

## Introduction

We return this morning to our series of studies on the life of David. I hope you can appreciate why we determine to spend such a lengthy series studying what the scripture teaches about a man who lived a thousand years before Christ. I hope you do not feel disconnected from reality because David's God is our God, and though cultures and technological circumstances change, the fundamental realities of life remain the same. The things that matter for eternity do not change. Furthermore, David is a key figure not only in the witness of the Bible but also in the course of the history of the world. Finally, David is the ancestor of Jesus who also prefigures him in many ways and speaks prophetically of him.

Our studies in First Samuel presented to us the debacle that was the reign of Saul. And we were introduced to David as a man after God's heart who would do the commands of the Lord. He was anointed by Samuel and the sun was rising on his kingship while it was setting on that of Saul. First Samuel concludes with the defeat of Israel at the hands of the Philistines and the self-inflicted death of Saul. Saul was badly wounded by archers and was unsuccessful in his attempt to persuade his armor bearer to finish him off. We are told straight up by the text that Saul took his own sword and fell on it and died. Meanwhile David and his men carried out a successful rescue of their households from a band of Amalekites and returned to their incinerated city of Ziklag. That's where we take up this morning.

[Read text and Pray]

This text strikes me as unusual. The reason is that we have now been told that Saul and Jonathan are dead. It is a climax toward which all of 1 Samuel was building. And now when David is to learn the sad details, they are brought to him by a curious individual who ends up dominating the first 16 verses of the chapter. Why do we need to know about this guy who brought the news? Why must he initially take a bit of the spotlight from David and the grief that he expresses over how the mighty have fallen?

Let's remember that although the writing instrument was in the hand of a human, it's every word was breathed out by God. So then we ask, why did God want us to be faced with the encounter between David and the bearer of the bad news?

There are at least two answers to that question. One, the details of this encounter help exonerate David from suspicion that he had anything to do with the death of Saul. Two, they point out certain principles which characterize the kingdom of God. We are going to proceed with this second point as the main one for the purpose of the message today. Here is a young man, an Amalekite, who stoops to unrighteousness in an attempt to gain favor with the man he believes will soon be crowned king, and he pays the ultimate price for his miscalculation. Let's zero in on key aspects of this man. They are uncovered by David as he questions him.

First, I want you to see . . .

### **I. The Motive of the Amalekite.**

Here he comes. His clothes are torn and he has dirt on his head. This was a sign of mourning. It directs us back to a day before the people had a king. There was conflict. The Philistines captured

the ark, and the two sons of Eli died. A man ran from the battle line to tell the old priest Eli. The man's clothes were torn and he had dirt on his head. As a result of the news he bore, Eli fell backward, broke his neck, and died.

Even so the man who came to David had torn his clothes and put dirt on his head. He had the appearance of grief. He also displayed the posture of respect and devotion. He fell to the ground before David and paid homage. Moreover, it is clear he was motivated by a strong desire. He had come from the battle camp of Israel which was some 80 miles north of Ziklag. It was a trip that would have taken several days to complete. He brought news of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. But he came to David bearing Saul's crown and armlet. Here was an opportunist. He was cozying up to the Lord's anointed. He was here to curry favor with David, no doubt, so as to gain an important role in his administration.

This much we need to give him, though. He was correct in recognizing that David was the one who would wear the crown. David was the Lord's anointed. Coming to David was the right move. But not everyone who comes to the right king comes in the right way. We are told in the New Testament of the wealthy young man who approached the right king but in the wrong way. He said to Jesus, "What good deed must I do to have eternal life?" Jesus told him that doing a good deed to gain favor with God is not the terms upon which eternal life is received. Rather you must relinquish everything so that the kingdom alone is your prize.

Back to the Amalekite, his motive was wrong. He sought a place of standing for himself. He came to David in such a way as to please him. He thought David would be overjoyed with his news and reward him accordingly. So his motive was to step onto the ladder of opportunity.

We all have instances of wrong motives. By sinful nature we are driven to seek honor and recognition, prestige and comfort for ourselves. The disciples of Jesus themselves were motivated within the group by a drive for positions of prestige. Remember how the mother of James and John came and asked Jesus for seats of honor in his kingdom. When the rest of the disciples found out about it, they were indignant. The disciples asked Jesus who would be the greatest in the kingdom. He said, it would be one who humbles himself like a child. We are all concerned with pecking order, but Christ is concerned with simply whether we will humble ourselves and seek first the kingdom. In the body there are eyes and ears and feet and hands. Each part should value all the other parts and not think too highly of itself. In the body of Christ, he is the head, and the rest of us are body parts according to his grace. Christ's followers don't need to curry favor with Jesus. We simply need to be who he is making us to be and do what he has told us to do. The glory of Christ should be our motive.

Second, I want you to see . . .

## **II. The Method of the Amalekite.**

It is when we look at the method of this Amalekite that we are assured that his motive was wrong. There is an aspect to the narrative that causes some interpreters problems. The report that this Amalekite gives as to what happened and how he came to know that Saul and Jonathan were dead contradicts what has already been reported in 1 Samuel 31. There, as I mentioned earlier, we were informed that Saul fell on his own sword and died after being greatly wounded by the Philistine archers. Now, here, on the very next page, this Amalekite reports that he JUST HAPPENED to be on Mount Gilboa in the midst of combat in which the king himself was greatly wounded and everybody around was dying. Saul, being in distress, requested that he finish him off. And he obliged. He

defends his actions in that Saul was bound to die anyway. He reports that he then took the crown and the armlet and brought them here to David.

Skeptics pounce on the contradiction presented by these two accounts as evidence that the Bible is not inerrant. However, there is in fact not a contradiction in the word of God. The contradiction lies between the report of the biblical narrator and the Amalekite. Consider a couple things. Consider, number one, that the book of Samuel was originally only one book. It was divided into two parts in the second century BC when the Hebrew was translated into Greek. So these two accounts are in such close proximity that it is unthinkable even from a human standpoint, that the narrator slipped up. Consider, number two, that the person who provides the report in our text is an Amalekite. This people group was antithetical to the people of God. We could not assume their honesty.

Consider, number three, that this Amalekite had a motive. And consider, number four, the curious description of the Amalekite. Three times in the text (verses 5, 6, and 13) he is called "the young man who told him." And these instances are all clustered around the tale he was telling about putting the finishing touch on the life of Saul. We are faced with a choice between believing the Spirit-inspired narrator and an Amalekite with a motive who was telling a story. It should be clear that our only legitimate conclusion is that the Amalekite was lying. Deceit was his method to accomplish his objective.

I am going to say this carefully though I hope a little provocatively because I want you to think. Here goes: The Bible contains lies. Yes indeed, the Bible contains lies. Before any of you prepare to charge me with heresy, please note what I did not say. I did not say that the Bible lies. The Bible does not lie. But the Bible does contain lies. The very first of these is the lie that the devil told to Eve in the garden. Regarding eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the devil told a lie. He said, "You will not surely die." It was a direct contradiction of what God had said. Yet the Bible records this lie accurately. We do not have to be told he was lying because we see it for ourselves. Now, here before us in 2 Samuel 1 is another lie found in the Bible.

God despises lying. Dishonesty is the trademark of Satan. He is the Father of lies. Meanwhile it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18). Jesus is the Way, the TRUTH, and the Life (John 14:6). Dishonesty dishonors God. He does not build his kingdom through dishonesty but through truth. Lies are the tool of the devil to deceive and to destroy. Yet lying is often a temptation whenever our motives are driven and shaped by selfish desires. We want to save face; we are tempted to lie. We want to gain favor; we are tempted to deceive.

Take online dating sites for example. Nobody wants to make a better impression than somebody who is trying to get a date. The owner of one of the dating sites says that it is a constant battle to maintain integrity on the site. One survey found that more than 50% of participants admitted to lying about themselves. Women typically lie about their age and appearance. Men typically lie about their job and career. All this lying is designed to make themselves more appealing. But in fact, before God, it just makes their sinful corruption worse. This Amalekite wanted to look good to David, but his lie exposed his corruption.

Biblically, think of Ananias and Sapphira. There in the early church they simply wanted to appear more sacrificial than they actually were. They sold some property and pretended that they were giving the full proceeds to the ministry of the church when in fact they were not. And this lie was exposed to the church by God. He took the life of each one while they were making their deceitful claim. God abhors deceit. He abhors trying to look better than you really are. Yet there can be no

doubt that this is a sin we are likely guilty of at some point. Thank God that he forgives sinners who repent. If this sin is characteristic of you, you really do need to repent and seek God's forgiveness. And we really all must be vigilant to keep in check selfish motives and loose tongues that in their wagging are prone to hide the truth.

Third, I want you to see . . .

### **III. The Miscalculation of the Amalekite.**

The report of the Amalekite to David was that Saul and Jonathan were dead; that he had helped Saul die; and that he wanted David to have the crown and armlet which were Saul's. He thought he was bringing what would be to David good news. David later says as much. When two other guys murdered his opponent the son of Saul, Ishbosheth, they came to David with his head thinking he would be pleased. David's response was that this is now a time like a previous instance. Previously there was one who came to me and said, "Behold, Saul is dead," and thought he was bringing good news." It was a grave miscalculation that was made by the Amalekite who came to David.

He thought David would be happy Saul was dead, and he thought he would be pleased that he had finished him off. That is why he came with the crown and the armlet. Don't you see how this guy was in it for himself? He thought his coming would put him in the good graces of David. He assumes that David is a man like he is with similar goals and a drive to arrive at the highest pinnacle of success and to gain notoriety for himself and to pat himself on his back for his achievements. But he found that was not the case.

Instead of a party celebrating that the wicked king was dead, there was a wake, a vigil of remorse, and grief that interrupted the conversation itself. David took hold of his clothes and tore them and so did the men who were with him. And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son and for the people of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

The coming of the Amalekite in this way shows us what a different kind of man David is. David would not seek the throne of Israel for himself. He did love Yahweh and he loved the people of God. But it was the Lord who sought out David and sent Samuel to anoint him king when he was nothing but a shepherd boy whom none even in his own family could conceive of being king. God came to him and anointed him to be king. And all along, David will not seize the crown for himself. He will not take matters into his own hands. The crown is God's to give. Now that Saul is dead along with his potential rival Jonathan, David is not thrilled. He is heartbroken. This response tells us that David's number one goal was not to be king and be highly regarded by the nation. His goal was to be a man of God—a man who loved the Lord, a man of faith and obedience, a man of integrity, and justice, a man with regard for whomever the Lord anointed as king, a man with a loyal heart toward a friend with whom he had made a solemn covenant. With this kind of heart, the life and death of Saul were not a matter of joy but sorrow. The judgment brought to bear upon Saul was for David not something in which to gloat.

When you have experienced God's grace in salvation, you know there is nothing in the judgment of the unrighteous in which for you to gloat. It could just as well have been you. It is not a time for applauding yourself because you are better but a time to beat your chest with a cry to God to be merciful to the sinner. Rather than rejoicing for personal gain, David sorrowed over the sad fact that the mighty had fallen. His chief concern was not for himself but the glory of God and the deliverance of God's people.

In this frame of mind, David so wonderfully points us to Jesus. Remember what Paul wrote about Christ. Jesus did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death on a cross. He did not seize the crown for himself. He humbled himself. It is the Father who has highly exalted Christ. Jesus is the preeminent one who has shown us what it means to humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and let Him do the exalting. Christ is our exalted king, but the Father is the one who places him on the throne and the crown upon his head.

Now for us, life in God's kingdom is not about our importance. Of central concern is the glory of God and the well-being of his people. It is not about my role, my importance, my respect, and my reward. For me and you it is about being faithful to God in whatever role he has placed us and serving him and the cause of his glory and righteousness. Life in the church, the body of Christ, is not about chest-beating, ladder-climbing, and self-importance. It is about functioning according to the placement of the Spirit and being faithful with his gifts. Let the Father tell who sits where in the kingdom of his Son.

Finally, I want you to see . . .

#### **IV. The Mortification of the Amalekite.**

His miscalculation led to his death. The Amalekite thought Saul's death would make David happy, but he was grieved. He thought David would be pleased that according to his story he helped kill him. But David was justly aghast. "Where do you come from?" David asked. He was the son of an Amalekite sojourner. That is to say he was of Amalekite lineage, but he had lived among the Israelites as a guest in their land. The law of God called for mercy upon the sojourner. But the fact that he was a sojourner also meant he should have known of the significance of being the Lord's anointed. The Lord's anointed represented the Lord himself among the people. Nobody was to take out the Lord's anointed but the Lord himself. Not even Saul's armor bearer would dare to euthanize Saul.

So, asks David, rhetorically, "How is it you were not afraid to put out your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" Apparently the man who was doing the telling was now suddenly speechless. By his own words he had condemned himself, even though it was a lie. So David condemns him to death.

There is a certain amount of fear that should impact our actions. If we fear the Lord, we will fear to sin against him. It is a healthy thing to fear the Lord and to respect what he has said to us. God forbid that we take the Lord's commands lightly.

#### **Conclusion**

The Lord's consummate anointed is Jesus. He is so different from Saul. He is the Son of God. His obedience to the Father is perfect. His life was lived and his death was endured for the sake of his followers. He came to serve not his own interests but ours! If it would have been a grave thing to slay Saul the Lord's anointed, how much more Jesus, God's only begotten Son! I can only imagine the realization of guilt for those who will one day soon look on him whom they pierced. The Bible says they will mourn bitterly as one mourns for an only child (Zechariah 12:10).

But it was a grave miscalculation of this Amalekite that would think he could join the band of the followers of the Lord's anointed by cunning and hypocrisy. It is just as grave for those who think they can join the band who follows the Messiah Jesus through deception and walk in ungodliness. When you truly seek Jesus, you seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. Wrongdoing will never pay.