

From Tragedy to Triumph, Part II (1 Samuel 30)

1. Devastation at Ziklag (v.1-5)

- The Amalekites were a nomadic group scattered from southern Judea to the border of Egypt. Even though there was no central Amalekite city, they would muster together towards a common enemy when necessary.
- The narrator has educated the reader that the Amalekites raided against the Negeb (Judah) and Ziklag. The reader is informed of these details: David and his men are not.
- When they arrived, the town was burned down to an ash-heap. All the livestock was gone, including all the women and children. The men who were with David wept loudly until there was no strength (v.4).

2. Dire Distress (v.6)

- David's men were most distraught over the loss of their sons and daughters, and subsequently blame David for their current crisis.
- Once the men recover themselves from their loud weeping, whatever strength they have left is turned towards David: they spoke of stoning him (v.5).

3. Dependence on the LORD (v.6)

- David "strengthened himself in the LORD." For the first time, in over a year and a half, David comes to the end of himself, and casts himself on the mercy of God.
- This "strengthening" happened prior to the LORD answering favorably through the ephod: David was not strengthened because the LORD answered him. The strengthening happened before he asked the LORD for anything. David was not strengthened because he wept loudly, but instead through the covenant promises of the LORD (23:16).
- The ephod was the byproduct of the strengthening he received, not the means of the strengthening. This occurred once he came to the LORD his God. This strengthening was a synergistic act. Without David's coming, there would be no strengthening.

4. Divine Provisions (v.7-20)

- Out of nowhere Abiathar, the High Priest, appears with his ephod (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8) that he took from Nob (22:20-23; 23:6, 9) and inquires of the LORD (30:7-8). The LORD answers and provides direction for David and his men to pursue the band.
- Shortly after they embark on the rescue mission, two hundred men are too exhausted to continue (v.9-10) and are left to protect the baggage. This is a motif (Judg. 7:2-8), along with an obedience to the Torah (Deut. 20:5-9).
- They come across an abandoned Egyptian slave whom they feed and hydrate (Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Lev. 19:34). After he recovers, he informs David's men of what the reader has already been privy to (30:1-2; 14-15). After pledging not to kill the Egyptian or return him to his master (Deut. 23:15-16), they find the Amalekites eating, drinking, and dancing (v.16). Attacking at twilight (early morning), David and his men recover all the women, children, and livestock.

5. Determined Leadership (v.21-31)

- As he is returning to the camp at Besor (v.11), David has with him not only all the women, children, and livestock, but also the spoils of the other cities and towns that the Amalekites had raided (v.13-14).
- Two hundred of the six hundred men who were previously left behind at Besor were physically and emotionally exhausted (29:11-30:1, 5). As David approaches the camp, he greets them.
- Of the four hundred who previously accompanied him in the successful recovery raid of the Amalekites, he had with him "wicked and worthless" men.

- "Worthless" a term of derision that means "Belial." Hophni and Phinehas (2:12), the men who were at Saul's coronation (10:27), and Nabal (25:17) were all described as being "worthless". We discover that some of the men who had joined David between the Cave of Adullam (22:2-2) and the deliverance of the residents at Keilah from the Philistine raids (23:13) were wicked. These men did not think that the two hundred who remained with the baggage should receive anything back, other than their family.

David's Gracious Response:

- To the wicked men: While David does call them "brothers" in kindness and warmth, he also exhorts them (v.24).
- To the men who stayed with the baggage: when David departed, some may have been part of those who wanted to stone David (v.6). David graciously greets them (v.21).
- Regarding the spoil: there are three categories of spoil recovered from the Amalekites. The first was the recovery of all that had belonged to them prior to the Amalekite raid (wives, children, and livestock). The second was a certain percentage of the livestock that was above and beyond which David would keep for himself. The third would be the division of whatever else was left.

David establishes a custom of equity moving forward. While David made this legal, this has been a policy in principle that his predecessors had exercised: Moses (Numb. 31:25-31) and Joshua (Josh. 22:8). After all, the spoil did not belong to David and his men, but the LORD, for He had brought victory (1 Sam. 30:8, 19, 23).

David distributes his portion of the spoil to his "friends" in Judah (v.26-30). The reason for this is three-fold: first, he is demonstrating where his true loyalties lie, celebrating the victory that the LORD had brought to those who share in it. Second, he's exercising shrewdness, in faith, by garnering political support in Judah. Third, he is laying the groundwork for his approaching kingship. Hebron is where David is anointed King of Israel (1 Sam. 30:31; 2 Sam. 5).

6. Disparities between Saul and David (1 Samuel 8-30)

David is finally ready to be God's king. Up to this point, the narrators of 1 Samuel have developed an important theme regarding David and Saul:

- A. David has direct access to the LORD through prayer (23:1-5), while Saul doesn't.
- B. David receives revelation from the LORD through the ark, ephod, and Urim and Thummim (23:6-12; 30:7-8) while Saul receives none (14:3, 19, 36-37, 41-42).
- C. The LORD sends the prophet Samuel and Gad to David to provide direction (16:1-13; 22:5) but not to Saul.
- D. Saul listened to the people (15:10-23). David did not (30:22-25).
- E. David is successful in all his fighting against the Philistines (18:30), unlike Saul, who was to deliver the Israelites out of the hands of the Philistines (9:16). While he drove out the Amalekites (15:48), he failed to defeat the Philistines (14:46; 31:2).
- F. Saul did not obey the voice of the LORD in destroying Amalek and all the livestock (15:1), while David obeyed the LORD, pursued the Amalekites, and recovered everything (30:8, 19).
- G. David, is a giving king (30:26-30) unlike the kings of the other nations (8:17).
- H. David is obeying the Torah (Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Lev. 19:34 Deut. 23:15-16), along with new revelation and commands from the LORD through his appointed means (30:7-8), while Saul is simultaneously one hundred miles away violating the Torah by consulting a witch at Endor (Ex. 22:18; 19:31; Lev. 19:26-32; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:10-11).