

# **The Life of David**

## **David's Wives Are Captured**

*1 Samuel 30:1-31*

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## David's Wives Are Captured

### Scripture

The last few chapters of First Samuel switch between David and Saul. David's temporary unfaithfulness caused him to go and live in Philistia. Achish, the king of Gath, allocated David and his followers the city of Ziklag. David lived there for sixteen months and carried out raids against Israel's enemies. Eventually, Achish commanded David and his men to join him in battle against Israel, the covenant people of God. God providentially worked through the commanders of Philistia so that Achish was forced to send David back to Achish. Chapter 30 tells us what happened when David and his men arrived back in Ziklag.

Let's read about the capture of David's wives in 1 Samuel 30:1-31:

**<sup>1</sup>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 <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep. <sup>5</sup>David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. <sup>6</sup>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.**

**<sup>7</sup>And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the**

ephod to David. <sup>8</sup> 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." <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> But David pursued, he and four hundred men. Two hundred stayed behind, who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor.

<sup>11</sup> 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, <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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." <sup>15</sup> 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."

<sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and David rescued his two wives. <sup>19</sup> Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken. David brought back all. <sup>20</sup> David also captured all the flocks and herds, and the people drove the livestock before him, and said, "This is David's spoil."

<sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup>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.” <sup>23</sup>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. <sup>24</sup>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.” <sup>25</sup>And he made it a statute and a rule for Israel from that day forward to this day.

<sup>26</sup>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.” <sup>27</sup>It was for those in Bethel, in Ramoth of the Negeb, in Jattir, <sup>28</sup>in Aroer, in Siphmoth, in Eshtemoa, <sup>29</sup>in Racal, in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, in the cities of the Kenites, <sup>30</sup>in Hormah, in Bor-ashan, in Athach, <sup>31</sup>in Hebron, for all the places where David and his men had roamed. (1 Samuel 30:1-31)

## Introduction

Andrew Brunson, a Christian pastor from North Carolina spent 20 years in Turkey. He had a quiet but deep ministry there until 2016, when after a failed military coup, the government arrested him along with journalists, activists, military officers, and others. The Turkish government labeled Brunson a spy.

Brunson was held for more than a year without charges. He spent nearly two years in prison, often enduring long trial sessions. At one point, it looked like he could spend years or even decades in Turkish prisons. Finally, after pressure from the Trump administration, Brunson was released from prison and returned to the

United States.

In a Wheaton College chapel talk, Brunson candidly said that he did not feel God's overwhelming presence during his stay in prison. Instead, he experienced something even deeper. Brunson said, "[After a few days in prison], I completely lost the sense of God's presence. God was silent. And he remained silent for two years."

When he was finally brought to trial, things were even worse. He says:

There are some who go into the valley of testing and some do not make it out...I was broken. I lay there alone in my solitary cell, I had great fear, terrible grief, and I was weeping. And the thought kept going through my mind, "Where are you God? Why are you so far away?"<sup>1</sup>

Like Andrew Brunson, David must have had the thought keep going through his mind, "Where are you God? Why are you so far away?" He had fled from murderous Saul and was hiding out in Philistia. Then, after sixteen months, Achish, the king of Gath, ordered David and his men to go and fight against the Israelites, the covenant people of God. Amazingly, God providentially prevented David from fighting, and Achish ordered David and his men to return to Ziklag. And it was at Ziklag that David experienced tragedy.

### **Lesson**

First Samuel 30:1-31 shows us how God turns tragedy into triumph.

Let's use the following outline:

1. God's Servant Is Distressed (30:1-6a)

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2019/june/in-severe-trials-broken-pastor-proclaims-i-love-you-jesus.html>.

2. God's Strength Is Provided (30:6b-10)
3. God's Providence Is Indispensable (30:11-15)
4. God's Grace Is Recovered (30:16-25)
5. God's Generosity Is Shared (30:26-31)

## I. God's Servant Is Distressed (30:1-6a)

First, God's servant is distressed.

It was about a sixty-mile journey from Aphek to Ziklag. It had taken David and his men three days to return. As they approached Ziklag, their stomachs must have turned as they saw smoke rising in the distance. Once they arrived in Ziklag, they discovered that the city had been burned, and no bodies were there. Perhaps there was some temporary relief, knowing that at least no one was dead, but then they realized that a fate worse than death had befallen their wives and sons and daughters, knowing that they were being taken into slavery. **Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep** (30:4). And if things were not bad enough for him, **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** (30:6a).

David's distressed just seemed to intensify over time. David had been on the run from Saul for over seven years. Saul had tried to kill David sixteen times. David was ordered to go and fight against his own people, the Israelites. Fortunately, God wonderfully extracted him from that. But, just when David thought things might improve, they got worse. Dale Ralph Davis writes:

Here is a sobering and disturbing picture for God's people. Are there not times when you think it cannot get any worse? And 1 Samuel 30 says, Yes, it can. There are times when you conclude that your present trouble is the last straw; you simply cannot take any more. Then comes Ziklag, the last straw after the last straw.

Sometimes you are tempted to add another line to Psalm 30:5: “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning”—and disaster strikes next afternoon.<sup>2</sup>

Do you feel that sometimes? Do you feel that things cannot get any worse? And then they do? All God’s people experience times of distress.

## II. God’s Strength Is Provided (30:6b-10)

Second, God’s strength is provided.

David was in significant distress. His soldiers were in significant distress. Their homes had been burned to the ground. Their families had been captured. And everything else was gone too.

What would David do? What do you do when you experience distress in your life? What do you do when you experience financial ruin, or a crippling accident, or a destroyed relationship, or a life-threatening illness?

Well, let me mention some things that you should not do. First, do not try to lean on your own understanding or strength. Not one of us has sufficient understanding or strength to deal with significant distress that comes into our lives.

Second, when you experience distress, do not turn to religion. Suddenly, you decide to attend worship services, or give money, or read your Bible, or say prayers because you want to earn God’s favor. Religion simply does not work.

Or third, do not let go emotionally. This is what David and his men did in verse 4; they “raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep.” Now, it is not wrong in and of itself to weep. Often, it is good to weep. But, weeping alone does not address significant distress.

The correct response to significant distress in our lives is to

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<sup>2</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 310–311.

do what David did. Verse 6b says, **“But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.”** Exactly what does this mean? David had a personal relationship with God. David turned to **“the Lord his God.”** Yes, David had faltered. Yes, David had a temporary lack of faith. But, when his back was against the wall, when he was in significant distress, he went to his heavenly Father.

And how did he do that? **David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, “Bring me the ephod.” So Abiathar brought the ephod to David (30:7).** In the Old Testament, the **ephod** was sometimes used by leaders to seek the will of God. That is what David did now. **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” (30:8).** God not only answered David, but gave him an assurance that he would succeed. And so David and his men set out to find their families.

We no longer have a linen ephod. But, we do have the Word of God. God’s strength is provided to anyone who has a personal relationship with him, and who will go to him in his Word.

In early 2018 I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. My urologist told me that given the aggressiveness of my cancer and other factors, I was a candidate for either surgery to remove the prostate gland completely or to have various radiation protocols. Each option had its own risks and side effects. When I asked him which option was better, he demurred and said that I could go either way. So, I was really struggling about what to do. I set up an appointment with a surgeon and also a radiation oncologist. I knew that each specialist would say that I was the ideal candidate for the treatment he offered. And they did! So, that did not help me. I did not know which option to choose, and that caused me distress.

One morning I read in Proverbs 15:22, “Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.” I prayed, “Lord, I don’t know which option to choose. I don’t know what will be



best for me. I am asking for counsel, because I don't know what to do. Will you please provide advisers to me? Amen." Later that day I was at the VA Hospital and bumped into a friend who worked in the radiation lab there. I had told him a week or so early about my situation. He asked if I had some time, and invited me into his office. Within a few minutes, I had a free consultation with several people there, including a surgeon. He pulled out a large book with a table, checked all my numbers, asked a bunch of questions, and said, "Based on all the factors involved in your particular case, your best option is radiation."

Within hours, God answered my prayer, had given me advisers, and provided me with strength.

When you are distressed, go to God. He will provide you with strength to face the situation in which you find yourself.

### III. God's Providence Is Indispensable (30:11-15)

Third, God's providence is indispensable.

As David and his men headed further south, **they found an Egyptian in the open country and brought him to David** (30:11a). After giving him food and water, he told them what had happened at Ziklag. He told them that the Amalekites had raided Ziklag and burned it. Then when they were returning to the place from which they came, he fell ill, and his master left him behind.

David and his men had no idea where their families had been taken. But God providentially caused an Egyptian servant of the Amalekite leader to fall, and then be left behind so that David could find him. So, **David said to him, "Will you take me down to this band?"** (30:15a). After negotiating for his safety, the Egyptian agreed to do so.

God's providence is indispensable in turning tragedy to triumph. Let us believe that God will providentially order circumstances for his glory and our ultimate good.

#### IV. God's Grace Is Recovered (30:16-25)

Fourth, God's grace is recovered.

David and his men found the Amalekites, and they attacked them. Four hundred Amalekites 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** (30:18-19). In addition, **David also captured all the flocks and herds** (30:20a).

Then David and his men came to the brook Besor, where they had left two hundred men, who had been too exhausted to chase down the Amalekites. **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"** (30:22-23). And then David made a rule that both combatant and non-combatant were to share the spoil equally (cf. 30:25).

You see, the wicked and worthless fellows believed that it was because of their own skill and ability that they were able to recover the spoil. But, David knew that it was by God's grace that he had given it into their hands. God had preserved David and his men, and given the Amalekites into their hand.

A works-oriented view says that we get blessing for ourselves. A grace-oriented view says that we receive God's blessing only by his grace. Let us think correctly on these things. Everything we have is given by God's grace.

## V. God's Generosity Is Shared (30:26-31)

And fifth, God's generosity is shared.

**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" (30:26).** Some commentators suggest that David shared his spoil for political purposes. He was trying to sweeten the elders to make them like him.

However, David rightly understood that he was the rich recipient of God's grace and mercy and gifts. And so, in gratitude to God, he simply wanted to share God's blessing to him with others. He wanted to share God's generosity with others.

If you are a Christian, and especially if God has blessed you by turning tragedy to triumph, share with others what God has done in your life.

### Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the incident of the capture of David's wives as set forth in 1 Samuel 30:1-31, let us always look to Christ, especially when facing tragedy.

When Andrew Brunson was in a solitary cell, he asked, "Where are you God? Why are you so far away?" He continued:

And I opened my mouth as I wept aloud, and I was surprised at what I heard coming out of my mouth. I heard, "I love you Jesus. I love you Jesus. I love you Jesus." I thought here is my victory. Even if you're silent, I love you. Even if you let my enemy harm me, I love you. [As] Jesus said, "But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."<sup>3</sup>

Brothers and sisters, let us always look to Christ. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2019/june/in-severe-trials-broken-pastor-proclaims-i-love-you-jesus.html>.

# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church  
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and membership in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike maturity,  
equip them for their ministry in the church  
and life mission in the world,  
in order to magnify God's name.*

## Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can  
be found at:

1. [www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons](http://www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons).
2. [www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp](http://www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp).
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