

Bible Study May 15, 2024

2 SAMUEL 1 (NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION)

David Hears of Saul's Death

1 After the death of Saul, David returned from striking down the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days.

David had great faith in God. He patiently waited for God to fulfill his promises. The book of 1 Samuel tells of David's struggles as he waited to become king of Israel (Samuel had anointed David as king of Israel many years earlier; see 1 Samuel 16:13). King Saul became jealous of David because the people kept praising him for his military accomplishments. Eventually, Saul's jealousy became so intense that he tried to kill David several times. As a result, David had to escape. For many years David hid from Saul in enemy territory and in the vast wilderness south and east of Jerusalem. David may have wondered when God's promise that he would be king would come true, but his struggles prepared him for the great responsibilities he would later face. The book of 2 Samuel tells how David was finally rewarded for his patience and consistent faith in God.

When Saul died, David and his men were still living in Ziklag, a Philistine city. Because Saul had driven him out of Israel, David had pretended to be loyal to Achish, a Philistine ruler (1 Samuel 27). There God had kept him safe from Saul.

2 On the third day a man arrived from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honor.

3 "Where have you come from?" David asked him.

He answered, "I have escaped from the Israelite camp."

4 "What happened?" David asked. "Tell me."

"The men fled from the battle," he replied. "Many of them fell and died. And Saul and his son Jonathan are dead."

5 Then David said to the young man who brought him the report, "How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?"

6 "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa," the young man said, "and there was Saul, leaning on his spear, with the chariots and their drivers in hot pursuit. 7 When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, and I said, 'What can I do?'

8 "He asked me, 'Who are you?'

"An Amalekite," I answered.

⁹ “Then he said to me, ‘Stand here by me and kill me! I’m in the throes of death, but I’m still alive.’

¹⁰ “So I stood beside him and killed him, because I knew that after he had fallen he could not survive. And I took the crown that was on his head and the band on his arm and have brought them here to my lord.”

¹¹ Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. ¹² They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the LORD and for the nation of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

David and his men were visibly shaken over Saul’s death: “They mourned and wept and fasted all day.” Their actions showed their genuine sorrow over the loss of their king, their friend Jonathan, and the other soldiers of Israel who had died that day. They were not ashamed to grieve. Today, some people consider expressing emotions to be a sign of weakness. Those who wish to appear strong try to hide their feelings. But expressing our grief can help us deal with our intense sorrow when a loved one dies.

¹³ David said to the young man who brought him the report, “Where are you from?”

“I am the son of a foreigner, an Amalekite,” he answered.

The Amalekites were a fierce, nomadic tribe that frequently conducted surprise raids on Canaanite villages. They had been Israel’s enemies since Moses’ time. David had just destroyed an Amalekite band of raiders who had burned his city and kidnapped its women and children (1 Samuel 30:1-20). This man was probably unaware of David’s recent confrontations with the Amalekites, or he may not have come. Instead, he incurred David’s wrath by posing as an enemy of Israel and claiming to have killed God’s chosen king.

The man identified himself as an Amalekite from Saul’s camp (1:2).

He may have been an Amalekite under Israelite jurisdiction, but more likely he was a battlefield scavenger. Obviously, the man was lying both about his identity and about what had happened on the battlefield. (Compare his story with the account in 1 Samuel 31:3-4.) Because he had Saul’s crown with him, something the Philistines wouldn’t have left behind, we can infer that he had found Saul dead on the battlefield before the Philistines had arrived (1 Samuel 31:8).

As it happened for the Amalekite, a life of deceit often leads to grave consequences for the liar, even for things he or she may not have done. This man lied, most likely to gain some personal reward for killing David’s rival, but he misread David’s character. If David had rewarded him for murdering the king, David would have shared his guilt. Instead, David had the messenger killed. This may seem to be an overly severe punishment, but there are few crimes more serious than killing the Lord’s anointed king, a crime David himself had refused to commit a number of times.

¹⁴ David asked him, “Why weren’t you afraid to lift your hand to destroy the LORD’s anointed?”

¹⁵ Then David called one of his men and said, “Go, strike him down!” So he struck him down, and he died. ¹⁶ For David had said to him, “Your blood be on your own head. Your own mouth testified against you when you said, ‘I killed the LORD’s anointed.’”

Although Saul had been trying to kill David for many years, David did not celebrate Saul's death. In spite of all that Saul had done against him, David maintained respect for Saul's position as God's anointed servant. Since David believed that God had anointed Saul, it followed that only God was in a position to remove him from office. If it became casual or commonplace to assassinate the king, the whole society would become chaotic. It was God's job, not David's, to judge Saul's sins (Leviticus 19:18). When looking at our own leaders, religious or civil, we may become tempted to become angry, despairing, or fearful. But despite their shortcomings, we must realize that God has placed rulers in authority over us, and we should maintain respect for the positions they hold (Romans 13:1-5).

David's Lament for Saul and Jonathan

17 David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan, 18 and he ordered that the people of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar):

***19 "A gazelle lies slain on your heights, Israel.
How the mighty have fallen!***

***20 "Tell it not in Gath,
proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon,
lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad,
lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice.***

***21 "Mountains of Gilboa,
may you have neither dew nor rain,
may no showers fall on your terraced fields.
For there the shield of the mighty was despised,
the shield of Saul—no longer rubbed with oil.***

***22 "From the blood of the slain,
from the flesh of the mighty,
the bow of Jonathan did not turn back,
the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied.***

***23 Saul and Jonathan—
in life they were loved and admired,
and in death they were not parted.
They were swifter than eagles,
they were stronger than lions.***

***24 "Daughters of Israel,
weep for Saul,
who clothed you in scarlet and finery,
who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold.***

***25 "How the mighty have fallen in battle!
Jonathan lies slain on your heights.***

***26 I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother;
you were very dear to me.***

***Your love for me was wonderful,
more wonderful than that of women.***

By saying that Jonathan's love was "deeper than the love of women," David was not implying that he had a sexual relationship with Jonathan. Practicing homosexuality was forbidden in Israel (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13). David was simply describing the deep brotherhood and faithful friendship he had with Jonathan. (For more on their friendship, 18:1-4.)

***27 "How the mighty have fallen!
The weapons of war have perished!"***

David was a talented musician. He played the harp (1 Samuel 16:23), he organized musicians and music for worship at the Tabernacle, later to be used at the Temple (1 Chronicles 25), and he wrote many of the psalms. Here we are told that he wrote a funeral song in memory of Saul and his son Jonathan, David's closest friend. Music played an important role in Israel's history.

Saul had caused much trouble for David, but when he died, David composed a funeral song in memory of the king and his son. David had every reason to hate Saul, but he chose not to. Instead, he chose to look at the good Saul had done and to ignore the times when Saul had attacked him. It takes courage to lay aside hurt and painful memories and to respect the positive side of another person, especially an enemy.

The Benefits of Obedience

*God promised many blessings to the nation of Israel if they would obey His commands.
Deuteronomy 28*

1. **Set you above other nations**
2. **Successful cities and farming**
3. **Blessings of children, food, and livestock**
4. **Protection and power against enemies**
5. **Bountiful harvest**
6. **Set apart as God's holy people**
7. **Feared by other nations**
8. **Prosperity regarding family, food, and farm livestock**
9. **Appropriate rain and favorable blessing upon their work, including freedom from debt**
10. **Leadership among other people and nations**