

2 Samuel 01 - David Learns of Saul & Jonathan's Deaths; "Song of the Bow"

I. David's faith (2 Sam 1:1—10:19)

(1) Political victory (1:1—5:25)

(A) David's reaction to Saul's death (1:1-27)

(a) David receives the report of Saul's death (1:1-10)

(b) David mourns and kills the man taking credit for Saul's death (1:11-16)

(c) David's lament over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (1:17-27)

2 Samuel 1

I. David's faith (2 Sam 1:1—10:19)

(1) Political victory (1:1—5:25)

(A) David's reaction to Saul's death (1:1-27)

(a) David receives the report of Saul's death (1:1-10)

1 Now it came about after the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, that David stayed two days in Ziklag.

1 Now it came about after the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, that David remained two days in Ziklag.

1 Shortly after Saul had died, David returned from defeating the Amalekites and remained in Ziklag for two days.

1 Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag;

- Though greatly reduced by the Amalekite incendiaries, that town apparently was not so completely sacked and destroyed that David and his 600 followers, with their families, could still find some accommodation.

The Amalekite's Tale

The narrative of Saul's death, given in the last session, was inspired; the Amalekite's story here (v2-12) was simply a fiction of his own, invented to ingratiate himself with David, the presumptive successor to the throne. It is unlikely that Saul would have been leaning on his spear, unattended by Israelite warriors, as the Philistine chariots charged him, and had to call on a stranger who just happened to be passing by. It is also unlikely that an innocent bystander "happened" (v6) to be on the battlefield during fighting, and survived.

David's question, "How went the matter?" evinces the deep interest he took in the war, an interest that sprang from feelings of patriotism, not from ambition. The Amalekite, however, judging him to be actuated by a selfish principle, fabricated a story improbable and inconsistent, which he thought would procure him a reward. Having probably witnessed the suicidal act of Saul, he thought of turning it to his own account, and suffered the penalty of his grievously mistaken calculation (compare 2 Sam 1:9 with 1 Sam 31:4-5).

2 And on the third day, behold, a man came from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. And it happened when he came to David, he fell to the ground and prostrated himself.

2 On the third day, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul, with his clothes torn and dust on his head. And it came about when he came to David that he fell to the ground and prostrated himself.

2 The next day, a man escaped from Saul's camp! With torn clothes and dirty hair, he approached David, fell to the ground, and bowed down to him.

2 It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance.

- This young Amalekite soldier was likely a mercenary who had joined Saul's army

3 Then David said to him, "From where do you come?" And he said to him, "I have escaped from the camp of Israel."

3 Then David said to him, "From where do you come?" And he said to him, "I have escaped from the camp of Israel."

3 David asked him, "Where did you come from?"

He answered him, "I just escaped from Israel's encampment."

3 And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped.

4 David said to him, "How did things go? Please tell me." And he said, "The people have fled from the battle, and many of the people also have fallen and are dead; and Saul and his son Jonathan are also dead."

4 David said to him, "How did things go? Please tell me." And he said, "The people have fled from the battle, and also many of the people have fallen and are dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also."

4 David continued questioning him, "How did things go? Please tell me!"

He replied, "The army has fled the battlefield, many of the army are wounded or have died, and Saul and his son Jonathan are also dead."

4 And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.

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

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

5 David asked the young man who related the story, "How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?"

5 And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead?

6 The young man who told him said, "By chance I happened to be on Mount Gilboa, and behold, Saul was leaning on his spear. And behold, the chariots and the horsemen had overtaken him.

6 The young man who told him said, "By chance I happened to be on Mount Gilboa, and behold, Saul was leaning on his spear. And behold, the chariots and the horsemen pursued him closely.

6 The young man who had been relating the story answered, "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa and there was Saul, leaning on his spear! Meanwhile, the chariots and horsemen were rapidly drawing near.

6 And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him.

7 When he looked behind himself, he saw me, and called to me. And I said, 'Here I am.'

7 When he looked behind him, he saw me and called to me. And I said, 'Here I am.'

7 Saul glanced behind him, saw me, and called out to me, so I replied, 'Here I am!'

7 And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here am I.

8 Then he said to me, 'Who are you?' And I answered him, 'I am an Amalekite.'

8 He said to me, 'Who are you?' And I answered him, 'I am an Amalekite.'

8 He asked me, 'Who are you?' So I answered him, 'I'm an Amalekite!'

8 And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite.

9 And he said to me, 'Please stand next to me and finish me off, for agony has seized me because my life still lingers in me.'

9 Then he said to me, 'Please stand beside me and kill me, for agony has seized me because my life still lingers in me.'

9 He begged me, 'Please—come stand here next to me and kill me, because I'm still alive.'

9 He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me.

10 So I stood next to him and finished him off, because I knew that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took **the crown** which *was* on his head and **the band which was on his arm**, and I have brought them here to my lord."

10 So I stood beside him and killed him, because I knew that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown which *was* on his head and the bracelet which *was* on his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord."

10 So I stood next to him and killed him, because I knew that he wouldn't live after he had fallen. I took the crown that had been on his head, along with the bracelet that had been on his arm, and I have brought them to your majesty."

10 So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.

- "...the crown" - a small metallic cap or wreath, which encircled the temples, serving the purpose of a helmet, with a very small horn projecting in front, as the emblem of power

- "...the band which *was* on his arm" - the armlet worn above the elbow; an ancient mark of royal dignity. It is still worn by kings in some Eastern countries.

- It seems likely that the Amalekite's account of Saul's death was inaccurate, in view of 1 Sam 31:1-6 and 1 Chr 10:1-6

— However, it could've been true if, after falling on his spear, he did not die immediately and asked the Amalekite to finish him off

- Ironically, God commanded Saul to annihilate the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:3) and David had just returned from slaughtering a portion of them (v1; 1 Sam 30)

— Now, an Amalekite claimed to have killed the king who disobeyed God by not killing all the Amalekites

(b) David mourns and kills the man taking credit for Saul's death (1:11-16)

11 Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so also *did* all the men who *were* with him.

11 Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so also *did* all the men who *were* with him.

11 On hearing this, David grabbed his clothes and tore them, as did all the men who were attending to him.

11 Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him:

- David responded to Saul's death with the loyal covenant love (*chesed*) that Saul had denied David in life

12 And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the people of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

12 They mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan and for the people of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

12 They mourned and wept, and then decided to fast until dusk for Saul, for his son Jonathan, for the army of the LORD, and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen in battle.

12 And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.

- Compare the weeping of Jesus over the fall of Jerusalem, even when it was about to destroy Him

One of the key words in this chapter is *fallen*, found in v4,10,12,19,27. When Saul began his royal career, he was described as standing head and shoulders "taller than any of the people" (1 Sam 9:2; see 1 Sam 10:23; 16:7), but he ended his career a fallen king. He fell on his face in fear in the house of the spirit medium (1 Sam 28:20), and he fell on the battlefield before the enemy (1 Sam 31:4). David humbled himself before the Lord, and the Lord lifted him up; but Saul's pride and rebellion brought him to a shameful end. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12, NKJV).

13 Then David said to the young man who informed him, "Where are you from?" And he answered, "I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite."

13 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."

13 Meanwhile, David asked the young man who had told him the story, "Where are you from?"

He answered, "I'm an Amalekite, the son of a foreign man."

13 And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence art thou? And he answered, I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite.

- The man had at the outset stated who he was. But the question was now formally and judicially put.

14 And David said to him, "How is it you were not afraid to reach out with your hand to destroy the LORD'S anointed?"

14 Then David said to him, "How is it you were not afraid to stretch out your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?"

14 At this David asked him, "How is it that you weren't afraid to raise your hand to strike the LORD's anointed?"

14 And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD'S anointed?

- David had repeatedly failed to take vengeance upon Saul himself; ambition and impatience never overcame his resolve to "wait on the Lord"

— He never approved of anyone who even suggested harming Saul

15 Then David called one of the young men and said, "Come forward, put him to death." So he struck him and he died.

15 And David called one of the young men and said, "Go, cut him down." So he struck him and he died.

15 Then David called out to one of his young men and ordered him, "Go up to him and cut him down!" So he attacked him and killed him.

15 And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died.

- This just punishment of the Amalekite precluded any untrue accusations by David's political opponents that he might have had a part, directly or indirectly, in the death of Saul
— Though David had numerous opportunities to slay Saul, he always regarded him as the Lord's anointed

- It was dangerous for David to execute the Amalekite because David was still residing in Philistine territory

— His Philistine neighbors could have interpreted any show of sorrow over Saul's death as treasonous

— David risked danger in order to do what was right; it was time for him to break away from the Philistines and return to Israel

16 And David said to him, "Your blood is on your head, because your *own* mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have finished off the LORD'S anointed.'"

16 David said to him, "Your blood is on your head, for your mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have killed the LORD's anointed.'"

16 David told him, "Your blood is on your own head, because your own words testified against you! After all, you said, 'I myself have killed the LORD's anointed!'"

16 And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD'S anointed.

- David's reverence for Saul, as the Lord's anointed, was in his mind a principle on which he had faithfully acted on several occasions of great temptation

— In present circumstances it was especially important that his principle should be publicly known; and to free himself from the imputation of being in any way accessory to the execrable crime of regicide was the part of a righteous judge, no less than of a good politician

The Song of the Bow

This inimitable pathetic elegy is supposed by many writers to have become a national war song, and to have been taught to the young Israelites under the name of "The Bow" (Hebrew and many classical writers gave titles to their songs from the principal theme (Ps 22:1; 56:1; 60:1; 80:1; 100:1).

(c) David's lament over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (1:17-27)

17 Then David sang this song of mourning over Saul and his son Jonathan,

17 Then David chanted with this lament over Saul and Jonathan his son,

17 So David intoned this song of lament about Saul and his son Jonathan,

17 And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son:

18 and he told *them* to teach the sons of Judah ***the mourning song of the bow***; behold, it is written in the **Book of Jashar**.

18 and he told *them* to teach the sons of Judah *the song of the bow*; behold, it is written in the book of Jashar.

18 and he gave orders to teach the descendants of Judah the art of warfare, as is recorded in the Book of Jashar:

18 (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the Book of Jasher.)

- "...*the mourning song of the bow*" - although these words are a supplement by the translators, they may be rightly introduced, for the natural sense of this parenthetical verse is, that David took immediate measures for instructing the people in the knowledge and practice of archery, their great inferiority to the enemy in this military arm having been the main cause of the late national disaster.

- "...book of Jasher" - also mentioned in Joshua 10:13; 1 Kings 8:53 [LXX]. It was a history of the wars of Israel ("Jeshurun"; Deut 32:15)]

19 "Your beauty, Israel, is slaughtered on your high places! **How the mighty have fallen!**

19 "Your beauty, O Israel, is slain on your high places! How have the mighty fallen!

19 "Your beauty, Israel, lies slain on your high places! O, how the valiant have fallen!

19 The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

- Literally, "the gazelle" or "antelope of Israel;" an animal is the chosen type of beauty and symmetrical elegance of form.

- "...How the mighty have fallen!" - the theme of this song (v19,25,27)

20 "Tell *it* not in Gath, Proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, Or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice, The daughters of the uncircumcised will celebrate.

20 "Tell *it* not in Gath, Proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, Or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice, The daughters of the uncircumcised will exult.

20 Don't make it known in Gath! Don't declare it in the avenues of Ashkelon! Otherwise, the daughters of Philistia will rejoice; and the daughters of the uncircumcised will triumph.

20 Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

- The references to Gath (the capital and easternmost city in Philistia) and Ashkelon (the westernmost city) represent all of Philistia

21 "Mountains of Gilboa, *May there be* no dew nor rain on you, or fields of offerings! For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.

21 "O mountains of Gilboa, Let not dew or rain be on you, nor fields of offerings; For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.

21 Mountains of Gilboa, let no dew or rain fall on you, and may none of your fields be filled with plenty, because in that place the shield of the valiant ones was defiled, the shield of Saul without an anointing with oil.

21 Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.

- To be deprived of dew and rain, which in those anciently cultivated hills seem to have brought plenty of firstfruits in the corn harvests, was the greatest calamity David could imagine

To cast away the shield was counted a national disgrace. The shield of Saul is pictured by David as lying upon the mountains, no longer polished and ready to be worn in action, but cast aside as worthless and neglected. In ancient times, shields, whether made of leather or metal, and were oiled to keep them in good condition. Yet, on that fatal battle of Gilboa,

many of the Israelite soldiers, who had displayed unflinching valor in former battles, forgetful of their own reputation and their country's honor, threw away their shields and fled from the field.

22 "From the blood of those slaughtered, from the fat of the mighty, The bow of Jonathan did not turn back, And the sword of Saul did not return unstained.

22 "From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, The bow of Jonathan did not turn back, And the sword of Saul did not return empty.

22 From the blood of the slain, from the blood of the valiant, Jonathan's bow would not retreat nor would Saul's sword return empty.

22 From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

23 "Saul and Jonathan, **beloved** and **delightful** in life, And in their deaths they were not separated; They were swifter than eagles, They were mightier than lions.

23 "Saul and Jonathan, beloved and pleasant in their life, And in their death they were not parted; They were swifter than eagles, They were stronger than lions.

23 Saul and Jonathan, loved and handsome in life, in death were not separated. Swifter than eagles they were, and more valiant than lions.

23 Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

- "...beloved" - refers to physical attractiveness

- "...delightful" - refers to fundamental devotion

— Taken together, the two words articulate a peculiar and precious bonding with David

24 "Daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, Who clothed you in scarlet, with jewelry, Who put gold jewelry on your apparel.

24 "O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, Who clothed you luxuriously in scarlet, Who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.

24 Daughters of Israel, weep over Saul! He clothed you in scarlet luxury and decorated your garments with gold.

24 Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

- Saul's reign was good for Israel economically; he had been the source of some blessing because he was God's anointed, even though he caused sorrow (Cf. 1 Sam 14:47)

25 "How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan is slaughtered on your high places.

25 "How have the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan is slain on your high places.

25 How have the valiant fallen in the tumult of battle! Jonathan lies slain on your high places.

25 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.

26 "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been a close friend to me. Your love for me was more wonderful Than the love of women.

26 "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was more wonderful Than the love of women.

26 I am in distress for you, my brother Jonathan. You have been most kind to me. Your love for me was extraordinary— beyond love from women.

26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

- David considered Jonathan's love (friendship, Cf. Ps 109:4-5) better than that of women

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

27 "How have the mighty fallen, And the weapons of war perished!"

27 How the valiant have fallen! How the weapons of war are destroyed!"

27 How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

- "...weapons of war" - may refer to Israelite soldiers who had perished in battle; may also refer to Saul and Jonathan metaphorically

- A lesser saint would have rejoiced that his enemy was slain, but David was a man after God's own heart and keenly felt the tragedy of Saul's sin

- David's dear friend Jonathan was also dead; the sin of a disobedient father had brought judgment upon innocent people, including his son

- David's lamentation is touching (see Prov 24:17), however interesting in that no religious thought of any kind appears in the poem; the feelings expressed in it are purely human

- This "Song of the Bow" connects with Jonathan's use of the bow (1 Sam 20:20ff)

— There are no unkind words about Saul in this song. David's chief concern is that the Lord's anointed has been slain and the Lord's glory has been dimmed. He is anxious that the unsaved enemy not rejoice over this victory.

— Even when Saul died, David acted properly toward the Lord's anointed. This shows his regard for Yahweh's leadership over Israel. Jonathan would have succeeded Saul on the throne customarily, but now he was dead too. Even though David saw in the deaths of these men the removal of obstacles to his coronation, he did not rejoice.

- In 1 Sam 10:23, Saul "stood higher" than any other man, but now he had fallen lower than the enemy!

In the Saul and David narrative just completed (1 Sam 16—2 Sam 1) the importance of "the anointed one" surfaced many times. To be right before God and to enjoy His blessing, one had to respond properly to His anointed. This always holds true, especially concerning God's anointed, Jesus Christ. As Yahweh's anointed David was to lead Israel in its battles. David began doing this with a shepherd's tools rather than with those of a warrior, showing that he would be an ideal leader. He led as a shepherd. Many in Israel, even the royal family of Saul, as well as many outside the nation (among the Philistines, Amalekites, et al.), recognized that God was bringing blessing to Israel through David. Like the ark, David went into exile in Philistia, but the Philistines sent him back because he was a greater threat than a help. This shows that God had been with David as He had been with the ark.

The major conflict between Saul and David contains eight sub-conflicts:

- (1) God's Spirit left Saul and came upon David at his anointing (1 Sam 16)
- (2) Goliath and Saul conflicted with David (17:1—18:5)
- (3) Saul conflicted with David and Saul's household (18:6—20:42)
- (4) Saul and Doeg conflicted with David and Israel's priests (1 Sam 21-22)
- (5) Saul conflicted with David in the wilderness (1 Sam 23-26)
- (6) Saul and his heirs conflicted with the Philistines (1 Sam 27-29)
- (7) The Amalekites conflicted with David (1 Sam 30)
- (8) Finally, Saul and Jonathan conflicted with the Philistines (1 Sam 31—2 Sam 1)