

## **Exploiting Another Man's Tragedy**

Call to Worship: Psalm 91

1st Scripture: 1 Samuel 31

2nd Scripture: 2 Samuel 1:1-16

### **Introduction:**

David and his men have returned from slaughtering the Amalekites, and from rescuing their wives, their children and their possessions. They seek to resettle in Ziklag, which the Amalekites had burned with fire, and on the third day of their return, a messenger comes running to David, with news concerning the battle between the Philistines and the Israelites. The man's clothes are torn and his head is covered with dust, indicating (at least outwardly), that he is mourning over the outcome of the battle. He is about to inform David of the great defeat, which Israel has suffered, and how Saul and his sons have been killed in the battle. However, as you follow the man's description of the events that have transpired, it becomes more and more evident that this messenger's mourning is quite artificial, and rather than seeking to merely inform David of all that has happened, he has developed a plan, for exploiting Saul's death unto his own personal advantage. Recognizing David's inevitable advancement to the throne, the man would seek to capitalize on Saul's bad fortune, so as to gain favor with David. David (possibly seeing through the man's scheme) ultimately rewards the man according to his own fabricated profession. And while beginning to get another glimpse of David's tender heart (which we will build upon further, next week, Lord willing), we will also contemplate the evil that is associated with exploiting the tragedies of others, unto our own personal advantage and agenda.

### **I. The Messenger's Report** (Vs. 1-10)

Decked with the appearance of sorrow and mourning, the messenger comes to David, and falls down to the ground, humbly prostrating himself before David. Naturally, David then asks the man, "Where have you come from?" (vs. 3a). The man then responds, "I have escaped from the camp of Israel" (3b). The man's appearance, and the fact that he "escaped," would have, at this point, conveyed to David that things did not go well for Israel, in the battle. That said, David asks the question that would ultimately confirm his logic, while providing a further description of what had happened. "How did the matter go? Please tell me" (4a). And the man

responds, "The people have fled from the battle, many of the people are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also" (4b).

Seeking to validate the certainty of this information, David then wisely asks, "How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead?" (5). And the young man then provides his own testimony, as an eye witness testimony, which is further strengthened by the items he has with him. However, here is where the impurity of the man's motives (for coming with this information) begin to rise to the surface. [Read verses 6-10]

And so, the messenger begins by stating that he happened to be on Mount Gilboa, where he found King Saul leaning on his spear. And then he moves on to create an alternate version of what had really happened, and that, as a means of seeking to gain favor with David. We know, from what we have read in the narrative given in 1 Samuel, that after Saul was struck by an archer's arrow, he turned to his armorbearer, and asked him to thrust him through with his sword. And when the armorbearer refused, Saul fell on his own sword, and died. And after he died, his armorbearer then took his own life. However, the messenger, here tells David that he found Saul leaning on his own spear, as the Philistine chariots and horsemen were following hard after Saul. And then Saul, who was still alive, after falling on his spear, turned and saw the messenger behind him. And after finding out that the messenger was an Amalekite (and not a Philistine), he asked him to stand over him and to put him out of his misery, which the messenger did, as he believed that Saul would not be able to survive his wounds. And so, the picture here painted by the messenger was one of urgency and desperation (the Philistines were approaching, and Saul was severely wounded by his own spear), and therefore, in putting Saul out of his misery, he comes across as compassionate and heroic. He covers all angles. But it doesn't end there. Furthermore, he took the crown from Saul's head and the bracelet from his arm (the signature items of royalty), and brought them here to David, recognizing that David would be the one who would replace Saul. And so, this messenger comes off as heroic, compassionate, and as a humble subject of the new king to be crowned, as he kneels prostrate before David (certainly, in his own mind, anticipating a great reward, with some form of political advantage in the new kingdom).

Now, what is wrong with all of this? Well, for starters, it is not what really happened. The messenger was exploiting the death of Saul, for his own personal advantage. Obviously, he was at the scene of Saul's dying moments, but he craftily spun the story (of what really

happened) to serve his own advantage, and he cloaked it all in the guise of a hypocritical mourning, as he tore his garments and threw dust on his head. He probably observed what had happened with Saul and his armorbearer, and then, after they were both dead, went over and took the crown and the bracelet, snuck away, and rewrote the end of the story, in such a way that (he thought) would promote his own interests in the rise of David's kingdom. Obviously, he was very familiar with all that was happening between David and Saul, and he was pretty certain of David's coming rise to the throne. And he wanted a piece of it! And so, with no real concern about Saul or his sons, the messenger exploited the tragedy for personal gain. But, little did he know, that there was a divine Sovereign, observing all of his thoughts, actions and motives; and this divine Sovereign was about to cause the messenger's plan to severely backfire!

## **II. David's Response to the Amalekite Messenger** (Read verses 11-16)

Being confident in the man's testimony, concerning the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, David tears his clothes, as an expression of mourning and lamentation. And the men with him, follow suit. And then we are told that they mourned, wept and fasted until evening, for Saul, for Jonathan and for Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. Next week, Lord willing, especially as we consider the remainder of the chapter (vss. 17ff), we will give special attention to the mourning and lamentation of David. Needless to say for now, we can at least catch another glimpse here of the tender and compassionate heart of David, who sincerely concerned himself with the painful providence that has fallen upon Saul, Jonathan and all Israel. Like his Heavenly Father, David did not find joy in the death of the wicked. And furthermore, unlike, and in direct contrast to the Amalekite messenger, David was hardly concerned about the great benefit, which he could (even honestly and properly) derive from Israel's misfortune. It could be very easy for David to jump up and down here, as the gateway to the throne legitimately swings open toward him, but (for the moment, at least), that is the furthest thing from his mind. David grieved over Saul's death and Israel's loss, and would have sincerely desired to see things work out, in a more positive fashion, for all.

Moving on though, we find that David has some unfinished business with the Amalekite messenger, who had informed him of Saul's end (vs. 13ff). And so, David begins by questioning the messenger, concerning where he is from. And the man informs David that he is the son of a foreigner, an Amalekite. Apparently, though Amalekite by natural descent, the man defected over

to Israel, and ultimately joined their ranks in the battle against the Philistines. Now, before going any further for a moment, the mention of this man's ethnic heritage, ought to at least raise a red flag for us. Right away, we ought to recall that the Amalekites were a cursed people, from the standpoint of God; again, stemming back from their treatment of the Israelites in the wilderness, during the time of Moses. And furthermore, what did David and his men, just return from doing, only a few days ago? Slaughtering Amalekites, who had just burned Ziklag with fire, taking the women and children hostage, and an abundance of supplies. These facts, on their own, would set this man in a great position of disfavor with David. But, to then exploit Israel's tragedy unto his own personal advantage, and that, by the claim that he was the one, who ultimately took Saul's life...really sparked the catastrophic fire, which would ultimately consume him.

And so, taking the man in accordance with his own word and testimony, David then responds, "How was it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" (vs. 14). We have seen, on at least two occasions, where even in self-defense, David has refused to touch Saul, because the anointing oil of God was upon him. David was solidly convinced that it was not given man, the right to touch, what God has set apart unto His own sovereign purposes. And if this man did indeed take the king's life, even by request of the king, rather than exhibiting a heart of compassion, he would be infringing upon God's sovereign anointing, and that is a serious crime. The man ought to have rather feared God above all else! But furthermore, to David's knowledge or not, the fact that this man exploited the death of Saul, with an attempt toward seeking his own advantage (and advancement, in any sense), attempting to put himself forth as heroic and worthy of honor (in some sense), warranted a just penalty for the crime he had unwittingly claimed to commit. And so, David calls out one of the young men, who was with him, and orders him to execute the messenger. And he does. And the scene of execution closes with David pronouncing the following judgment upon the Amalekite:

"Your blood is on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have killed the Lord's anointed.'" "No need for two or more witnesses here. You said it. Now here is your reward. You are the bearer of your own guilt, and the taking of your life; the spilling of your blood, is to your own merit!" I think that we can say, brethren, that things did not go according to the messenger's plan. He had visions of grandeur, visions of elevation, and visions of praise, flowing through his mind. He left God out of the equation of his deceptive exploitation, and it all came back to bite him real hard. The very act, he thought would gain him

praise, wound up warranting his total destruction. And that was only the beginning. He would yet, stand before God to give an account as well, would he not? [Note the striking similarity to Doeg, the Edomite---from whom the Amalekites descended. Doeg ratted the innocent David out to Saul, and was a very significant accomplice in the murder of the priests of Nob; all of which he did for his own personal gain and promotion. This messenger followed in those steps, but in God's providence, his judgment came immediately upon his head, for his wickedness; relate Saul's armorbearer to the Israelite soldiers who refused to kill the priests of Nob]

### **III. Closing Thoughts and Applications**

1) Recognize the utter evil of exploiting the tragedies that befall others, unto our own personal benefit. Now brethren, we might be tempted to say, "Well, what does this have to do with us, here in the year 2012?" I wish that I could say, "absolutely nothing," but sadly, this gross form of evil, though perhaps masked by its common acceptance, presently pervades the very fabric of our political system. And it is virtually, blindly accepted (or passed over) as normal, by most, when it is a gross act of rebellion against our God, who loves integrity and truth. Make no mistake about it, satan, the father of lies, is the father of this wretched form of exploitation. And if it be accepted or overlooked as some minor issue, at the highest level of our country, then we ought to presume that it spills over into the daily situations and lives of everyday people.

And it all stems from an idolatrous pursuit of selfish ambition, at the expense of all else. Rahm Emanuel, mayor of Chicago (and former White House Chief of Staff, to our current president), whose name is as blasphemous as his tongue, asserted the following, when sharing their plans for the Obama presidency: "You never let a serious crisis go to waste. And what I mean by that it's an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before." In other words, "Make use of times of crisis, not as a means of doing what is best for the country (or the people in crisis), but rather, as a springboard for your political agenda." And brethren, this is the kind of politics that has been horribly exhibited by our current administration, and sadly, the gross infraction is committed by both sides of the political aisle.

When a concern for people; for real, living souls, takes the back seat to political agendas; when the welfare of a nation is placed below personal advancement; when all you can ask at the outset of every crisis and/or catastrophe (be it economical, physical...etc) is, "How can this best

be spun to suit my agenda; when the media no longer concerns itself with printing the truth, but rather, gives its attention to cherry picking and dissecting bits of truth, mixed with falsehood unto serving a liberal agenda, this is a gross exploitation of the tragedies that befall others. Brethren, we ought to be appalled by what we see happening in our country, and certainly, we ought not to partake in it, as a "tit for tat" means of advancing our own political agenda! Wars, where American soldiers and foreign lives have been ended, have been exploited in this way. The economy, and all manner of job losses, have been exploited in this way. Natural disasters and statewide tragedies, have been exploited in this way. And even individual cases and crimes, have been exploited in this way. Leaches, who have no concern for anyone but their own persons; who have no concern for anything but their own pockets, line our political system across the aisle, and it is hard, very hard, to find a man/woman these days, who is willing to stand upon God-honoring principle; who is willing to sacrifice everything, for the sake of maintaining a good conscience before God. And brethren, this would be bad enough if it were left in the political arena. But sadly, this is at the very heart and soul of a country that has caved into the covetous pursuit of the American Dream (above all else), grossly indulging in a pursuit of materialistic fulfillment. Let us guard our own hearts, brethren. Let us, with David, weep even for Saul, when his calamity comes upon him, recognizing the bigger picture that rests behind the facade of this world system. Let us be about, looking out not only for our own interests, but also for the interests of others, esteeming others as better than ourselves...and especially within the church! [Consider again, the "outward focus" of Samuel, David and Jonathan; Mary (sister of Lazarus vs. Judas Iscariot]

2) Note a certainty here, confirming that "assisted suicide" (aka "mercy killing), is murder in the sight of God. God gives life, and He alone is warranted to take it. There is a divine purpose even and especially in suffering, and we ought not to tamper with that purpose. And who is to say, whether or not, God might heal the individual in question? Suppose they are unsaved...is that really mercy? Whatever the case, "assisted suicide," is properly designated "assisted murder," in the sight of God. As in the case of abortion, we ought never to condone such evil, under any circumstances. [Obviously not dealing with self-defense; war...etc]

3) Friends, consider the utter foolishness of thinking that we can ever get away with anything in this world. Though God does not always immediately judge someone for their sins; (indeed, far more often than not, God is longsuffering and patient), we are meant to see here (in

these instances) that God will bring every sin to its proper judgment consequence. Nothing you or I do; indeed, no thought or motive that you or I have, ever escapes the watchful eye of God. And He will bring everything into judgment.

Well, some of you might say, "Are you sinless then, Pastor?" No, I have to continually war against sin until the day I die, but I am united to Christ! God does not base my relationship with Him, on my own merits, but rather on Christ's! Christ paid for all of my sins, and in Him, I am daily in the battle against sin. I am as guilty as the Amalekite, but God's unearned grace has found me; and it has brought me to Christ for salvation and eternal life. But, if you die outside of Christ, you will perish in your sins. Every sin you have ever committed will add to the fire of your condemnation. Repent of your sins, and turn to Christ today...be saved before it is too late!

AMEN!!!

**Benediction:** 1 Corinthians 13