

When Life Gets Overwhelming

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading comes from 1 Samuel chapter 30. Please follow along on the screen in your bulletin or your own Bible.

Starting in verse 1, we read, Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid against the Negev and against Ziklag.

They had overcome Ziklag and burned it with fire and 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.

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. Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep.

David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. And David was greatly distressed for the people spoke of stoning them because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters.

[1 : 15] But David strengthened himself and the Lord his God. And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of the Himelech, Bring me the ephod.

So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. And David inquired of the Lord, Shall I pursue after this ban? Shall I overtake them? He answered him, Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue.

So David set out and the six hundred men who were with him and they came to the brook Besai, where those who were left behind stayed. But David pursued.

He and four hundred men, two hundred stayed behind, who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besai. They found an Egyptian in the open country and brought him to David.

And they gave him bread and he ate. They gave him water to drink. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. And when he had eaten, his spirit revived, for he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights.

[2 : 27] And David said to him, To whom do you belong? And where are you from? He said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite.

And my master left me behind because I fell sick three days ago. He had made a raid against the Negev of the Kenizzites and against that which belongs to Judah and against the Negev of Caleb.

And we burned Ziklag with fire. And David said to him, Will you take me down to this band? And he said, Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master and I will take you down to this band.

And when he had taken him down, behold, they were spread abroad over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing because of all the great spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah.

And David struck them down from twilight until the evening of the next day and not a man of them escaped except 400 young men who mounted camels and fled.

[3 : 37] David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken and David rescued his two wives. Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken.

David brought back all. David also captured all the flocks and herds and the people drove the livestock before him and said, This is David's spoil. Then David came to the 200 men who had been too exhausted to follow David and who had been left at the Brook Besaw.

And they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him. And when David came near to the people, he greeted them. Then all the wicked and worthless fellows among the men who had gone with David said, Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except that each man may lead away his wife and children and depart.

But David said, You shall not do so, my brothers, with what the Lord has given us. He has preserved us and given into our hand the band that came against us.

Who would listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the battle. They shall share alike.

[4 : 58] And he made it a statute and a rule for Israel from that day forward to this day. This is the word of God. Great. Thank you, Celeste, for reading.

And good morning, everybody. It is great to be able to see you. I've really enjoyed seeing so many faces. This morning, I see Ellie Jen from the USA joining us and tons of others.

It's great to see you this morning. In many ways, I really do greet you with something of a heavy heart, with all that's going on in our world, all that's going on in our city, the increased case numbers, the hundreds of people that have passed away just this year.

I think of 300 families that are grieving the loss of a loved one in our city. And obviously, the war in Ukraine. I so wish this morning that I could look you in the eye.

I could shake hands with you. I could give you a hug. And that together, we could encourage one another in the hope of the gospel. I was just thinking of earlier this week, Psalm 121 says, I lift my eyes to the heels.

[6 : 07] From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. And I wish we could gather face to face and remind one another of that and encourage one another of that this morning.

But at last, we will try our best through technology. Now, this morning, we come to the end of our series on the book of 1 Samuel. And it's an amazing passage of scripture that speaks directly to so much of what's going on in our world and in our city.

To the frustration, the anguish, the fear, and in many senses, the hopelessness of what's going on in our city. Because in this passage, David is overwhelmed by the hopelessness of his situation.

And it's a passage that has encouraged me this week, and I hope it will encourage you. And so, let's dive in and see what God wants to say to us this morning. 1 Samuel chapter 30. And there's a couple of things I think God wants to say to us.

But the first one I want us to note is take note of God's suffering servant. God's suffering servant. The context is that David and his band of soldiers, about 600 of them, have fled Israel and are living in Palestine, in Philistine country.

[7 : 24] And they're living in a town called Ziklag, which is a city that one of the Philistine kings gave to them. And the deal was you can live here, you can stay here, but if we ever go into battle, you've got to join us and come and fight with us.

And later on, the Philistines go into battle with Israel, or they line up their forces to attack Israel. That's the context of the story last week.

And this king says to David and his band, you've got to come with us. And David's in a tight spot because he's an Israelite, but now he might need a fight against the Israelites. But fortunately, when they get to the front lines, the other Philistine kings say to them, there's no chance we're going to let Israelites come in the midst of us.

These guys are going to sabotage our own agenda. They're going to turn around and fight against us. And what better way for David to win over the favor of the Israelites than to turn on us? And so they chase them away and say, get out of here, go back to your hometown.

So David and his men tread three days across the desert to go back to Ziklag. And when they get there, there's a devastating scene that awaits them.

[8 : 30] Their town has been raided, has been destroyed. And all that remains is the smoldering smoke of the ruins of their city.

The people are gone, their wives and children are nowhere to be found, and their homes have been destroyed. And this is obviously a devastating situation.

We've all seen the pictures of what's been happening in Ukraine. In many ways, this is the situation that David and his men come back to. But coming off the back of everything that's been happening to David these last 10 years, constantly on the run, chased by Saul.

As soon as they get some reprieve, they're chased another way. They're now living in enemy territory, the Philistines, always looking over their back, always wondering when the next attack is going to come. And wave after wave of bad news has hit David and his men.

And you can almost sense the exhaustion that they feel. Look at what they say in verse 3 and 4. Now that their homes have been destroyed and their families have been kidnapped, it says, When David and his men came into the city, they found it burnt with fire.

[9 : 37] Their wives and their children were taken captive. David and the men who were with him raised their voices, and they wept until they had no more strength left to weep. They don't know it at this time, but their families have been kidnapped.

As far as they know, they could have been killed. And everything around them seems utterly hopeless. And as if that's not bad enough, look at verse 6b.

It says, These soldiers that David had amassed were people that were themselves once bitter in soul.

Chapter 22 tells us they had come under David's wing. David had looked after them and nurtured them. He had been a father to those that were kind of cast out. And now they're talking of Stonyham.

There's mutiny in the ranks. Friends, one of the sobering messages for us from this passage is that there are times when you think that things can't possibly get any worse.

[10 : 44] And then 1 Samuel 30 tells us that yes, they can. There are times when you feel like your present situation is the last straw. Things can't get any more difficult.

There can't be any more pressure. You can't take any more. And then you come to Ziklag. And it's the last straw after the last straw. And I thought about this quite a bit after last week's sermon.

Last week's sermon was quite heavy with darkness and hopelessness. And I thought a lot about it. The fact that for those of us that are followers of Jesus, God never promises that because you have followed Jesus, He will excavate you out of the darkness.

He never promises that, yes, there's light in the darkness. Yes, there's hope in the midst of the hopelessness. But followers of Jesus are not immune or inoculated against the struggles and the difficulties of life.

This is where God's people have lived for centuries. And we sometimes look at Saul and say, okay, well, he was a bad guy. He deserved it. But here's David. Here's David's servant.

[11 : 44] The servant of the Lord. The one who's chosen to deliver his people. The one who lives with integrity and uprightness of heart. A good man. And yet he's a servant of the Lord who suffers terribly.

He is a suffering servant. Friends, what about you? How are you feeling this morning and this week? Have you felt this week like, I don't know if I can take any more?

Maybe you're worried about kids getting tested positive and the possibility of being separated in the coming weeks and months. Maybe you've been reading the news. Maybe there's loved ones that are far away and they are sick.

With all that's going on, have you felt like, I don't know if I can take any more? I've come to the end. Friends, throughout the century, God's people have often dwelt here. And yet, in the midst of the darkness, David, the suffering servant, knows what to do.

Because David knows how to strengthen himself in God's grace. David's back is against the wall. And it seems like everything is utterly hopeless. It's not just that life has dealt him bad blow after bad blow.

[12 : 52] It's not just that he, God seems to have repaid his integrity with difficulty and harshness. And never mind all that you're going to be king when they talk that Samuel once gave him. That seems like a distant pipe dream into the long way away.

But now the men that he took under his wing are plotting against him. And so what should David do? Friends, what should we do? When the darkness closes in and feels claustrophobic, what should we do?

Well, look what David does in verse 6b. In last week's passage, verse 6 was one of the most lamentable verses in the whole Bible. It talks about how Saul cries out to God and all he gets is silence.

Well, in our passage today, verse 6 is one of the most instructive. Because look at what it says. David was greatly distressed. The people spoke of stoning him. Because all the people were bitter in Saul, each for his own sons and daughters.

But David strengthened himself in the Lord is God. Now, one of the things that the author of 1 Samuel has done is he's constantly wanting to contrast David versus Saul.

[14 : 02] That's why the narrative keeps on jumping between the two. And in this last two chapters, we've seen how Saul and David both experienced this deep crisis in their leadership.

Both of them, their lives are on the line. And yet, you'll remember what Saul did when he's greatly distressed. He uses the same Hebrew word. He runs to the medium of Endor to consult the dead in order to try and preserve his life.

But look at what David does here in contrast. David doesn't run out there. David doesn't try and preserve his life. David strengthens himself in the Lord his God.

Friends, this could hardly be more instructive to us than at a time like this. When so many have felt that things can't get any more difficult.

When things can't possibly get any more restrictive. When the bad news can't get any worse. Maybe some of us, as you said, are fearful for the next few weeks or months.

[15 : 01] Maybe some of us are facing job loss. The online schooling has been difficult. Marriage is difficult. Relationships are hard. Where do we turn when the dark night of the soul gets that much darker?

When David was greatly distressed because the people started stoning him, he strengthened himself in the Lord his God. And notice the language here. I don't know if you remember from last week.

The passage where Saul eventually does speak to Samuel. Saul says to Samuel, he says, I'm in distress and God has turned away from me. And the word he uses for God there is a generic Hebrew word for God.

It's almost as if Saul is saying, that deity in the sky, that God that you talk about, Samuel, he's not answering me. He's silent. He's not listening to my cries.

That God that you've spoken about, where is he? But look at the language that describes David here. When David was distressed and anguish, he strengthened himself in the law. That's the personal name for God.

[16 : 01] Yahweh. The Lord his God. One commentator, Alexander McLaren, says, Staring at the burning rubble of Ziklag, David could no longer say, My house.

My city. My possessions. But he could still say, My God. He's drawing near to Yahweh, his God. The God that has been with him as he's shepherded, as he's been a shepherd against the lions and the bear.

The living God that's preserved him as Goliath came against him. He calls on the Lord, his God, who has been with him on the run from Saul in the desert these last 10 years or so. The God who has proved himself faithful.

David cries out to that God, the personal God who has walked with him and been with him. That's where David goes for strength. To the Lord, his God.

And friends, one of the keys to the Christian life is to know how to dive deep into the waters of God's grace and drink of them to fill us all.

[17 : 02] To know how to place ourselves in the stream of God's grace and to draw deeply on God's grace in our time of need. When the storms approach, when darkness comes in, how to lash ourselves to the rock that is Christ and find our strength there.

You know, the picture of a young sapling, a young tree. When the T10 storm hits Hong Kong, it's on the mountainside and it's going to break. It doesn't have the strength to withstand the storms.

But if that sapling, that little tree is bound to a stake, an iron stake that's firmly rooted in the ground, it will withstand the storms. Friends, one of the keys to the Christian life is to know how to dive deep into the rivers of God's grace and draw on that grace to strengthen us in times of need.

And friends, in this pandemic, in this world of bad news, when life seems overwhelming, God's word to us in 1 Samuel 30 is that rather than diving into escapist behavior and rather than binging on things like Netflix and social media, there is a God in heaven to whom we can run to to strengthen ourselves when life seems overwhelming.

Now, how do we practically do this? What does this actually mean? What does it mean to strengthen yourself in the Lord your God? Well, I'm so glad you've asked that question. There's lots of ways to do it.

[18 : 28] One way to do it is to put on some really good worship music and to go for a prayer walk and to fill your soul with the lyrics of heaven. Something I did this week on, I think it was Friday evening, I just needed to go for a walk and put on some worship music and just sing of the greatness of God.

You can spend time in prayer. But one of the very best things to do is to get into God's word. Psalm 19 says, The word of the Lord is perfect.

It revives my soul. Revives my soul. Psalm 119 says, When my soul cleans the dust, you give me light according to your word. When my soul melts away for sorrow, you strengthen me according to your word.

And God's word, the scriptures, have a unique ability to cut through the darkness, to pierce the fog. When the waves of doubt and the waves of anxiety and the dark clouds seem to roll into our soul, God's word has a way of piercing through that and speaking straight to our heart in a way that gives hope and courage and strength in the midst of the difficulty.

God's word is unique in that as Hebrews 4 says, it's like a sword that pierces through straight to the heart and lifts our eyes off of the circumstances around us onto God and who he is and who we are in him.

[19 : 51] The scriptures know how to make God big and circumstances small in our lives once again. You know, friends, in all my years as a follower of Jesus, nothing, nothing has so strengthened me, encouraged me, rooted me as coming to God's word and soaking my heart in who he is in his word.

This word has so often been an oasis in the desert. It's so often been a rock in the storms of life. And the reason we say it is because scripture is not just good advice.

It's not just there to tell you how to live. It's good news. It reminds you of the steadfastness of God. Scripture is going to tell you of the sovereignty of God. Scripture is going to remind you that the life seems out of control.

There is a God in heaven who is seated on the throne. Scripture is going to come not just with good advice, but good news that there is a king who loves you and died for you and hasn't given up on you.

Recently, I was feeling a little bit overwhelmed by circumstances, about something in the future towards the end of last year. And I opened my Bible one Saturday morning, Psalm 131, and I read the scripture.

[21 : 00] I want to share it with you. Psalm 131 says, And as I read that, it was like a light just pierced all the anxiety in my heart.

And God just said to me, Kevin, there are things that are beyond your control. They're too high and lofty for you. They're too great for you, too marvelous for you. Things like the future. You don't know what's going to happen in a month or two or three.

You can't control the future. That's not in your realm. But it is in my realm, says God. But if you'll come to me and trust me, if you'll let my word soak over you, I will give you such peace that like a freshly fed baby in its mother's arms that is fast asleep, you will find peace to yourselves.

And friends, I promise you, I sat down in that chair, anxious and worried, and I got up 20 minutes later as light and as free as a bird. God's word is able to do that. God's word reminds us of his goodness and his sovereignty.

It reminds us of his faithfulness. Now, of course, one simple thing is we need to do more than just read God's word. You can read it like a to-do list and you tick it off and you get on with your day.

[22 : 22] But God's word is not a silver bullet. It's not a magic potion. It's not something that we come to just to sort out our problems. God's word is designed to bring us into fellowship and community with God.

As we soak it in, as we meditate on it, as we reflect on it, as we read it and write it down, as we think about it and memorize it, it's able to bring us to his throne of grace. David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

Friends, let's do the same. Now, ideally, this should be done in community, right? That's the great hope and treasure of gospel community, that we encourage one another. When the darkness seeps in, and sometimes you don't even have the strength to do it, friends can come around and do that with you.

And you'll remember Chris quoted the scripture two weeks ago. In 1 Samuel 23, David is in the cave. Saul is pursuing him. Things are not looking good. And it says this, Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh and strengthened his hand in God.

It's the last time David will see his friend, Jonathan, before Jonathan dies. And what does he do? He strengthens David, but he doesn't just tell him, listen, you're a good guy. I'm sure things will work out.

[23 : 33] He doesn't just try and give him pithy sayings. He strengthens his hand in God. He brings him to God's throne and says, God is with you. And how does he do that? Well, the next verse tells us, he reminds David of God's promises to him.

He goes back to God's word. He says, David, don't you know what God has said? God has spoken. He has promised things. You can bank yourself on God's faithfulness. As Christians, even more in times like this than ever before, we need desperately gospel community.

And yet the point of this passage is that sometimes community is not there. I mean, friends, just imagine with me, hypothetically, imagine one time in the future, we have this worldwide pandemic, right?

Where we can't gather on Sundays and we can't see one another face to face and we can't gather in community groups because there are social distancing restrictions. And friends, just imagine that there comes a time in the future where you can't gather and read the Bible with others around you.

What's going to keep us grounded and rooted? David is all alone here. And yes, he's had Jonathan in the past, but in this moment, Jonathan's not there. And the people that should be there are turning on him.

[24 : 46] David knows how to strengthen himself in the Lord his God. Friends, yes, gospel community is extremely important, but it can't be the basis of your faith.

You've got to encounter God. You've got to know how to find the strength in his word and in his grace. David knew how to strengthen himself in the Lord his God. Now, if we just left it there, this passage wouldn't be very encouraging.

It would be instructive, but it wouldn't be very encouraging. So far we've heard life is tough. Sometimes life is very tough. So strengthen yourself in God. But all the onus is on us.

And yet, friends, as we've often said, the Bible is not just good advice, it's good news. So where is the good news in this passage? Well, look thirdly with me at not just God's suffering servant, not just God's strength and grace, but thirdly, God's perfect providence.

If you're new to church with us this morning, providence means the way that God orchestrates the ordinary issues of life in accordance with his will.

[25 : 56] Sometimes the arbitrary, the mundane things of life, God is working them to bring about his redemption and restoration, his glory and our good.

And so David in verse 8, he seeks God and says, God, what should I do? And he has been reminded of God's promise. He's drawn God's presence. And now God speaks to him.

Verse 8 says, David inquired of the Lord, shall I pursue this band? And shall I overtake them? And God answers them, overtake them, pursue them, for you shall surely rescue. And so they set out, David and his 600 men, and they go to this brook Besor, and two of them say, we are done.

We're exhausted. We don't have any energy. We can't do this anymore. And so they rest, and the other 400 say, let's carry on. Now remember, they don't know who's taken their families.

They don't even know if their families are alive. I mean, it probably is the Amalekites, but they don't know. It could be some other raiding army. And they don't know where they've gone. I mean, as one commentator said, it's not like raiding armies leave their name card, their calling card, on the smoldering ruins of Ziklag, right?

[27 : 04] I mean, so, and David and his men have, have evaded Saul for 10 years in the wilderness. They know how easy it is to hide in the wilderness. And so they three days journey behind these guys.

They've got to find them. They don't know who they're looking for, and they don't know where to go. I mean, they should go south, sure, but do they go to the west? Do they go to the east? Where are they going to find these guys? Where do you start looking?

Well, look at verse 11. They stumble across an Egyptian slave who just so happens to be part of the Amalekite army. Verse 11 says, They found an Egyptian in the open countryside, and they brought him to David.

They gave him bread, and he ate. They gave him water to drink, and he revived. And they say to him, Where are you from? What are you doing? And he says, I'm part of the Amalekite army.

I got discarded a few days ago, and I fell sick. And he says, verse 14, We made a raid against the Negev. We burned Ziklag with fire. He has one of the very guys that was part of the army.

[28 : 04] I mean, if there's one person that can give you military intelligence, it's someone who was there. And this discarded Egyptian servant ends up taking David and his men right into the very campsite of the Amalekites.

And friends, think about it. Here is the key to God fulfilling his promise to David back in verse 8. I mean, here is the key to David rescuing and redeeming his people, God's people.

And it all rests on the unlikely event of finding this random man. And yet in verse 11, which is filled with God's providence, God's divinely orchestrating ordinary events in life, and yet there's no theological bells and whistles.

They find this guy, but there's no, you know, angel singing Gloria and Excelsis Deo. There's no halos, no, no, no, no signs and wonders, just an ordinary servant to chance and counsel with the discarded piece of Malachite machinery.

And yet on that simple piece of providence hangs the key to David's redemption, to the salvation of his people, and to the turning point in David's career.

[29 : 14] Because at this point, David has been downhill his whole life. And from this point on, David, Saul is going to die in battle, and David's going to become the king. This is the turning point in David's life.

Friends, do you know how often it is that God works like this? That his perfect providence, his guiding and ordaining of arbitrary, ordinary events in life, according to his purpose, brings about the redemption and the rescue of people.

Friends, it happens so often, God orchestrates things that seem random, even unjust things, in order to save and rescue his people. I think one of the greatest examples of this is Joseph in Egypt, right?

Do you remember the story? Joseph, his brothers are jealous of him, so they decide to get rid of him. They sell him as a slave to a bunch of traders that are coming past Israel on their way to Egypt.

So he goes to Egypt as a slave. When he's in Egypt, things go bad for him. He gets thrown into jail because of the jealousy of Potiphar's wife. While he's in jail, he meets somebody who can rescue him.

[30 : 16] And he says, remember me when you get out. And the guy forgets about him. And everything seems to be going from bad to worse. And yet, at the perfect time, the cupbearer to the king remembers Joseph, restores him.

Joseph becomes prime minister of Egypt, and saves not only Egypt, but all of Israel. And you remember what Joseph says to his brothers when he meets them at the end of his life?

He says, what you meant as evil against me, God intended for good, to bring about the saving of his people. Friends, doesn't that remind you of Jesus Christ?

In his death on the cross, Pontius Pilate and Herod are jealous. The Jews are jealous. They're conspiring against him. Jesus Christ ends up on the cross. What you meant for evil, God has worked out for good, to bring about the saving of many people.

Friends, if you're a Christian this morning, just think about the way that you became a Christian. It might look like some chance encounter. Maybe you went overseas to go study abroad, and you stayed with a host family that were Christians, and they shared the gospel with you.

[31 : 23] Friends, I heard a story of somebody recently, who went on a business trip, he was all alone, he was in his hotel one night, and he picks up a Bible on the hotel bedside table, and reads it, and he encounters God, and becomes a Christian there in his hotel room.

Friends, maybe you go overseas, and you meet somebody randomly, and they share the gospel with you. Friends, maybe you've come to Hong Kong for such a time as this, because God is orchestrating what might seem arbitrary to you, to bring you to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those events aren't chance. That's not just a chance happening. You've met those people for a reason. God is working out things to bring about your salvation and his glory.

And here seems like such a small piece of providence, finding this random Egyptian guy, this down and out servant, who's been tossed out like a discarded rag, and yet God is working all things to bring the salvation of his people.

Well, friends, that should be great encouragement, but that's not the greatest thing. The fourth and the final thing, the greatest encouragement from this passage is surely found in God's emphatic victory.

[32 : 31] God's emphatic victory. Look at what happens here, and we're almost done. The Egyptian helps David and his men find their way to the Amalekites. They are celebrating their victory. They are literally drinking and dancing and eating.

They are having an amazing party, and they are not suspecting David and his men coming and risking their people. And the next day, David and his men attack the Amalekites, and they utterly defeat them.

Some of them are killed. Some of them flee and run away, and they utterly defeat their enemy. And notice how emphatic the scripture is to demonstrate the totality of the victory that David achieves.

Hebrews scholars actually tell us that the grammar of the Hebrew here is written to emphasize just how emphatic, just how absolute this victory was. Look at verse 18. It says, David rescued all that the Amalekites had taken.

David rescued his two wives. Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken. David brought back everything.

[33 : 39] David also captured all the flocks and the herds, and the people drove the livestock before him saying, this is David's spoil. Friends, you see what's going on here?

God is trying to say to us, in the darkest moment of David's life, when things felt like they couldn't get any worse, and then they did. When David is utterly down and out, and depressed beyond despair, when there's nothing to lift his spirits, David goes from the darkest moments to one of his most emphatic victories.

David didn't just defeat his enemies. He actually plundered them. David didn't just win the battle. He completely trounced his enemies. He plundered them, not only from what they had taken from him, but from what they had taken from everyone.

And just a few days earlier, what had looked like one of the lowest moments in his life, turns out to be one of the highest moments of victory for David, and for all those who trusted him and followed him.

Friends, do you notice the grace that David gives the 200 people that are stuck at the Brook Abyssal? David comes back, and are they excluded? Are they cast out?

[34 : 50] No ways. David says, our victory is your victory. The victory we've achieved will be credited to you. Even though you're too tight, even though you didn't lift a finger, you will enjoy the spoils of my victory on your behalf.

Friends, don't you see what's going on here? This picture is not just, this story is not just an episode in Israel's history. It's a picture of the gospel.

It's a promise of what would happen when God's true and great Messiah King, the one that Isaiah would later call the true suffering servant, would come into the world.

At the moment when Jesus Christ seemed like his lowest moment in the world, when his friends had abandoned him, when through jealousy they arrested him, when the brutality and the evil of wickedness had conspired against him to crucify him on the cross, when Jesus Christ suffered so bitterly that rather than just weeping, his perspiration turned to blood.

The moment of his greatest weakness and the lowest moment of his life was actually the moment of his greatest victory. Friends, Jesus Christ, the true suffering servant, trusted the providence of God the Father, knowing that what men meant for evil, crucifying the Son of God out of jealousy and disdain, God had planned before the creation of the world for good, to bring about the saving and the redemption and healing of men.

[36 : 22] Friends, Jesus Christ, the true suffering servant, would be nailed to a cross in what seemed like a defeat and walk out of the grave three days later in his greatest victory, not only over his enemies, but over the greatest enemy, over sin, over Satan, over death.

Friends, here in this story, from the lowest moment in his life to this great victory is a picture. But it's also a promise. It's a pledge of what God is doing in the world through Christ his Savior, plundering the gates of hell and rescuing and redeeming his people.

And you know what that means? Friends, it means that when we encounter the dark night of the soul, when the waves of doubt roll in, when we are utterly at despair, when we feel we are too weak to even weep, when life gets overwhelming, friends, when you and I are bitter in soul, we can draw near to the one who bled and died and rose again, the one who won on the cross.

And we too can strengthen ourselves in Christ the Lord our God. Let's pray together. Oh, Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, God, this word that you orchestrated when we planned this months ago, not knowing what was going to go on in our world at this time, before this fifth wave even came, we planned this passage.

And yet, God, it seems like your providential timing as we should look at 1 Samuel 30 today. With all the darkness in our world, with all that's going on, God, I pray that you will show us and help us how to strengthen ourselves in the Lord our God.

[38 : 03] That God, when we suffer and life is hard, we will remember there is a God on the throne, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who has achieved this emphatic and encouraging victory so that, God, the storms and the waves don't need to overwhelm us, but that we, God, can turn to you.

God, I pray for my brothers and sisters. I pray for my friends this morning. I pray for those in Watermark and those that are looking in. That, God, you will draw near to us and help us to draw near to you. God, won't you lift our sights this morning.

God, for those of us that feel so discouraged that we don't even know how to do that, won't you bring a Jonathan, a friend around us who can strengthen us in God and point us to you and open the scriptures to us and with us and remind us of your great sovereignty.

God, I pray, come and draw near and strengthen us today. In your awesome, your sovereign, and your tender name we pray. Amen.