

Session 15 David’s Godly Response To Saul’s Death (2 Sam. 1)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. 2 Samuel 1 gives us important insight into David’s perspective on his enemies as well as into fallen leaders in the kingdom of God. His response can be used as a litmus test for us to measure elements of bitterness that we may have toward our “personal Sauls” or fallen leaders in the body of Christ.
- B. ***The context:*** David returned to Ziklag after defeating the Amalekites in the south and received news of the battle between Israel and the Philistines that had just occurred in the north (1 Sam. 31).
¹Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel..fell slain on Mount Gilboa.
²Then the Philistines...killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul’s sons. ***³The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was severely wounded by the archers.***
⁴Then Saul said to his armorbearer, “Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me.” But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it. ***⁵And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword, and died with him. (1 Sam. 31:1-5)***
- C. How did David respond to Saul’s death and the downfall of his government? I encourage all of us to pray “to see what God sees and feel what God’s feels” about our adversaries in the body of Christ because they are members of His family. Many secretly wish for the downfall of those who have mistreated them (Prov. 24:17). The Lord has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11).
¹⁷Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles...
(Prov. 24:17)
¹¹Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! (Ezek. 33:11)
- D. Hearing the news about the death of Saul, David realized that God’s promise was about to be fulfilled in his life. However, the joy of this much anticipated day was overshadowed by the grief expressed in 2 Samuel 1:17-29, as he wept over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan.
- E. David grieved over Saul because he saw who Saul was “in the spirit,” not who he was “in the flesh” (2 Cor. 5:16). To see someone “according to the spirit” is to see them through the lens of God’s eyes and His calling on them and seeing who they are to God and who they are in Christ.
¹⁶Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. (2 Cor. 5:16)
- F. David viewed Saul through the lens of Saul’s divine calling as the Lord’s anointed servant who fought the Lord’s enemies and in his public role as the *top political leader of his nation*. David also recalled *their friendship* in their early days together. The temptation is to view people only through the lens of how they mistreated us personally, thus seeing them mostly as a personal enemy.

- G. Through David’s view and response, we can be used by the Lord to bring healing to hurting hearts in the church as well as to civil strife in city and nations, e.g., the gracious response of Nelson Mandela and Abraham Lincoln to people on the other side of great civil strife. They set the stage for many to enjoy peace and safety instead of facing an escalation of conflict and violence. They approached the healing of their nation through David’s perspective as seen in 2 Samuel 1.
- H. One reason that David responded in this way was because he did not see Saul as his own “source” of promotion or as preventing God’s will in his life. The death threats of Saul were over. There is a time when the season in the “seminary of Saul” is over.
- I. By embracing the call to love our enemies actively, our feelings will change and we glorify God.
⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Mt. 5:44–45)
- J. In loving this way, we prove that we have received the Father’s love. We are filled with gratitude for love that we did not deserve, so it makes sense to us to share that love with our enemies. This is the most convincing way to prove that the Father’s love exists. It is God’s grace to unbelievers for them to witness God’s love through you in the times they mistreat you.
³⁵Love your enemies...you will be sons of the Most High. He is kind to the unthankful and evil. (Lk. 6:35)

II. DAVID EXECUTED THE AMALEKITE WHO CLAIMED TO KILL SAUL (1:1-16)

- A. Saul was killed in the battle with the Philistines on Mount Gilboa at the very time that David fought the Amalekites to recover all that was lost at Ziklag. The events of 2 Samuel 1 happen sequentially after the events of 1 Samuel 30:26 and simultaneously with the events of 1 Samuel 30:27-31 when David divided the spoil that he gained and sent gifts to his friends in Judah (1 Sam. 30:26-31).
¹Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had stayed two days in Ziklag, ²on the third day, behold, it happened that a man came from Saul’s camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. So it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the ground and prostrated himself. ³And David said to him, “Where have you come from?” So he said to him, “I have escaped from the camp of Israel.” ⁴David said to him, “How did the matter go? Please tell me.” And he answered, “The people have fled from the battle, many of the people are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.” (2 Sam. 1:1-4)
- B. The Amalekite boasted that he gave the final deathblow to Saul. Thus, consistent with his revelation and conviction about respecting the royal messianic office, David had the Amalekite killed.
- C. *The third day*: Due to the man’s torn clothes and dust on his head—customary Hebraic signs of grief—David understood that the man came with bad news. These were days of deep contemplation for David who had so many promises of God that had not yet come to pass.

- D. David did not immediately receive the report as true, but probed for more details in order to determine the truthfulness of the information (1:5-10).
⁵So David said to the young man who told him, “How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead?” ⁶Then the young man...said, “As I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa, there was Saul, leaning on his spear; and indeed the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him... ⁸And he said to me, ‘Who are you?’ So I answered him, ‘I am an Amalekite.’ ⁹He said to me again, ‘Please...kill me, for anguish has come upon me, but my life still remains in me.’ ¹⁰So I stood over him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm...” (2 Sam. 1:5-10)
- E. **Crown and bracelet:** The man found Saul’s body with the crown on his head. This was in itself an expression of Saul’s pride to enter battle with the crown on his head, making himself a clear target for the archers (v. 10). Saul’s personal tokens of the royal jewelry proved the truth of Saul’s death.
- F. **I was sure he could not live:** The Amalekite presented himself as compassionate in killing Saul, since he could not survive. His life lingered, and soon after that the Amalekite gave the final blow.
- G. Some conclude that the Amalekite lied to David about killing Saul. However, the narrative presents David as believing his story. Some see a contradiction between the account of Saul’s death in 1 Samuel 31:4-5 and one in 2 Samuel 1:8–10. Most recent commentators accept both accounts as truthful. The Amalekite’s story gave the rationale for why the Philistines did not have Saul’s crown. The main difference is seen in the account of what happened in the final moments of Saul’s life. It appears Saul inflicted a wound on himself that would have killed him eventually; however, his death was sped up by the Amalekites striking him with a true deathblow.
- H. It was important for all to know that David acquired Saul’s crown and bracelet, not by participating in the battle against Saul, but by executing the man who killed Saul.
- I. David shocked the Amalekite by not being delighted at the news of Saul’s death (1:11-12).
¹¹Therefore David took hold of his own clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him. ¹²And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son, for the people of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. (2 Sam. 1:11-12)
- J. **All the men:** David changed the views of the men who urged him to kill Saul (1 Sam. 24; 26). Many can lament the “Jonathans” in their life, but few can lament the “Sauls” in their life.
- K. David ordered the execution of the Amalekite who killed Saul (1:13-16).
¹³Then David said to the young man who told him, “Where are you from?” And he answered, “I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite.” ¹⁴So David said to him, “How was it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the LORD’s anointed?” ¹⁵Then David called one of the young men and said, “Go near, and execute him!” And he struck him so that he died. ¹⁶So David said to him, “Your blood is on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, ‘I have killed the LORD’s anointed.’” (2 Sam. 1:13-16)

- L. **Amalekite:** David asked him again for his nationality to confirm that he was an Amalekite (1:8, 13). The Scripture called for the death of Amalekites (Ex. 17:15-16; Deut. 25:17-19; 1 Sam. 15:18-19).
- M. **Lord's anointed:** Killing the Lord's anointed was parallel to rejecting the God of Israel by killing His anointed leader. David had deep revelation of spiritual authority. Every born-again believer is under the New Covenant and is therefore anointed by God, **but** not all are entrusted with a significant sphere of leadership in God's purpose and to lead God's people.

III. DAVID LAMENTS DEVASTATION IN THE HOUSE OF SAUL (1:17–27)

- A. On hearing the sad news of Saul's death, David first showed his disregard for the Amalekite, who had hoped to gain a reward for killing Saul on the field of battle. Next, David mourned for Saul and Jonathan, which required that David overlook the terrible way in which Saul treated him.

¹⁷Then David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son, ¹⁸and he told them to teach the children of Judah the Song of the Bow... (2 Sam. 1:17-18)

- B. David viewed Saul and Jonathan as the beauty of Israel and as mighty in God (1:19-21).

¹⁹"The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen! ²⁰Tell it not in Gath...lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice... ²³"Saul and Jonathan were beloved and pleasant in their lives... (2 Sam. 1:19-23)

- C. **The beauty of Israel:** David saw God's beauty in God's people (Psalms 16:3). He saw them as beloved, pleasant, and wonderful (1:23, 26) and mighty (1:19, 21, 25, 27), swift and strong (1:23).

³As for the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight." (Ps. 16:3)

⁴For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation. (Ps. 149:4)

- D. **Tell it not in Gath:** Unbelievers are warned not to rejoice when God's servants fall. How much more important for believers not to rejoice even if it was someone with whom they had conflict!

- E. David recounted the noble characteristics and distinctives of Saul and Jonathan (1:22-24). The fruit of Saul's leadership brought financial prosperity to the nation at different times by their exploits.

²²...the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, and the sword of Saul did not return empty. ²³Saul and Jonathan were beloved and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. ²⁴O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with luxury; who put ornaments of gold on your apparel. (2 Sam. 1:22-24)

- F. David spoke of his friendship with Jonathan (1:25-26).

²⁵How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan was slain in your high places. ²⁶I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me; your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women. (2 Sam. 1:25-26)