

David and His Men Defeat the Amalekites

1 Samuel 30

1 Samuel 30 - *"Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag, on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked Ziklag and burned it with fire, ² and had taken captive the women and those who were there, from small to great; they did not kill anyone, but carried them away and went their way. ³ So David and his men came to the city, and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive. ⁴ Then David and the people who were with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep. ⁵ And David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive. ⁶ Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.*

⁷ Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, "Please bring the ephod here to me." And Abiathar brought the ephod to David. ⁸ So David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?" And He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all."⁹ So David went, he and the six hundred men who were with him, and came to the Brook Besor, where those stayed who were left behind. ¹⁰ But David pursued, he and four hundred men; for two hundred stayed behind, who were so weary that they could not cross the Brook Besor. ¹¹ Then they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David; and they gave him bread and he ate, and they let him drink water. ¹² And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. So when he had eaten, his strength came back to him; for he had eaten no bread nor drunk water for three days and three nights. ¹³ Then David said to him, "To whom do you belong, and where are you from?" And he said, "I am a young man from Egypt, servant of an Amalekite; and my master left me behind, because three days ago I fell sick. ¹⁴ We made an invasion of the southern area of the Cherethites, in the territory which belongs to Judah, and of the southern area of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire." ¹⁵ And David said to him, "Can you take me down to this troop?"

So he said, "Swear to me by God that you will neither kill me nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this troop."¹⁶ And when he had brought him down, there they were, spread out over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing, because of all the great spoil which they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. ¹⁷ Then David attacked them from twilight until the evening of the next day. Not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled. ¹⁸ So David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away, and David rescued his two wives. ¹⁹ And nothing of theirs was lacking, either small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything which they had taken from them; David recovered all. ²⁰ Then David took all the flocks and herds they had driven before those other livestock, and said, "This is David's spoil."²¹ Now David came to the two hundred men who had been so weary that they could not follow David, whom they also had made to stay at the Brook Besor. So they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him. And when David came near the people, he greeted them. ²² Then all the wicked and worthless men^[a] of those who went with David answered and said, "Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except for every man's wife and children, that they may lead them away and depart."

²³ But David said, "My brethren, you shall not do so with what the LORD has given us, who has preserved us and delivered into our hand the troop that came against us. ²⁴ For who will heed you in this matter? But as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike." ²⁵ So it was, from that day forward; he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day. ²⁶ Now when David came to Ziklag, he sent some of the spoil to the elders of Judah, to his friends, saying, "Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD"— ²⁷ to those who were in Bethel, those who were in Ramoth of the South, those who were in Jattir, ²⁸ those who were in Aroer, those who were in Siphmoth, those who were in Eshtemoa, ²⁹ those who were in Rachal, those who were in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, those who were in the cities of the Kenites, ³⁰ those who were in Hormah, those who were in Chorashan, those who were in Athach, ³¹ those who were in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to rove."

Background Notes

In 1 Samuel 29, David was breathing a sigh of relief because the Lord had delivered him out of a very difficult situation of his own making. By leaving Israel and going to the Philistines for security, David ended up in a situation where he and his men were going to have to fight with the Philistines against Israel. Well, the Lord delivered David from this dilemma by having the Philistine military commanders tell King Achish that David and his men were a risk, and might change their allegiance in the heat of the battle. So King Achish reluctantly told David to return to his base camp at Ziklag. The Lord graciously got David out of a very difficult situation! And the Lord may graciously get us out of difficult situations of our own making.

Meanwhile, back at Ziklag, all was not peace and quiet. The Amalekites had raided Ziklag, burned it to the ground, and taken the people captive, including the women, children, and David's two wives Ahinoam and Abigail. Obviously, this was more bad fallout to David's wrong decision of turning to the Philistines rather than trusting the Lord. David's men even talked about stoning David because of their losses. Well, David did the right thing here - he turned to the Lord.

Doctrinal Points

1. God provides help and strength for defeating the enemy.

Verse 6: "...David strengthened himself in the LORD his God." When David turned to the Lord, he found the help and strength that he needed. And so will we. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Notice the specific help and strength that the Lord provided for David. First of all, when David inquired of the Lord through Abiathar the priest as to whether he should pursue the Amalekites, the Lord said "Yes" in no uncertain terms. Abiathar probably used "urim and thummim" (objects that were associated with the ephod of the high priest) to learn the Lord's will. This was certainly help from the Lord, giving David direction. When David and his 600 men came to the Wadi Besor, they were exhausted in their pursuit of the enemy, but the Lord gave David and 400 of his men the strength they needed to

continue the pursuit. The Lord will give us the strength we need to do whatever He calls us to do. Isaiah 40:31 says, *“But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”*

In addition, the Lord provided help for David from an Egyptian slave whom they “just happened” to find along the way. Now do you think that this was just by chance? No way! The Lord was providing help for David. This Egyptian slave had become sick, and he was abandoned by his Amalekite master three days before David found him. After giving this poor man food and water, David received specific information about the Amalekites’ activities and whereabouts. As a result of this information, David was able to not only to find the Amalekites, but to overrun their unguarded camp with a surprise attack as they were celebrating. David recovered all that was lost, both people and livestock. What an answer to prayer!

And what a lesson for us! Perhaps you have suffered losses because of bad decisions – maybe bad decisions made by others, and maybe your own bad decisions. Maybe bad decisions have brought certain members of your family under the enemy’s control. Listen - be like David, and look to the Lord! The Lord will give you strength, courage, help and direction for defeating the enemy, repairing the damage done by the bad decisions, and perhaps even for recovering the losses. 2 Timothy 2:26 indicates that it is possible to escape the snare and captivity of Satan.

As we see here, in answer to our prayers, God can direct us through circumstances and people as well as directly through His Word. God provides help and strength for defeating the enemy.

2. God provides illustrations and principles for Christian service.

In verses 27-31, David gave some of the spoil or plunder to a number of cities in the territories of Judah and Simeon: *“...those who were in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to rove”* (v31). When David returned with the spoils of war the question came up as to whether or not the 200 exhausted men who had stayed with the equipment should share in the spoils along with the 400 men who went on to the battle. David said, “Yes, they should all share.” So, this became standard practice and operating principle in Israel from that day on (v24-25).

This is still a good principle for Christian service today. Some believers are called to the front lines of Christian service; others are called to supporting roles. Both areas of service are important and necessary, and all share in the fruits of the labor. All will share in the reward from the Lord in the coming day.

Another principle of Christian service that’s illustrated here is kindness in dealing with the outcasts of society. David treated the abandoned Egyptian slave with kindness. Now it’s true that David received valuable information from this Egyptian, but the principle of feeding the hungry and helping the outcasts of society is illustrated here.

In fact, here we have a spiritual picture of salvation that’s similar to the picture of salvation in the story of the Good Samaritan. Follow this spiritual picture: in the Bible, Egypt is often a spiritual picture of this world, so in the Egyptian slave we have a picture of the unsaved. They are slaves to this world, and they are “used” by this world, but they are not

helped or cared for by this world. This was our lost condition before we met Christ. But like David, the Lord reached out to us in mercy and gave us life. Meanwhile, the world to which we once belonged is eating and drinking and dancing, unaware of the sudden destruction that is to come upon it. But we are on the winning side, with Christ our greater David! Once we were slaves of the world, now we are servants of the King. So here in 1 Samuel 30, God provides illustrations and principles of Christian service.

Practical Application

Look for solutions, not scapegoats.

When things looked hopeless for David and his men, some of the men began to grumble and point the finger at David as the scapegoat. But David looked for a solution.

What about us? When problems and conflicts arise in our homes and churches, do we look for a scapegoat, or do we look for a solution? It's always easy to find someone to blame, but that doesn't solve the problem or resolve the conflict. Let's be more like David. Let's go before the Lord and look for solutions, not scapegoats!