

# From Tragedy to Triumph, Part I (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.
- David and his men are not informed of any of these details until they come across the abandoned Egyptian (v. 11-14).
- For sixteen months (27:7), David and his men slaughtered Amalekite men and women scattered across the Negeb. It is not surprising that the Amalekites retaliated when David and his men joined Achish as they marched towards Aphek.
- While we cannot pinpoint the exact date when the Amalekites raided and burned down Ziklag, we know the distance from Ziklag to Apeh was around sixty miles.
- As David and his men were relieved from battle (29:11), they trekked sixty miles from Apeh to their temporary residence at Ziklag. When they arrived, the town was burned down to an ash-heap. All the livestock was gone, including all the women and children. They have not been informed to the narrative details (v.1-2) and could only surmise what had happened.
- All the men, undoubtedly men of grit, who were hardened through many years of fighting, and constant wanderings in the wilderness of Judah, were overcome with sorrow, grief, and despair. They wept loudly until there was no strength (v.4). Abigail and Ahinoam, David's wives, were missing as well (v.5).

## 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.
- While David was able to outfox Saul, Achish, and the Philistines, his greatest threat is now within his own ranks: the men who had been with him all these years (22:1) are turning against him. Grief has transmuted to bitterness and rage.
- Their grief is understandable: they have followed him all this time, including the long trek from the Judean wilderness to Gath (27:1-4), and then to Ziklag. They have complied with David's stratagems for sixteen months (27:8-11) as they carried out questionable practices and as David was drafted into service of Achish (28:1-2).
- 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)

- The LORD is never mentioned from 1 Samuel 27:1-28:2. David has gone over a year and a half without consulting the LORD.
- Despite all of David's cunning behavior his first wife Michal has been given to another man (25:44), Ahinoam and Abigail are missing (30:5), Jonathan is over 100 miles away (31:1-2), he has lost all his possessions, his house has been burned down, and his men are speaking of stoning him.

- David has exhausted himself of his own self-reliance and self-deliverance. He is in the most desperate situation of his life.
- 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.
  - David was strengthened by reminding himself of the covenant promises of the LORD (23:16). Certainly, there was an unraveling of his soul before the LORD (Heb. 4:16).
  - The ephod was the byproduct of the strengthening he received, not the means of the strengthening.
  - His strengthening 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 fruit of reconciliation and restoration before the LORD for the wayward saint is honoring God's word. This was one of the main ordinances through which the LORD spoke to his priests, prophets, and kings.
- The LORD answers David through the ephod (Urim and Thummim), thus affirming the order of God's kingdom (12:13-15): God's word is to be obeyed.
- David and six hundred of his men are commanded to pursue the band. Not only will they overtake them, but they will rescue all (v.8).
- The reader has been informed that the Amalekites have not slaughtered anyone, despite David's unrelenting policies of extermination (27:9). The Amalekites' fury was subsided through arson. They plan to offer the children and wives whom they have taken captive to the slave market to be sold for a profit.
- 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).
- David, along with the remaining four hundred come across an abandoned Egyptian slave who 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 that was lost, not only the women, children, and livestock, but also the spoils of the other cities and towns that the Amalekites have raided (v.13-14).

## 5. Determined Leadership (v.21-31)

## 6. Disparities between Saul and David