hatred or shame, or tithe dollars, or weeks of consistent bible study, or for Martin Luther it was walking up the steps of the Scala Sancta in Rome on his knees. How misguided!

Yet I know I am prone to it myself. What the Lord asks is not penance, but a humble heart. *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."* *Psalm 51:17* Any guesses who wrote that? David, when he was confronted about his affair with Bathsheba and having her husband killed in battle.

A humble heart He will not cast away. Not now, and not ever. And that brings us to our final point. We are ultimately strengthened in the Lord and find ultimate comfort in His promises because they are not only for this life, but also for the life to come.

STRENGTHENED BY HIS ETERNAL SECURITY

Jesus tells us that we are in his hands and, *"No one will snatch them out of my hand."* *John 10:27–29* You cannot be snatched out. You can't fall out accidentally. You can't wriggle out on purpose. If you are in Christ's hands, in the words of Allstate Insurance, "you're in good hands."

Listen to this double guarantee, *"he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."* *1 Peter 1:3–5*

An inheritance in Heaven that is being kept for you, who are being guarded by God's power until the end. Double guarantee!

How do you know that's you? *"In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,"* *Ephesians 1:13* Which Paul says in *2 Corinthians 1:22* is a "guarantee" of our salvation.

The same Holy Spirit who reminds us we are children of God and calls us back into His presence is the guarantee of our salvation.

If you have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in you, brother and sister, you are sealed forever! *"Nothing... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* *Romans 8:38–39*

And how do you know you have the Holy Spirit? You believe the Gospel. No one can truly believe the Gospel unless he is born again. You can give intellectual assent. You can say, "Jesus died for the sin of the world."

You can answer all the Sunday school questions. You can know the Bible from cover to cover. But until you have been born again by the Spirit you cannot believe that Jesus died for *your* sin. And that that is the only thing you bring to the table – your sin. That the only thing that makes any lick of difference in your salvation is His grace.

That you not only know this in your mind but believe it in your heart, and from the overflow of your heart comes the expression of Jesus' lordship in your life, demonstrates not only do you know *about* Jesus, but you know *Him* and more importantly He knows *you!*

And when you've been filled with the Spirit, He begins a work in you until the day you meet Jesus face to face. He humbles the proud. He comforts the afflicted. He convicts the sinful. He produces fruit in your life such that you grow in Christlikeness.

LORD, I NEED YOU

So let me ask you, do you believe the Gospel? Do you, like David, recognize just how much you need the Lord? Not, like 'I need the Lord to fix my problems. I need the Lord to take away my anxieties. I need the Lord to provide financially. I need the Lord to get me out of a mess I've made. I need the Lord to answer all my questions.'

But first and foremost, do you recognize that you need the Lord your God? Your soul was created to worship Him, to walk with Him, to be in communion with Him. But in Adam, all sinned and are cut off.

This is the source of all human suffering. So you don't need the Lord first to solve your problems. You need to be strengthened in the Lord *your* God. Which means first you need the Lord to bring you into right relationship with Him.

And when you know you are in Christ and Christ in you, then, brother and sister, walk with Him reminding yourself of His promises, seeking His guidance, grateful for His forgiveness and restoration, and confident in your eternal security.

Call out to Him today, "Lord I need you."