

1 Samuel 30

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[0 : 0 0] We're due to eternity now to the chapter we read, 1 Samuel chapter 30, and I'd like to focus our thoughts this evening around the last part of verse 6, where we read, but David found strength in the Lord his God. Now can I first of all apologise to the young people here because I haven't got a story to tell you at the beginning, but I've got a story a little bit into the sermon, so if you keep an ear out for it, there's a special bit for the young people.

And I do apologise that I've just got one as well, but there we are. Well, the context that we have here is that this was possibly one of the grimmest periods in the life of David, probably of all, possibly with the one exception of the time when Absalom rebelled.

You remember the details, perhaps the young people won't remember all the details, but what had happened was, as we're told, that in 1 Samuel chapter 27, David had been pursued so mercilessly by Saul that it seems that he just had come to the end of his tether and he went to the land of the Philistines.

He just couldn't see, apparently, how he could possibly survive any longer in the land of Israel. He went over into the territory of the worst enemies of all of the children of Israel, the Philistines, and there he sought the protection of one of the Philistine kings, the king of Gath.

And he had been given a village to live in along with his men. So there we have David, the man who had been anointed by the prophet Samuel, appointed by God to succeed Saul as king, and there he was under Philistine protection.

[1 : 5 2] He was a renegade, and he tried very hard and quite ruthlessly to keep up the appearance that he really had given up on his own people, the children of Israel.

He was willing to serve as a mercenary, a person who will fight for money of the Philistines. And there was this decisive battle. The Philistines had decided, all the kings gathered together, and they decided that they were going to have this one decisive push that was going to sort out Israel, defeat Israel once and for all, and subjugate the children of Israel.

And David gave the appearance of going along with them. And he joined the army for the king of Gath, and he turned up at Aphek, where the Philistines were gathering.

Now, we don't quite know what was going on in David's mind. We don't know, in fact, what was going on in David's mind. Whether he was going to change sides at a crucial point in the battle, or whether he didn't know what he was going to do, we don't know.

But the Philistines themselves got him out of the tight spot. The Philistines' other leaders said, there's no way we're having this Israelite David in the army.

[3 : 0 6] Who is to know but what he might ingratiate himself again with Saul by killing us at a crucial moment in the battle, send him home. So David goes home, and for three days they had to travel about 25 miles a day, 60-odd miles, before they got to Ziklag, and what do they find?

Ziklag is in ashes. And all the women and the children who they've left have gone. Not only that, David's men blame him, as we read, and spoke of stoning him because they thought it was all his fault.

And we have to admit that in one respect it was all David's fault. Back in 1 Samuel 27, without consulting God at all, he decided he was going to live amongst the Philistines.

He had, if you like, sought his own advantage instead of all the truth that he knew. Who was God's people? His responsibilities to them. All these things he paid no attention, and utterly at least sided with the enemies of God's people.

Now I think at that moment we all need to stop. You young people need to think here too, because that's something which we need to be careful of ourselves. We need to be sure that we don't act without seeking God's guidance.

[4 : 28] And that's terribly easy to do without realising it. You young people, you can do things, you can make decisions without asking God to show you what you should be doing to guide you.

Because God can guide us, God can tell us all sorts of things which we wouldn't have thought we would ever be able to understand at all. He can close doors so that we don't go through them. He can open other doors so that we do go through them.

That's what happens when people seek God's guidance. So you young people, that's the first thing I want you to remember. Always ask God to guide you from day to day. In the morning you should ask for God to guide you during the day, to keep you safe and to show you the things that you should be doing.

It's important also to remember about truth, to always do what's right, right in God's sight, right in terms of what we find ourselves being told to do in the Bible and told not to do.

Seek to do what's right rather than what suits you or what you think is to your best advantage.

That's important. Don't side with the enemies of God's people.

[5 : 33] It's so easy to slip into a position where basically the enemies of God's people think that you're on their side. Very, very easy. Remember about David. Be warned about David.

So that's the situation. David is really in a grim, grim position. But in spite of his distress, in spite of his sinfulness, which must have been staring at him right in the face, no matter the greatness of his problems, and he had a huge problem, just to try to put yourself in the position that David was there, what does he do?

Well, he encourages himself. I think in actual fact that translation is a bitty, bitty weak. David found strength in the Lord his God. The Hebrew actually indicates that the Lord, that he strengthened himself, or he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

It's very, very definite. It's very explicit. So David encourages himself, or if you like, strengthens himself in the Lord his God. And that's the first thing I really want us to think about tonight in this list.

What is this strengthening? What is this encouragement, or encouraging oneself in the Lord?

Hugely important, because from time to time we are all in a situation where we need to encourage ourselves, or to strengthen ourselves.

[6 : 49] You as a congregation, as I was noting this morning, you're in this sort of position at the moment. Your call to Dr. Bob Ackroyd, he felt that was not the Lord's will, he should accept it.

So you're in a situation, as a congregation, where you need encouragement. Obviously so, I think. Well, I think this is relevant, not just for you as a congregation, but individually as well. Well, what is it?

Well, can I say first of all, three things that it's not. Encouraging oneself, or strengthening oneself in the Lord, it's not a quick fix. It's not some sort of gospel magic.

We're in a tight situation. What can we do? We'll ask God to help us, and he'll sort it out for us. It's not like that. That's a huge, huge, huge oversimplification. It's not paying, as it were, lip service to the Lord, to get him to help, and to come in decisively on our side.

It's not also something which David and these men did, as we find it there in verse 4. It wasn't to do, it's not to do with letting go emotionally. It may well be the case that, at times, that's what you need to do.

[7 : 55] It's certainly what David and his men needed to do. They wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. But that's not strengthening oneself in the Lord, either. And it's not certainly, not doing what David's men did, letting out their anger and, well, I was going to say frustration, but it was worse and worse by far than frustration.

David's men did that, but they didn't strengthen themselves in the Lord, either. Might I just say, in passing, that sometimes a righteous anger, righteous indignation, as it's sometimes known as, sometimes that's an accurate response to the situation, and providing it's kept within biblical limits, then there's no problem with that.

But it's not strengthening oneself in the Lord. So those are three things, very quickly, that it's not. So what then is it, to strengthen oneself, or to encourage oneself in the Lord?

Well, the very first thing I think is this. It's to have the persuasion, have the absolute conviction, that encouragement in real sorrow, or encouragement in real difficulty, is in the Lord.

That's the first thing, in the Lord. Sometimes, perhaps, somebody who's just been bereaved, or something like that, you may feel that words don't, words just can't contribute any help.

[9 : 19] Sympathy is pretty shallow, perhaps. But there's always one thing which you can do, and that's to point the person who's in grief, or in an impossible situation, as it seems, to the Lord.

Because there's nothing wrong with going to the Lord, and saying, Lord, I don't know what to do. I'm desperate. Please help me. Because the Lord in the situation, does. The Lord does not turn away people, when they cry to Him in their need.

Except, perhaps, one might say, when people have turned their back on Him, all their lives, and they've rejected Him, time after time, and then right at the end, they ask help. There are many instances, where the Lord, the time is gone.

But can I say to you young people, boys and girls, never think that things are so difficult, that God won't help you. Always remember, when things are going badly, you're in trouble, perhaps, you don't know what you do, trouble at school, trouble at home, trouble with your friends, whatever it might be, never forget, that God, likes to help His people.

He loves to help His people. He wants them to pray, and ask Him for help. So that's the first thing, I think. The conviction, that encouragement, in real sorrow, real difficulty, is in the Lord.

[10 : 37] It comes from God. That's the place to look. First thing. Second thing, I think, we have to raise our mind, to God. That's, I think, what David did.

I think what David did, was to remember the promises, and the affirmations, that God had made to him, in His Word. And there's promises in God's Word, that apply to you and me.

And there's affirmations, there's statements in His Word, about God's character, which we can latch on to, and apply to ourselves, and get encouragement, and strength, and blessing too.

Now you might say, what's the evidence for saying that? Well, I think the evidence for saying that, is back in 1 Samuel 23, verses 16 to 17. David's, in a tight spot again, in, it's on page 296, 1 Samuel 23, verses, well, we'll read from verse 15, because here's, an example, where, Jonathan, did I think, the precise same thing, by the precise same means, as David did, in 1 Samuel 30.

While David was at Horesh, in the desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul, had come out to take his life. And Saul's son, Jonathan, went to David at Horesh, and helped him, to find strength, in God.

[12 : 02] That's the key phrase. What does Jonathan say? Don't be afraid, he says, my father Saul, will not lay a hand on you. You shall be king, over Israel, and I will be second to you, even my father Saul, knows this.

Two of them made a covenant, before the Lord, then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh. That's Jonathan, encouraging David, by, reminding him, of God's promises, about the kingship.

And I think, really, what's happening here, in verse 30, that we look, in 1 Samuel 30, verse 6, that we're looking at, is that David, found strength, in the Lord his God, by remembering, his promises, by remembering, the significance, of his anointing, by Samuel, by remembering, the times, that God, had delivered, Saul, David from Saul, umpteen times before.

So, it's raising, one's mind, to God, that's the key thing. Here's the story, for the young people. I think it's relevant, for all of us, to be perfectly truthful. In the 19th century, that's the date, remember, like 1843, or 1856, or something like that.

There was a very famous, minister in Scotland, he was a minister, in the Free Church, of Scotland, his name was Andrew Boner. He had a brother, who wrote a lot of hymns, Horatius Boner, but this is about, Andrew Boner.

[13 : 26] At one point, he was a minister, in a wee congregation, in Angus, and then he went, to a big congregation, in Glasgow. And, he kept a diary. You know, he wrote each day, what happened to him, all sorts of things.

On the 15th of October, 1864, his wife died. Her name was Isabella, but that's not the important thing.

His wife died. She died, apparently, from what we can make, out of complications, after giving birth to a baby. But, in the, he entered, he wrote an entry for his diary, the day his wife died.

And, he said, on this day, I had been meditating, after lunch, this is pretty much what he said, on the verse of scripture, as I always do, after lunch.

And, this day, the verse was, in the prophet Nahum, chapter 1, verse 7. Nahum, chapter 1, verse 7, says this, The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knows those who trust in him, or, if you like, rely on him.

[14 : 35] It's a great text, that actually. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knows those who trust in him. Think about that.

There's a huge amount of strengthening, and insight, into the Lord's character. Think about that. The Lord knows those who trust in him. And you can think, and think, and think, and there's more and more to get out of that, that one wee half sentence.

And in his diary, Andrew Boner, wrote the following, Little did I think, how I would need it, half an hour after. Because half an hour after, he was reading and meditating on it, thinking about it, that's what meditating words, that big word.

Half an hour after, his wife died. Now, why did he mention that verse? Because he was strengthening himself, in the Lord his God.

Each year, mid-October, Andrew Boner, mentioned in his diary, his wife's death, in 18, what was it, 1864.

[15 : 46] And I think that every time, he remembered it, he would have remembered, Nahum chapter 1, verse 7. The promise of God's word, you see.

The affirmation of God's character. That was what kept Andrew Boner, on his feet, year after year. See, he encouraged himself, and he used that verse, to encourage himself, year after year, after year.

So, that's why I said, the second thing to remember, or the second thing about, how to encourage yourself, or to strengthen yourself, in the Lord your God, is to raise your, eyes to him.

Raise your mind, to him. Third thing I think, we have to do, is to use, and I put it this way, use our access, to God's presence.

It's in verses 7 and 8. Then David said to Abiath, the priest, the son of Ahimelech, bring me the ephod. Abiath brought it to him, and David inquired of the Lord, shall I pursue this raiding party, will I overtake them?

[16 : 54] Pursue them, he said, you will certainly overtake them, and succeed in the rescue. Now, let's not get bogged down, in what the ephod actually was, or how it worked. But it does seem, to have been the case, it clearly is the case, scripture tells us the case, that there were, two means, at the time of, the Old Testament, whereby, kings could consult, and get answers, to specific questions, through the high priest.

There's a reference to, something called, the Urim and Thummim, which scholars are really, quite undecided about, exactly what they were. And there is the ephod, and it seems to have been involved, in casting lots.

So, in the presence of the high, or the high priest, indeed cast the lot. And, the question would be asked, the lot would be cast, and, the high priest, knew how to interpret, the Lord's answer.

But let's not get caught, in the detail. That's not the essential thing. David hasn't asked, for the ephod, to be brought, by Abiah, for the priest, since chapter 23, at verse 9.

Presumably, some years before. We actually, haven't heard, of David's speak, of the Lord, since chapter 26. It's not looking good, really, is it?

[18 : 10] But now, he seeks, the guidance, of the Lord, through Abiah, of the priest. And he uses, these sacred lots, connected with the ephod. So, what he's doing, he's strengthening himself, by using his access, to the Lord's presence.

Now, that's significant. That's very significant. David's really, up against it. And what does he do? He goes back to the Lord, who apparently, he hasn't thought much about, for quite some time. Now, the Christian doesn't have, Abiah, of the priest, nor, an ephod. But we do have, a priest, greater than any, Abiah.

Now, turn your attention, to Hebrews chapter 4. I think you probably, all know this verse, but it's well reading, worth reading again. Hebrews chapter 4, verses 14 and 16.

On page 1203. Here's what the Apostle to the Hebrews, says in verse 14. Therefore, since we have a great high priest, who has gone through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold firmly, to the faith, we profess.

[19 : 28] That's verse 15, but we'll read it too, that's not the key one. For we do not, for our purposes tonight, we do not have a high priest, who is unable to sympathise, with our weaknesses, but we have one, who has been tempted, in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.

Then verse 16, let us then approach, the throne of grace, with confidence, so that we may receive mercy, and find grace, to help us, in our time of need.

So, Lord Jesus, he's our high priest, and we are to, come to him, seek access to him, in prayer. We mightn't get precise answers, to questions, but we will find grace, to help.

And in all honesty, we usually need grace, to help more than we need answers, don't we? It's perhaps the case, that staying on our feet, in difficult situations, is more important also, than having answers.

So, we are to use, our high priest, to use our access, to the Lord Jesus, to God the Father, through him. It's part of, strengthening oneself, in the Lord your God.

[20 : 37] So, and there's one other thing. First thing is, we must be convinced, that encouragement, is in the Lord. Secondly, that we must raise, our minds to God.

Thirdly, we must use our access, to God's presence. And, fourthly, we must have confidence, in God, but not just confidence, in God, but a personal relationship, with him as well.

Now, I don't know, if you've ever, as it were, read all through the Psalms, and noted on the way, through the number of times, that David uses, the words, my God. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

The well-known Psalm 22, prophetic of the Lord Jesus, on the cross, and time after time, we have these words, sometimes in the middle of a line, sometimes at the beginning of a line, the words, my God.

Now, that's significant, because David, of all the Old Testament writers, is the very first, to grapple with the idea, to seek to explore, and to understand more, and more about the idea, of a personal relationship, to God, and that God, had a personal relationship, to him.

[21 : 51] That's why David, so often, addresses the Lord, as my God. The essence, of David's assurance, I think, there, at Ziklag, was that, his hand, was in God's hand.

And he knew, that was the case, because he had, a prior relationship, with God. And that's, I think, the key difference, between a real faith, or it's another key difference, in view of what I was saying, this morning, it's another key difference, between a real, and a nominal faith.

The real Christian, the person who, isn't just saying, yeah, I believe the Christian doctrines, but the person who says, I know the Lord Jesus, as my Saviour, the key thing about that, is that, he or she, does see, the Lord, as his or her Saviour.

And they know, it's the case, because they found it, to be the true, and the great moment, when they've walked, from spiritual darkness, to spiritual life, through faith in the Lord Jesus.

Through the way, in which, God has in fact, delivered them, and supported them, so many times. You know, when we say, when we, read the Lord, my shepherd, the 23rd Psalm, I think perhaps, we need to emphasize, that word more, my, more than we do.

[23 : 06] The Lord is, my shepherd. You know, at funerals, you get churches full, everybody sings, the Lord's my shepherd, and they don't really, think about it at all. The Lord's, my shepherd.

You know, Paul in Galatians chapter 2, says, the God who loved me, and gave himself for me. How many people, who are quite happy, to admit that, Jesus is God, for that matter, would draw back, from saying that, the God who loved me, and gave himself for me.

How many of us tonight, can say that? Crucially true, crucially important. Is it true or not? You young people, do you, can you say, Jesus is my savior?

I love Jesus. Really important, you know. Think about that. And to do this, to say that, requires, honestly, occupying our minds, and our hearts, with the truth, that God really is ours.

You mustn't, none of us, must ever think, sort of half-heartedly, about the death, of the Lord Jesus. It's too important for that. We've got to yield ourselves, to God.

[24 : 26] Because the marvellous thing, about a relationship, with God, is that, it's a reciprocal relationship. He's our God, and, we are his.

Individually, we must be able to say, the Lord is my God, and we, also, should be able, if we can say that, to say, I am his.

And the Lord himself, would say, you are mine. That's the reciprocal, relationship. And that's what David had. Can I say one other thing, in that connection?

It's not easy. It's not easy. The Hebrew, it doesn't come through, in the English at all, in any of the versions, but, the Hebrew makes it clear, that, when it says, David found strength, and the Lord is God, or encouraged himself, or strengthened himself, and the Lord is God, it comes by, persistent, and continuous effort.

There is Ziklag, David had, I think, shall we say, he had to fling himself, by an effort, into the arms of God. But he did, and he knew, he was safe there, because he knew, that God was his, and he was God's, and that the Lord, wasn't going to let him go.

[25 : 51] Crucially, crucially important. So, can I suggest, that there are those four things, that explain, what it is, to encourage oneself, in the Lord, one's God.

Conviction, that encouragement, has to be in the Lord, and is in the Lord. Raising your minds, to God. Having, using our access, to his presence, and having confidence, in God, and having a personal, relationship with him.

All these things, I think that's what it is, to encourage ourselves, in the Lord our God. There's something else, that I do want to draw attention to, as well.

And that follows on, in 11 to 15, verses 11 to 15. The account that we have, of finding the Egyptian, and the attack, on the Amalekites, and the recovery, of all the thunder.

And that's this, we must always remember, can I put it like this, boys and girls, can I use that, really difficult word here, ubiquitous.

[26 : 57] It means, everywhere. God's providence, is ubiquitous. It's everywhere. Now we know, that's true. I'm just using that word, we know about, the Lord knowing everything, he's omniscient, we know that he's all powerful, he's omnipotent, we know that the Lord, is omnipresent, he's everywhere, he's ubiquitous.

Perhaps, ubiquitous, will help us to remember it. God's providence, is everywhere, it's ubiquitous. All through 1st Samuel, you know, that's what happens.

Read through 1st Samuel, and see how the Lord, is everywhere, he's absolutely everywhere, at the right moment. Well, that's what happens here.

God's answer, comes through the way, in which he's everywhere. David gets the guidance, notice by the way, that once he encourages himself, in the Lord his God, that that encouragement, is very practical.

He goes and he asks God, what he should do. God says, follow after them, you'll catch up, and take them. But he does that, through this, poor Egyptian slave, probably.

[28 : 13] That Egyptian slave, was absolutely critical, for the whole, of God's answer to David. where they were, was a big, big area.

There were only 600 men, in fact, there were only 400 men. But they found, this one slave, who was probably, the only one, who could tell them, where to go.

He'd been left, slaves had a bad time, not just in the New Testament, in the Old Testament as well, became sick, he was thrown away. But he knew, how to find the Amalekites.

Now that wasn't, some sort of optional luxury, that the Lord gave David. It was absolutely, a necessity. And can I say this, that in the Lord's providence, it's usually the case, that it's the little details, that really matter.

The Lord shows his providence, his care for his people, in the little details, the way he brings, the small things together, perfectly.

[29 : 26] You know, we're living in a society, which talks about chance, and luck, and all sorts of things, like that. But there's no such thing. It's God's providence.

And, there's really no such thing, as coincidence either. Call it divine coincidence, if you want, but don't just call it coincidence. It's the Lord, bringing things together, at precisely the right moment, in precisely the right way.

And it's always the case, God's providence, is like that, everywhere. Can I make, a rather obvious application, to you as a congregation, in your present situation again?

The Lord's providence, is at work here, in Bon Accord. I don't know, what the future holds, but I do know, that if you seek, the Lord's guidance, however long it takes you, you'll get it, and he'll take you, to the man, of his choosing.

That's his promise. Courage yourself, in the Lord, seek his guidance. He'll show you, who the man is, to be minister here. God's providence, is absolutely, ubiquitous.

[30 : 39] It's everywhere. His people, his people, can't get away, from his providence. And isn't it a marvellous thing? There's a way, in which, as it were, it makes, it makes, they're always point, in getting out of bed, each morning.

Because God's providence, is with his people. It's marvellous, absolutely. You young people, when you get back home, ask your dad, and mum, or your granny, and granddad, or whoever's taking

you here, tell us about, God's providence, the way he looks after his people, the way he arranges things, for their absolute good.

Whether it's exam results, or whether it's happening at school, or whatever it is, if you love God, and you're one of his people, everything that happens to you, even the things that seem terrible, are actually for your good, because it's God's providence at work.

Very, very important, God's providence. Never forget it. It's always over his people. So, can I sum things up? Because the time is gone.

First of all, do note that David's encouragement was practical. It was practical. There's a way in which, I think you could say, from here on, perhaps before as well, but certainly from here on, David interprets obstacles as opportunities to see how God would answer his prayers.

[32 : 03] I think you can trace that through David's life. Obstacles are opportunities to see how God's going to answer his prayers. And that's how it is for God's people.

Always. It doesn't always seem like that, and I know it's very easy, or maybe you're thinking, it's very easy for me to stand up here and say that. But it is true. No matter how the depth of the difficult situation we can be in, God will answer your prayers, and the difficult situations that you're in are opportunities for him to show you how he's going to work out things well for you.

It's a marvellous thing. So David encourages himself in the Lord by doing all those things that I mentioned. And do, do note that David's victory was God's victory, and God's victories are always hugely encouraging for his people.

At the end of the day, because you've got a sort of preview here, you've got a preview about what's going to happen in the end times ultimately, because God's victory is certain, and what these little victories are are pledges of the final victory of the Lord's Messiah, when the Lord Jesus will come again in glory and where everybody will acknowledge that, yes, he indeed is king.

And whenever we read of the Lord's victories over his enemies, we are to be encouraged by them. Always. Always. I don't know I've said this to you before, but one of the things that really I think is important in the life of Paul is that if you look, as it were, at the small print of the epistles, you find that the thing that probably motivated Paul most consistently all through his life was thinking about the coming in glory of the Lord Jesus.

[34 : 02] And when Paul reflected on that, everything was worthwhile. all the shipwrecks and the beatings and the scourgings and all the horrible things that happened to the Apostle Paul, he was well content to endure them because he knew he was bringing that great day closer.

Well, it's always like that with the troubles and the tribulations of God's people. They're all to be seen as a foreshadowing, as a wee preview of what the Lord is going to do in the longer term.

So you see, there's a connection, I think, between what happens to us in the here and now and what the Lord intends to do in the future. So, do pay attention to David encouraging himself in the Lord his God or strengthening himself in the Lord his God because there are always times, we all have these moments, where we really feel, what more can I do?

Encourage yourself in the Lord your God. Have that personal relationship and you'll find that the Lord will do what you need. There's no doubt about it.

May we all find it to be just like that. Let us pray. The Lord our gracious God, we give thanks that we have a God like that who cares for us. May it be the case that in all our particular difficulties that we face individually or collectively, that we might find it to be just like David found, that he had a God in whom he can trust and a God who will open the way ahead for him.

[35 : 33] May, O Lord, none of us ever lose sight of the overarching providence of our God over all our lives, working all things together well. And we pray, Lord, that we would always be found giving you the facts.

It's the Lord's victory. It is your provision for us, even in the ordinary things of every day to the big things in our lives which seem at times to be so overwhelming. May it be the case that we all find the Lord Jesus Christ, a firm rock in the day of trouble, and may we all find that you are a good God, and may it be the case also that we have the something of the fullness of that great blessing of knowing that you indeed do know those who are yours, and may every one of us be your people. These things we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.