

## Samuel to king David 1 Samuel 30: David rescues Ziklag

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.  
English Standard Version (ESV) of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

### Introduction

Chapter 30 is the penultimate chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel. Chapter 31 completes the book and is about the Battle of Gilboa in which both King Saul and Jonathan his son were killed. Saul had been rejected as Israel's king by God in chapter 15 because of Saul's blatant disobedience. In chapter 16, God told Samuel to anoint David to replace Saul as king, which he did and then he [Samuel] fades from the narrative and eventually dies (25:1). To quote Jonathan Hughes from last week's talk:

"What Saul should have done, when he became aware of God's choice for the one to be king, was to abdicate and allow David to become king. Jonathan, Saul's son, had already concluded that David would be the next king instead of him. However, what followed was a period of intense persecution, as Saul fought to maintain his power and leave an inheritance for his own family. In choosing such a path he began an inexorable march to war and his own death."<sup>1</sup>

The narrative of chapters 21-26 describe how David became a fugitive. Eventually, Saul's constant hounding of David overwhelmed him and caused him to doubt that God would bring him through such an ordeal:

"Then David said in his heart, "Now I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will despair of seeking me any longer within the borders of Israel, and I shall escape out of his hand." So David arose and went over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath" (27:1-2).

Chapters 27-29 reveal the difficulties which that decision brought to David. Chronologically, the events of chapter 29 took place before the Philistines marched northwards (see 28:1) and camped at Gilboa (28:4). Chapter 29 describes how God intervened in the counsel of the Philistine lords at Aphek and providentially saved David from fighting against his fellow-countrymen from Israel. Chapter 29 ends:

"So David set out with his men early in the morning [from Aphek] to return to the land of the Philistines. But the Philistines went up to Jezreel" (v.11).

That means that the events in chapter 30 we will read about today took place many miles south of the scene of the Battle of Gilboa and far, far away from the Philistine army. We can see from this

that God protected David from any future false rumours from his enemies that he had helped the Philistines to defeat Saul's army.

### Structure of talk on chapter 30

I'll divide today's talk on chapter 30 into five sections and I'll read the corresponding verses for each section from ESV at each stage:

1. vv.1-6, The destruction of Ziklag.
2. vv.7-15, David pursues the Amalekites.
3. vv.16-19, David avenges himself of the Amalekites.
4. vv.20-25, David's establishes his kingship.
5. vv.26-31, David shares his spoil with Judah.

### The destruction of Ziklag

"Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid against the Negeb 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 him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God" (vv.1-6).

It took David and his army three days to get back to Ziklag from Jezreel. No doubt there was much murmuring from these disgruntled warriors against David to the effect that the whole episode had been a complete waste of time. There is an expression used in the world that, just when you think that matters cannot get any worse, then they do. That's what happened to David for the language of verse 3 implies that the smoke of Ziklag's fire was still visible, its sacking had just recently happened. While the majority of Philistine forces were out of their country fighting Saul's army, Amalekite marauders had seized the opportunity to invade its southern parts. Ziklag was ravaged, perhaps in revenge for David's recent raids upon them over the past year and a third (see 27:7-8). David and his men had lost everything, all their wives and families had been captured. They all were embittered and wept until they could weep no longer. David recognised that he was to blame. He also was greatly distressed and more so because they were on the edge of mutiny and spoke of stoning him. Under such pressure of such an unexpected devastating calamity, the spirit of any other leader would have sunk to rock bottom. But David must have realised that all of this was the consequence of having gone his own way without first having sought the mind of God. It was then that his faith kicked in. Notice the precise wording at the end of verse 6: "But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God." G. André comments:

"A shadow had darkened [David's] faith, but the discipline [God had taken him through] has fulfilled its work. God remains "his God." It is to [God] that he turns, and in [God] that he becomes strengthened. Since his departure from [Judah] during the sixteen months with Achish, not a word of God, not a prayer, not a Psalm is mentioned [in any Scripture about this period]. The great waters of very deep trials were necessary to cause [David] once again to cry to God, [who immediately] responds. Communion is restored."<sup>2</sup>

What a lesson this is for us! All of us have suffered losses of one kind or another, sometimes of our own making, and sometimes because of happenings outside our control. Like David, we can look to the Lord for the strength, courage, help, and direction to endure even the worst calamity. It was when David turned to the Lord, that he found all the help and strength that he needed. And so will we. Hebrews 4:16 says:

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Mercy, God refrains from giving us what we deserve. Grace, God gives us exactly what we need, not what we want, for the very circumstances we find ourselves in. David was the recipient of abundant mercy and grace at Ziklag. He knew that, as leader of the men faithful to him, he had the responsibility to find the Amalekites and salvage the situation. But he knew that he could rely on his God to sort matters out and fight for him so he “strengthened himself in the LORD his God.”

### **David pursues the Amalekites**

“And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, “Bring me the ephod.” So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. 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.” 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. But David pursued, he and four hundred men. Two hundred stayed behind, who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor. 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. 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. 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.” 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”” (vv.7-15).

We’re not directly told how David knew that the razing of Ziklag was the work of the Amalekites. Nor how he knew that none of its inhabitants had been killed, just carried away captive. It was probably information that Gad the prophet, or Abiathar the high priest, had told him. But it caused David to request of Abiathar the ephod so that he [David] might inquire of the LORD. Abiathar would have used the Urim and the Thummim to learn the LORD’s will for the two questions David asked God. Was he to pursue the Amalekites? and would he be successful in doing so? God answered David that he should hunt for them and gave him the assurance that he would be both successful and recover everything.

We should at this point take note of the contrast of conduct between David in this very difficult situation and Saul, who went to consult a medium in chapter 28. Saul’s conduct ended in utter despair, then disaster on Mt. Gilboa. David’s conduct ended in encouragement for he “strengthened himself in the LORD his God.”

So David set off and took all his six hundred men with him. But after already three days of marching, the extra journey proved difficult and resulted in two hundred fatigued men dropping out through sheer exhaustion at Besor. Again David's faith was being tested, had he fully realised that he'd been going his own way and was he now entirely reliant upon the Lord? Was his trust in God strong enough to know that he would succeed with just two-thirds of his army? What happens next is a great example of the kind of leader David was for he would by no means urge any of his men to beyond their strength, though the critical situation demanded urgent action. David knew roughly which direction to go in from Ziklag, but not exactly where the Amalekites were to be found. God providentially gave David an Egyptian slave of one of the Amalekites to lead him to the Amalekite camp. This slave had been cruelly discarded because he had fallen sick and therefore was of no further use to his master. The slave gave David a detailed account of the Amalekites' raids, including that on Ziklag, which was useful intelligence for David. Furthermore he was able to take David's army directly to the Amalekites' camp.

### **David avenges himself of the Amalekites**

“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 four hundred young men, who mounted camels and fled. 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”” (vv.16-19).

As was common of wars in those days in the Middle East, whenever a city was captured, all of its warriors were unsparingly put to death. But there were no warriors in Ziklag when the Amalekites raided it. So they simply took the booty, which included the women to be concubines and the boys for slaves. The narrative draws attention to what the Amalekites were doing when David surprised them. They were revelling over the spoils, eating, and drinking, and dancing, probably in honour of their idol-gods, whom they no doubt praised for their success. Complacent in the belief that both the Philistines and David's men were far away to the north in Israel, the Amalekites found themselves off their guard. Perhaps they were some distance from their weapons as they had spread themselves out over a vast area of ground. Also many of them would be drunk, and incapable of offering any meaningful resistance. David wasted no time in putting these surprised and panic-stricken marauders to the sword, but four hundred of their young men managed to escape and flee on mounted camels.

Amalek was a longstanding enemy of Israel. In the wilderness journey to Canaan, the Promised Land, Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim (Exodus 17:8) and Moses prophesied that, “The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation” (v.16). That's why Saul was told in 1 Samuel 15:2-3 to eliminate them at the crucial time when governance passed from Israel's judges to its kings. Saul's failure to obey this command caused the LORD to reject Saul as a suitable person to lead Israel. The words of chapter 30:17, “David struck them down from twilight until the evening of the next day, and not a man of them escaped” show that David did exactly what Saul ought to have done and indicate that the kingdom was about to be established in his hands.

Although I have entitled this section, ‘David avenges himself of the Amalekites’, the real issue is the total recovery of what belonged to him, as highlighted:

- At the start of v.18, “David recovered all”.

- “Nothing was missing” at the beginning of v.19.
- “David brought back all” at the end of v.19.

The full text of vv.18-19 stresses the significance of this point:

“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.”

It is tantamount to saying, “This is the occasion in the history of Israel when David assumed its kingship”, which become clear when we read vv.20-25.

### **David establishes his kingship**

“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. 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 baggage. They shall share alike.” And he made it a statute and a rule for Israel from that day forward to this day” (vv.20-25).

This on-the-way-back-home-to-Ziklag incident is recorded so that there is evidence that David asserted his leadership that day over his men, who were fierce fighting men and with not a few troublemakers in their ranks. Verse 20 states that not only had David brought back everything that the Amalekites had taken, but that David had also captured all their flocks and herds. His men drove the livestock before him, and said, “This is David's spoil.” It was these spoils of war that the wicked and worthless fellows among David's men claimed should not be shared with those who had stayed with the baggage. But David regarded the spoil as that which the LORD had given them and so he intervened and imposed his authority over the whole company. So began David's policy to treat all under his rule, everyone in God's kingdom so to speak, equally and with dignity: “They shall share alike” (v.24b). The words of v.25: “And he made it a statute and a rule for Israel from that day forward to this day” remind me of what David himself prophesied concerning Messiah:

“He shall judge Your people with righteousness” (Psalm 72:2, NKJV).

### **David shares his spoil with Judah**

Let's now read vv.26-31:

“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.” It was for those in Bethel, in Ramoth of the Negeb, in Jattir, in Aroer, in Siphmoth, in Eshtemoa, in Racal, in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, in the cities of the Kenites, in Hormah, in Bor-ashan, in Athach, in Hebron, for all the places where David and his men had roamed.”

These named places were all towns and villages in Judah who had protected him and shown him hospitality while he and his men were fugitives on the run from Saul. The sharing of the spoils from the defeat of the Amalekites was David's grateful acknowledgement of their support. And it was they who shortly afterwards claimed David to be Israel's rightful king, when following the death of Saul on Mt. Gilboa, which is the subject of next week's talk on chapter 30, the rest of Israel followed Ishbosheth, Saul's son.

The Scripture records two other points about Ziklag:

1. First, that Ziklag became David's headquarters. At Jezreel as he returned to Ziklag, some army chiefs and their men of the tribe of Manasseh deserted to David. Thereafter they helped David against the band of raiders. They are described as being mighty men of valour. From then on, day after day more men of Israel came over to David to help him and to strengthen his claim to the throne, "until there was a great army, like an army of God" (see 1 Chronicles 12:19-22)
2. Second, 1 Samuel 27:6 states that Ziklag remained the possession of the kings of Judah from the day when Achish gave it to David.

### **King David**

God willing, next week's talk concludes this Truth for Today series of studies on 1 Samuel. We have not planned a study 2 Samuel for the near future. And, as 1 Samuel 31 is entirely about the death of Saul and Jonathan, and as the name of this series is 'Samuel to King David', I think it is appropriate for me to finish today on a positive note; and to say a few words about David's reign over Israel in the following 40 years, the details of which are recorded in 2 Samuel. Saul was the people's choice of king. 1 Chronicles 10:13-14 gives this verdict on Saul's reign:

"He broke faith with the LORD in that he did not keep the command of the LORD, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance. He did not seek guidance from the LORD. Therefore the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse."

David was God's choice because he was a man after God's heart, who was commanded of God to be king (1 Samuel 13:14). Was he obedient to this command? Psalm 78:70-72 provide this summary of David's reign:

"[God] chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skilful hand."

This psalm is also a prophecy about Messiah, 'great David's greater Son.' The Old Testament prophets exult in the coming millennial kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth, when not only Israel, but also all nations of the world will be blessed by His beneficent rule. At the present time, Israel is enmeshed in wars with surrounding nations and the whole geo-political situation is very frightening. How good to know that the Lord Jesus is returning in power and great glory to rule as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Even so come Lord Jesus. Amen!

### **Endnotes**

1. T1386.
2. P.26, *David The Man After God's own Heart*, G. André, Believers Bookshelf, Sunbury, Pennsylvania, USA.

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### **Please Note:**

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