

1 Samuel Chapter 29 to Chapter 30 v 6

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Preacher: Frederick Hodgson

[0 : 00] Now it can be extremely disconcerting if you're in a large city and you lose your way, especially if you're with others and they're relying upon you.

They think that you know where you're going, but actually you don't and you can be very embarrassed when you get things wrong, particularly if you miss the big event that you're aiming for, or the last train home, or the time for the car park gates to close that hold your car. Well, none of this is anything compared to the problem that David faced with his band of faithful followers. Now David rightly had a great reputation not only as a warrior, but as a man of integrity and faith.

David was on the run from King Saul, who was determined to take his life. But David upheld his character and faith for so long, and he had lots of provocations from Saul.

David actually, despite this, had one or two opportunities of killing Saul and escaping from the trouble that he was in.

[1 : 30] But David maintained the moral high ground and refused to kill his persecutor. But as John reminds us, back in 1 Samuel chapter 27, David's faith wilted under the continued pressure from Saul.

And David panicked and said, one of these days I shall be destroyed by the hand of Saul. Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines.

Now you remember that the Philistines were the bitter enemies of the Israelites. And yet David sought refuge with them.

And despite the fact that he was a man of faith, one described as one of God's own heart, and despite the fact that he'd been anointed as the future king of Israel by Samuel, he sought refuge with the ungodly, idle-worshipping philistines.

And he was a man of faith. And he was a man of faith. And he was a man of faith. And he was a man of faith. And he was a man of faith. And he was a man of faith. Now at one time, David was foremost in defending and delivering the Israelites from the Philistines.

[2 : 57] But now things became so different. And in our reading, we were told how he actually went out of his way to join the Philistines as they marched against Israel.

He and his men left their families at Ziklag and were prepared to do battle against the army of Israel.

What a turnaround. Things had changed in the life of David. Now before you condemn David and judge him, just take heed.

You think you stand. But take heed, lest you fall. Now David had compromised himself and others. He found himself on the wrong side. And he developed a close relationship with one of the leaders of the Philistines. And his troops were marching with Achish there at the rear of the Philistine army.

[4 : 06] Even the Philistines were surprised at David's turnaround. Remember what they said in verse 5? Isn't this David they sang about in their dances?

Saul has slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands. And of course he was referring to Philistines. Now David's alliance with the Philistines was scandalous.

It was unthinkable. It's just as though one of our leading preachers or theologians, John Piper or Don Carson or John Blanchard, took the same platform as one of the leading atheists of our day and actually spoke on their behalf.

That's how incredible this turnaround of David was. Now to be fair to David, he perhaps thought that by joining the Philistines, he could actually eliminate Saul and bring about God's purposes and make himself king.

But in his way, as God wasn't doing it in the time that David thought fit. So it's a fair question to ask you, I think.

[5 : 31] Have you ever panicked or thought you knew better than God? And now find yourself engaged in such a close relationship with someone in the world that you've actually started to adopt the world's standards and lifestyle.

Even to the point that they speak well of you. Perhaps you fall into a situation where you're indistinguishable from them. Perhaps there was a time when you had a name for godliness and for zeal.

Zeal for the Lord. But now, or into the sheer pressure of temptation, you find yourself on the wrong side. You find yourself on the wrong side at school.

Or college. Or work. Or even in your home. And you appear to have lost what you once had. It's very uncomfortable being a backslider. You're out of place in your new friendship group. You know that you're in the wrong place.

[6 : 45] And that you're doing and saying the wrong things. But somehow you don't quite fit in. Your worldly friends don't know really what to make of you.

They suspect that you might spoil their party and embarrass them. Just like the laws of the Philistines didn't trust David.

That can happen religiously too. You might move or fall out with your fellow believers and start attending religious services where the leaders deny the very truths that you once held dear.

The Philistines worshipped false gods. Not the one and only creator and sustainer of the universe. They didn't worship the one who revealed himself by his word. They did their own thing. According to their own wisdom. Now their worship services might have been very impressive.

[7 : 53] I'm sure they were. Their temples might have taken their breath away. But they didn't worship the Lord.

The covenant keeping God of Israel. But something else. Now you might be a visitor today. But back home you might be supporting some religious work that you know you should not be supporting.

The leaders are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The one who died. Who died for your sins. And was raised again.

They suggest that there are other saviors. Other lords. And they're critical and hostile to the unique gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. That gospel that you actually love.

And the people that you know that you belong to. But you find yourself alongside them. Now the Philistines didn't love the people of God.

[9 : 08] Far from it. Some weren't so bad as others. Perhaps Achish was in that category. Perhaps David found him to be a nice, charming person.

But whether this was the case or not. David and his men now found themselves on the world side. True it is religious. But it was a religion of the world.

Not the religion of the Lord. Not the worship of the one and only. But something false. Something wrong. Something deceitful.

They were in the wrong sort of relationship. They were not as they once were.

I ask you. Do you ever recognise yourself as being in that situation? Perhaps you're not now.

Perhaps you were at one time. But maybe it is true of you now.

[10 : 10] That you've got a relationship that you're ashamed of. You're in the wrong place. You've got the wrong friends. And you're doing the wrong things. In terms of the gospel.

You're not walking in the light. But in darkness. You've fallen under temptation. Now David was in this situation.

Because he tried to find security with the Philistines. He wanted shelter and security. And Achish provided for his needs. You might be in the wrong place.

And have the wrong relationships. For other reasons. Remember the pleasure-seeking materialistic young man in the story that Jesus told.

The prodigal son demanded his share of the father's inheritance. So that life could be one long party for him. He was bored with life.

[11 : 12] And wanted to fill his life with pleasure. In Luke 15 we read. That this young man squandered his wealth in while living.

But the end was bitterness and an empty stomach. And when he returned home. His older brother was very judgmental. Did you see how David's men responded to David when they returned to Ziklag.

And they found that the Amalekite raiding party had taken their wives and children and goods. And goods. Chapter 30 verse 6. And this is the verse that I'd like us to concentrate upon.

David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him. Each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. David's decision had become an offense and a stumbling block to his brothers.

And they weren't pleased. They were greatly distressed. Their home was destroyed and their family was broken up. They wept aloud until they had no strength.

[12 : 25] They're very sorry for themselves. And David was the target of their bitterness and anger. The Bible says that the way of transgressors is hard.

And it's hard for families too. Is there any justification for those who point their finger at you because you made the wrong decision?

You've adopted the wrong lifestyle. You've adopted the wrong relationships. Now the remarkable thing is this.

That it's in this context that we're told in verse 6 that David found strength in the Lord. Does it surprise you that David, although he was seriously in the wrong, he was able to turn to the holy, righteous, omnipotent, all-wise, all-seeing God and find strength in him?

Now the verse doesn't actually say that David found strength in the Lord. Some people do imagine that the Lord is a distant, just vengeful God.

[13 : 44] But you wouldn't find strength in such a God. You'd be intimidated. You'd feel condemned. And you'd be expecting worse to come.

And yet David found strength in the Lord, his God. That is what it actually says. It doesn't say David found strength in this distant God that some people imagine.

He found strength in the Lord, his God. Now David had been foolish in trusting another, even the nice, hospitable, accommodating Achish.

He'd been unwise in seeking shelter with the Philistines. He'd forgotten what he was and who he was when he marched out with the armies.

He'd been careless in leaving Ziklag undefended. He hadn't trusted the Lord. He'd been hasty. But that isn't all there is to David.

[14 : 48] We know that he was basically a man of God's own heart. He knew the Lord was his God. He rejoiced in the Lord. If you read the Psalms time and time again, you come across this.

That David knew the Lord and he rejoiced in him. He was able to say, come and taste that the Lord is good. And his life, his earlier life, had been characterized by constantly seeking guidance from the Lord.

He'd known strength and fellowship and joy in the Lord and in his people. But all had changed. He had changed. But his Lord, the covenant-keeping God, had not changed.

You know how Malachi said this, that I, the Lord, do not change. Well, the Lord hadn't changed. And the Lord was still David's God.

David came to his senses and found strength in the Lord, his God. He found strength in the covenant-keeping Lord.

[15 : 56] He found strength in the Lord who appeared to Moses and revealed his glory to Moses. Remember how it's recorded in Exodus 34. The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

What a glorious God this is. What a glorious God this is. And this is the God that David came to and found strength in.

Listen to how David himself spoke of the Lord in Psalm 103. The Lord made his ways known to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel.

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever.

He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve, or repairs according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.

[17 : 21] As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. How different the Lord is from ourselves.

His ways, his thoughts are not like ours. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are his ways and his thoughts above ours. And David found strength in the Lord because he knew him. And that's why Paul, the apostle, constantly prayed for the early Christians. That they may have a knowledge of the Lord. That they may grow in a knowledge of him.

Think how he wrote to the Colossian Christians. That they may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work.

Growing in a knowledge of God. Being strengthened with all power. So do you recognize that you need to know the Lord better?

[18 : 26] David's son, Solomon, wrote this. The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run to it and are safe.

Remember that the name of the Lord describes who he is. It describes his character. And David fled to the Lord and remembered him. Remembered his character.

Remembered his attributes and found strength in the Lord. On another occasion, David said, the Lord, and he's speaking from experience.

He is a God that he knew. He is not a distant God that some talk of. David said this. The Lord is a very present help in time of trouble.

And when David came to the Lord and found strength in him, he came to the shepherd of Israel. The unchanging one.

[19 : 28] He came to the Lord, his God. He came to the Lord, his shepherd. And his soul was restored. Remember the psalm most closely associated with David.

The Lord is my shepherd, David wrote. He knew the Lord. It was a personal relationship with him. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul.

When David found strength in the Lord, his God, he came back to his senses.

He found hope instead of despair. Yes, he was surrounded by ungodly men. None of that had changed. Saul, the Philistines, the Amalekites, his own angry men threatened him.

But in the midst of all of this, he found strength in the Lord. And again, you remember how he wrote, Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.

[20 : 42] Your rod, yes, your rod, and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

And David found the sustenance, the strength that he needed. The Lord richly provided for him.

And David was filled with joy and hope and confidence.

You anoint my head with oil. My cover flows. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Can you see how David was taken up when he found strength in the Lord, his God? He'd come back to his senses. He remembered that Saul had anointed him as God's chosen king.

He knew who he was. He remembered who his God was. Does it remind you of the prodigal son I mentioned earlier? He came to his senses.

[21 : 44] When he came to his senses, he said this, How many of my father's hired men have food to spare? And here I am, starving to death. I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, Father, I've sinned against heaven.

I've sinned against you. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him.

He ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. This is the sort of thing that was going on here with David when David found strength in the Lord, his God.

Remember how the father said to his servants, Quick, bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it.

Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. And so they began to celebrate.

[22 : 48] Notice that the prodigal son not only got a royal welcome, but he was quickly welcomed. Not only was he quickly welcomed, but he was given the food that he needed for his strength to return.

That poor, starving, prodigal son was given food to sustain him. And David received new strength when he came to the Lord.

He was a new man. Now, have you come to the Lord and found strength? Perhaps you've never yet come to the Lord to find strength.

You know, we have got much more encouragement than David ever had. We see so much more of his love and grace and compassion.

Paul put it like this. You see, just at the right time, when we were still powerless, without strength, Christ died for the ungodly.

[24 : 00] The writer to the Hebrews had a lot to say to encourage people without strength. This is what the writer to the Hebrews said. We have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God.

Let's hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we don't have a high priest who's unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who's been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet without sin.

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence that we may receive mercy and find time to help us in our time of need.

Now, it's highly significant that the writer of the Hebrews was addressing those who had once stood firm and even joyfully suffered from their fellow Jews, even the spoiling of their goods, but now their faith was wavering.

They were tempted to go back to what they once knew in order to avoid social pressure. See, just the same problem that we also often have. It's addressing those whose faith was wavering.

[25 : 19] He was speaking to those who had started to fall off in meeting together. They needed to be strengthened in their faith. So the writer to the Hebrews pointed them to Jesus Christ.

And if you strayed from the way because of temptation and difficulties, remember the wonderful exhortation that the writer had in chapter 12 of Hebrews.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus. The sort of thought here is you're looking through binoculars or a telescope, your hands wavering around.

Let us fix our eyes on this object which you're looking at. Be determined. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

That is our Savior. Now, are you believing in him? Are you trusting in him? Are you finding strength through him? If you find yourself in the wrong place, having drifted into a position that's opposed to the people of God, being overcome by fear and temptation, then you must come to the Lord to find strength.

[26 : 44] If you don't respond, sooner or later, the Lord will deal strongly with you. David strayed into wrong paths and the Lord chastened him for it.

There was a clear link between David being in the wrong place with the wrong people and the disaster at Ziklag. If he hadn't gone off to war with the Philistines, the women and children would have been safe.

His goods and the goods of his armed men would have been safe. His relationship with his men would have kept intact. David had to experience the rod of God to bring him back.

The prodigal son had to be brought to extreme poverty before he was brought back to his senses. The writer to the Hebrews, quoting Proverbs, says this, My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline.

Do not lose heart when he rebukes you because the Lord disciplines those he loves. And he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.

[28 : 12] Now, David didn't make light of it. He didn't say to his men, you know, men, that's tough, that's life, that's the way things are.

He didn't break it aside. But neither was he crushed by the experience. He didn't lose heart. He came to the Lord. He found strength in him.

And that's what chastisements are for, that we might come to the Lord and find strength in him and renewed relationship with him.

Now, David took part in physical wars against enemies that he could see. You're not involved with wars against the Philistines or Saul or anything like that.

Our problem is that our enemies are often not seen. Paul wrote to the Christians at Ephesus, a well-known passage, chapter 6, and reminded them, our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

[29 : 38] How are you to overcome in that fight? We certainly need strength from the Lord for that fight. Remember, we're fighting a spiritual battle.

David was too. That's why he found it so difficult and that's why he stumbled. We all need to find strength in the Lord our God.

And Paul urged the Ephesian Christians in chapter 6 to be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

power. And if you're in Christ, you've got a new power within you. Power that gives you faith and hope and joy and peace, the fruit of the Spirit.

But you've also been given armour that protects you from the evil one. But you've got to be aware of the fight you're in and you must use that armour that you've been given.

[30 : 47] The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, proper footwear, shield of faith, sword of the Spirit, which is the word of truth. Are you familiar with the word of truth?

That word which can strengthen you and give strength and fixedness to your bones as it were. Well, David, as you know, went on to rescue those who'd been taken by the Amalekites.

His faith wasn't just passive. And if you find strength in the Lord, you will be strong and you'll do exploits of faith yourself.

Whether it's exploits of suffering or service. Exploits that amaze you, if not, amaze others. But you must first come to him and find strength in him.

You must know him. It's those that know the Lord who do exploits, as Daniel reminds us. And you need to know him as the one who loved you and gave himself for you.

[32 : 04] There on the cross he took away your sins, your sins far away. And you need to see him as your great high priest, representing you in the heavens now.

And you need his spirit working within you, both to do and will his good pleasure. So have you found strength in the Lord your God?

Let's pray. Lord and Father, we thank you for your word, which is both a challenge to us and a great help and comfort to us.

But our prayer to you is that we might take these things seriously, that we might learn a right of them and be able to apply them to our lives. For we ask it in the name of our great Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

[33 : 20] . . .

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