Good morning, Moon Valley!

Today we continue our sermon series titled, ▶ “Making a Difference in a Nation Adrift.” It is a study through the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel.

The text we are studying today is ▶ 1 Samuel 30:1-31. From this text, we are going to get an answer to the question: What do we do in the lowest points of life? How do we navigate our weakest moments? When he hit rock bottom, what then?

The low point may come with a divorce after many years of marriage.

Or being burned out to the point where even the simplest things seem insurmountable.

Or when chemotherapy ravages your body.

Or when you feel utterly alone, even in the presence of many people.

Or when you face a life transition but there seems to be no good way forward.

Or when you lose your job, or your identity, or your sense of purpose, or a loved one.

We are going to go to school on a guy named David, who will experience one of his weakest moments in our text. We are going to see what he faced, how he felt about it, and what he did to get through it.

Our text begins in ▶ 1 Samuel 30:1, where it says,

> ESV 1 Samuel 30:1 Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, . . .

You may recall from the previous chapters, God had saved David from a dilemma of his own doing. Let me briefly recap.

To escape Saul, David foolishly defects from Israel to Philistia, surrendering himself to the service of King Achish of Gath, an enemy of Israel. David wins the trust of Achish, in part, by deceiving him. Achish gives David, his men, and their families the town of Ziklag to live. Then Achish decides to take David and his men with him into battle against the Israelites, creating the dilemma for David, who does not want to fight his own people, but can find no way out of it.

On his way to battle, David is saved by God through some Philistine commanders who do not trust David and refuse to allow him to fight with them, lest he betray them. So, Achish sends David and his men home to Ziklag, which is a three-day journey.

While David and his men were gone, Ziklag is raided. ▶ Verses 1 through 3 explain.

> ESV 1 Samuel 30:1 . . . the Amalekites had made a raid against the Negeb and against Ziklag. They had overcome Ziklag and burned it with fire
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> ▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:2 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.
>
> ▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:3 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.

The narrator tells us what David does not yet know: that the Amalekites are responsible for the raid on Ziklag. This is significant because some months earlier, during his time in Ziklag, David and his men had raided the Amalekites, as recorded in 1 Samuel 27:8. And David's raids had been merciless. When attacking a particular Amalekite town, David had left no survivors.

What goes around comes around.

But the Amalekites do leave survivors. The narrator tells us that no one in Ziklag was killed, all were taken captive. At this point, David can only hope that is the case. All he knows is that Ziklag has been burned to the ground, and no one is there.

The response of David and his men is recorded in ▶ verse 4.

> ESV 1 Samuel 30:4 Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep.

This is a low point. This is a weak moment.

David not only shares the burden of his men, he himself suffers personally. ▶ Verse 5 explains,

> ESV 1 Samuel 30:5 David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel.

One can only imagine what is going through David's mind. "Have my wives been abused? Are they terrified? Are they still alive?"

This is bad. But things get worse. ▶ Verse 6 says,

> ESV 1 Samuel 30:6 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. . . .

Among David's 600 grieving men, there is talk of stoning David to death. You can imagine the grumbling. "David is responsible. We should have never defected to the Philistines. We are now suffering the loss of our families because of David's poor leadership. This needs to end along with David."

Put yourself in David's sandals. There is some truth to the grumbling. You have made some poor decisions—decisions which have brought suffering to the ones who have followed you faithfully and to the ones you love dearly.

And think of how bewildering this could be for David. "Has God has just saved me from one dilemma so I could live to experience a worse one?"

We have seen David awfulize before. Now would be the perfect time to awfulize again.

But he doesn't.

In the last part of ▶ verse 6, it says,

> ESV 1 Samuel 30:6 . . . But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.

This is a key verse that summarizes how David handled his weak moment. "David strengthened himself in the Lord."

The verb here is reflexive, indicating that David plays a role; he does something to strengthen himself.

Nevertheless, David himself is not the source of strength. He cannot do this on how own. His source of strength is "in the LORD his God."

The big idea I draw from this is straightforward and drawn directly from David's example: ▶ In your weakest moments, strengthen yourself in the Lord.

That may sound good. But it leaves us wondering exactly how to do it.

Unfortunately, our text doesn't provide specifics.

But David shows us.

Some scholars believe that Psalm 25 could have been composed by David at a time like this.[1] Indeed, Psalm 25 does give us insight into how we can strengthen ourselves in the Lord in our weakest moments.

In ▶ Psalm 25:1, David says,

> ESV Psalm 25:1 To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

This is a powerful word picture.

To lift the soul is a metaphor that portrays lifting up to God every part of ourselves. It is a way of saying our lives depend completely and only on the help of the Lord. It is giving over to God all we are, all we have, all we think, and all we do—all by faith, trusting him to care for us.[2]

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[1] Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 178.
[2] James L. Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Know Press, 1994),124.

You could say that David strengthens himself by lifting. But not by lifting weights. Instead, by lifting his soul to the Lord in faithful surrender to his loving care.

In ▶ Psalm 25:16, David cries out to God,

> ESV Psalm 25:16 Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.

It is hard to imagine feeling more alone than David did in the smoldering remains of Ziklag. Rejected by the Israelites. Rejected by the Philistines. Now rejected by his own men. His wives, gone. His house, burned. His reputation, spent.

In ▶ verses 17 and 18, David says to God,

> ESV Psalm 25:17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distresses. 18 Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.

David realizes that his own sins have contributed to his situation. Of course, it is complicated. Not everything stems from his wrongdoing. But, at least in part, he is experiencing the consequences of his own poor choices. He owns it. And seeks forgiveness.

Your own low point may or may not have anything to do with personal sins. But David's does.

Then there is the matter of David's foes: Saul and the Israelites loyal to him, the Philistine commanders, the Amalekites, and now his own grumbling men who are thinking of stoning him. So, David calls to God in ▶ verses 19 and 20.

> ESV Psalm 25:19 Consider how many are my foes, and with what violent hatred they hate me. 20 Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me! Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.

Finally, David says to God in ▶ verse 21,

> ESV Psalm 25:21 May integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for you.

The original Hebrew word for "integrity" carries the idea of being complete, pure in heart, sincere, free from any intent to deceive or impress others.[3]

The Hebrew word for "uprightness" is essentially a synonym for "integrity" which reinforces the same idea of being honest and sincere.[4]

It may seem curious that David would appeal to his own integrity and uprightness, when he has just asked God to forgive his sins. Indeed, this has prompted some scholars to conclude that David intends "integrity" and "uprightness" to describe God, not himself.

Nevertheless, I think David is describing his own wholehearted submission to God in the moment. His heart is undivided in its devotion to God. This fits other scriptures which describe David as a man after God's own heart. It's not about perfection; it's about intention.

One commentator who explains,

> *[It] is probable that the words "integrity and "uprightness" do refer to the psalmist, indicating not sinlessness, but his penitent state and determination to obey God. His prayer is not based on self-confidence*

[3] Holladay.
[4] Ibid.

> *with respect to his worthiness, but rather in the trust that his attitude toward God, of repentance and worship, is of such a kind that he may legitimately expect God's answer and protection. And so he continues to wait for God.*[5]

David is resolved to go all in with God—to faithfully do and be whatever God wants, leaving the outcomes to the Lord. David's part is to wait. To trust. To depend on the Lord his God.

In God's economy, the position of greatest strength is wholehearted surrender. This is how David strengthens himself. And it brings us back to the big idea: ▶ In your weakest moments, strengthen yourself in the Lord.

Now, back in our text, we are going to see what this strengthening looks like as it plays out through David. In ▶ 1 Samuel 30:7-8, it says,

> ESV 1 Samuel 30:7 And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David.
>
> ▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:8 And David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them?" ▶ He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue."

David seeks guidance from the Lord on a question that seems like a no-brainer: Shall I go after those who captured our families to rescue them? David is trusting completely in God and not himself, even on decisions that we might consider obvious.

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[5] Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 221.

This is evidence that David has strengthened himself in the Lord. David relies on God for an answer, and God provides one from which David will need to draw strength later on: “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue.”

▶ Verses 9 and 10 continue.

> ESV 1 Samuel 30:9 So David set out, and the six hundred men who were with him, and they came to the brook Besor, where those who were left behind stayed.
>
> ▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:10 But David pursued, he and four hundred men. Two hundred stayed behind, who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor.

That one third of David’s men were too exhausted to go on is understandable. The men had traveled for three days from Aphek to Ziklag. Then they spent a lot of emotional energy, weeping until they had no more strength to weep. Then they traveled for about 16 miles from Ziklag to the brook Besor, the largest and deepest ravine in southern Judah.[6] It is no wonder 200 men stayed behind, too exhausted to cross the ravine.

Nevertheless, David continues the chase, now with 400 men. Keep in mind the men who keep going are also tired.

Along the way, they encounter a weak, thirsty, starving man. ▶ Verses 11 and 12 explain,

[6] Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, Vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 276.

ESV 1 Samuel 30:11 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,

▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:12 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.

Of course, David wants to get information from this man about the possible whereabout of the captors. But he could have done it without providing the generous helping of food and the time to eat it. The personal urgency of David's situation makes his generosity even more remarkable.

It is quite possible that David is simply obeying the commandments given by God in the Mosaic Law concerning the gracious treatment of sojourners (e.g. Deut. 10:17-19).[7] David is not so wrapped up with his own problems that he could not help a person in need, in keeping with God's will. This is another mark of being strengthened in the Lord. David is willing to suspend his personal preferences in obedience to God.

The Egyptian turns out to be a servant of an Amalekite in the band that raided Ziklag. He had fallen ill and was left to die. David gets from him the information he was hoping for and catches up with the captors.

▶ Verses 13 through 17 advance the story.

ESV 1 Samuel 30:13 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."

[7] Ibid.

▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:14 “We had made a raid against the Negeb of the Cherethites and against that which belongs to Judah and against the Negeb of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire.”

▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:15 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.”

▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:16 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.

▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:17 And David struck them down from twilight until the evening of the next day, and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men, who mounted camels and fled.

When it says, “not a man of them escaped except four hundred young men,” the implication is that the 400 who escaped are but a fraction of the total. This would mean that David and his own 400 tired men were greatly outnumbered but attacked anyway.

Though David and his men were seemingly at a disadvantage, they must have been buoyed by the promise and strength of the Lord: “you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue.”

When you strengthen yourself in the Lord, the Lord sustains you.

Just how bountifully the Lord sustains David is recorded in ▶ verses 18-20.

> ESV 1 Samuel 30:18 David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and David rescued his two wives.
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> ▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:19 Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken. David brought back all.
>
> ▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:20 David also captured all the flocks and herds, and the people drove the livestock before him, and said, “This is David’s spoil.”

The men who once decried David’s leadership now extol it: “This is David’s spoil.”

On his way back to Ziklag, David returns to the 200 exhausted men left behind. ▶ Verse 21 says,

> ESV 1 Samuel 30:21 Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow David, and who had been left at the brook Besor. ▶ 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.

The original Hebrew word for “greeted” carries the idea of asking about one’s wellbeing—something like our “How are you?” But it’s not a rhetorical question for David; he genuinely wants to know. Instead of deriding them for staying behind, David inquires about their welfare.

But some of David’s men who had just gone into battle are not so compassionate. ▶ Verse 22 explains,

> ESV 1 Samuel 30:22 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."

Some of the men insist that the spoil not be shared with those who stayed behind on the thinking that they did nothing to earn it and do not deserve it. "The pansies can take their families, but none of the spoil" would be a loose translation.

In ▶ verses 23 through 25, David intervenes.

ESV 1 Samuel 30:23 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."

▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:24 "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 baggage. They shall share alike."

▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:25 And he made it a statute and a rule for Israel from that day forward to this day.

David's argument is a theological one. "None of us did anything to earn or deserve what the Lord has given. It is the Lord who preserved us. What we have is by the grace of God, so we shall share alike."

When you strengthen yourself in the Lord, you become like him. And God is gracious.

As another gesture of grace, when David gets back to Ziklag, he sends part of the spoil to his friends in the southern regions of Saul's kingdom, where David and his men used to roam as fugitives. ▶ Verses 26 through 31 explain,

ESV 1 Samuel 30:26 When David came to Ziklag, he sent part of the spoil to his friends, the elders of Judah, saying, ▶ “Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD.”

▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:27 It was for those in Bethel, in Ramoth of the Negeb, in Jattir, 28 in Aroer, in Siphmoth, in Eshtemoa,

▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:29 in Racal, in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, in the cities of the Kenites, 30 in Hormah, in Bor-ashan, in Athach,

▶ ESV 1 Samuel 30:31 in Hebron, for all the places where David and his men had roamed.

David’s heart is turning back to his people. The men of Judah to whom David sends the gift are likely the same men who will soon anoint David king over the house of Judah in 2 Samuel 2:4.[8]

When you strengthen yourself in the Lord, you align yourself with God’s purposes for your life.

Which brings us back to the big idea: ▶ In your weakest moments, strengthen yourself in the Lord.

Are you at a low point right now? Do you find yourself in a weak moment? Do you need strengthening?

We have seen with David that strengthening himself in the Lord relates to his heart. He strengthens himself through wholehearted surrender to his God.

[8] David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman’s, 2007), 646.

We can strengthen ourselves in the very same way.

Pray with me, using the words of David in Psalm 25, making them your own.

- To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
- Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.
- The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distresses.
- Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.
- Consider how many are my foes, and with what violent hatred they hate me.
- Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me!
- Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.
- May integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for you.
- Amen.