



Do You Really Know the King?

A Study in Samuel

A Discovered Truth

1 Samuel 30:1-31

Preached by Rev. Craig T. Smith

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Discovering the Discovered

In his book, *Orthodoxy*, G.K. Chesterton tells the story of a British yachtsman who sailed to discover a new island in the south seas. After sailing for a few days, he came upon land and disembarked his boat, armed to the teeth and using hand gestures to communicate with the bewildered barbaric people on the shore. He planted his Union Jack, the British flag, on a pagan temple nearby.

However, because of a slight miscalculation, he veered off course and ended up landing in the British seaport of Brighton, a prominent city on the southeast coast, about 50 miles from London. The pagan temple was actually the Royal Pavilion, a former royal residence of King George IV. The thought of searching to discover something that has already been discovered intrigued Chesterton, who wrote:

What could be more delightful than to have in the same few minutes all the fascinating terrors of going abroad combined with all the humane security of coming home again? What could be better than to have all the fun of discovering South Africa without the necessity of landing there? What could be more glorious than to brace oneself up to discover New South Wales and then realize, with a gush of happy tears, that it was really old South Wales?¹

Chesterton goes on to explain that *he* too is a man who had discovered what had previously been discovered. His book *Orthodoxy* is his account of his “adventures in pursuit of the obvious.” He shares about his pursuit of truth and how he wanted to be ten minutes in advance of truth but instead found himself eighteen hundred years behind it. In an attempt to be original, Chesterton said that he created an inferior copy of the existing traditions of civilized religion. This leads him to the conclusion that he accepts Christianity because it has not merely told any particular truth, but it has also revealed itself as the only truth-telling system.

¹ Gilbert K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: John Lane, 1909), pp.14-15.

All other philosophies and pop culture catchphrases say things that *seem* to be true and many of them certainly sound impressive and even attractive. But they are not a system of declaring the Truth. Only Christianity does that. But that doesn't mean people are not constantly in search of discovering truth. What most don't realize, and sadly many won't ever discover for themselves, is that truth was already discovered in Jesus. He declared that HE was the Truth.

We are desperately searching for truth so we can stake our lives on it. In the Old Testament, nearing the end of 1 Samuel, David lays out the steps we should take in finding the truth upon which we stake our lives. To turn from this pattern laid out in Scripture is to attempt to discover something that has already been discovered. I invite you to turn to 1 Samuel 30 this morning. (read text)

David In Philistia

Beginning back in 1 Samuel 27, David is forced to flee from King Saul, and he has to take extreme measures to do so. He needs to find a place safe enough and large enough for his six hundred men, all of their wives and children and all of their belongings. The constant travel with that entire entourage must've been exhausting. It is also nearly impossible to hide that many people. It means constantly moving.

This forces David to seek refuge in the cities of Israel's main enemy, the Philistines. Because they were aware of Saul's pursuit of David, one of the Philistine kings, Achish of Gath, allows David and his company to stay in a city called Ziklag. This is where David stays for over a year.

Near the end of that year, the Philistines once again muster their army to face the Israelites. At first, Achish enlists David and his men to go along and fight against Israel as Achish's personal guard. This puts David in a terrible pickle. Having had to leave the women, children, and possessions behind, he and his men are caught between a Philistine rock and an Israelite hard place. If he fights against the Israelites, it will jeopardize his anointing as king. If he turns on his Philistine protectors, he risks the health and safety of his entire company. Luckily, the other Philistine leaders are not on board and demand that David return to Ziklag rather than risk David turning on the Philistines in battle.

God graciously delivers David from this lose-lose situation. Which is good, because David will soon have much more pressing issues to deal with in Ziklag. The Amalekites have raided Ziklag and taken everything.

We've met the Amalekites before. The Bible portrays them as terrorists who took advantage of weaker opponents. Saul had some early victories over the Amalekites and those wins were seen as proof of his legitimacy as king (14:48). However, Saul's spiritual failures connected to those victories resulted in Saul's condemnation and disqualification as king (15:10-31). To show the contrast further between David and Saul, David will now become God's instrument of God's judgment on Amalek.

Here we see David enact vengeance on the Amalekite raid of Ziklag. The Amalekites have taken all of the wives, including David's, all of the children and disappeared. If that wasn't enough, David's men for the first time question his leadership (30:6). The men are so upset over losing their families, they are talking about killing David by stoning him. This brings us to a crisis that illustrates both the difference between Saul and an example of an inner life that should challenge all Christians.

Comparisons

David is surrounded by trouble here. Much like Saul was back in 1 Samuel 28. Saul was surrounded by the Philistines with little hope of victory. David is surrounded by his own grieving men and faces the seemingly hopeless task of retrieving their families. Saul resorts to seeking out a medium, proving how unsuitable he is as king. David's actions stand in contrast and prove, once again, why David will become the ideal king for Israel.

The contrast is most evident in the concluding statement of verse 6: "But David found strength in the Lord his God." In Saul's desperation, he turned to illegitimate sources for truth. In contrast, in David's deep moments of need, he turns to the Lord his God.

The Hebrew verb that we translate as "found strength" involves a reflexive element. David had a pattern of strengthening himself in God's presence. This phrase emphasizes David's personal faith in God. It does so in a way that reveals the unique relationship faith makes possible. In other words, faith requires a human response, even though the relationship is enabled by God's grace (Ephesians 2:8).

God graciously makes faith possible, however we must respond to his grace. This is why we talk about being “saved” or salvation as a personal decision. Your parents cannot make it for you. Your church cannot make it for you. You must make the active choice to respond to God’s grace by faith.

You may say, “But Craig, I was christened as an infant” or “I was confirmed at 12.” Those can certainly be lovely ceremonies, loaded with significance to different traditions. But we are not “saved” by any action. Our baptism doesn’t save us. Our church attendance doesn’t save us. Our spouse’s faith or our parent’s faith won’t save us. Faith is a personal matter between a person and God. Salvation is received by grace through faith. Meaning at some point in our lives, we must understand and choose to believe that Jesus is the divine and eternal Son of God, that He became a man and lived a perfect life. Then he died on the cross to atone for our sins and on the third day God raised Him from the dead. Believe those things as truth and anchor your life to Jesus through faith.

We do that and then we can have this inner life based on truth like David had. And when crisis comes and trouble surrounds us, like David, we can be strengthened in the middle of it by the Lord Himself. You see the personal nature in the text by God being referred to as David’s Lord.

Saul has no faith-based, personal relationship with God to speak of. He believes that God exists but has not ever truly trusted completely in that truth. And when Saul found himself in utter despair, he was incapable of relying on God for strength. David has a long-standing relationship with God and that means it is only natural, it is reflexive, for David to seek strength once again from God in a time of need.

It brings insight into David’s declaration in Psalms: The Lord is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my rock where I seek refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold (Psalm 18:2).” It also reminds us that faith is combination of God’s grace and a person’s response. David is mustering his faith here and God strengthens him. This is not passive faith; this is active faith. This is not faith without works (James 2:17). This is an Old Testament example of Paul’s statement, “...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to His good purpose (Philippians 2:12-13).”

David counts heavily on God's work here.² He trusts in God and at the same time, David is boldly planning a rescue mission. We see David's complete dependence on God in how he inquires of God. He uses a method of communicating with God that is legitimate according to God's word. He has the priest Abiathar use the priestly ephod, a garment, along with the Urim and the Thummim.

God then provides an Egyptian slave on the run from his abusive Amalekite master and provides David with the secret location of the Amalekites. Even down one third of his men, David trusts God's direction to pursue them. Further, you see David's personal faith in God work itself out in other ways, especially his empathy and generosity to the men who stayed behind.

David is strengthened here because he has a consistent, steady relationship with God. Saul is weakened and flailing because he does not. Over time, Saul has gotten further and further away from God's word. He flails around blindly, trying to find some sort of truth to anchor his life on. David spends time being strengthened in God's presence so much so that this is his reflexive response.

Can you imagine driving somewhere and realizing there is something wrong with your car. Instead of pulling over, you pop the hood open, lean out the door and steer with your foot while you grab a monkey wrench and whack around blindly at the engine. Searching for a truth to anchor your life on in crisis outside of faith in Christ is like that. You grab the monkey wrench that says, "Be the captain of your own journey," and start blindly flailing and then failing. Why? Because you and I were NEVER supposed to be the "captains" of our own journeys. We are supposed to make Jesus our Lord – our boss, our captain. Then He strengthens us. "Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16)." This inward renewal happens by faith in the presence of God.

In asking Abiathar to get the ephod, David's faith finds expressions in concrete actions that are part of God's work in reversing this seemingly hopeless situation. True Christian faith finds expression in Biblically concrete actions. Daily prayer. Daily time in God's word. Caring for those who need help. Sharing the good news of the gospel.

² Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1990) p.202

Engaging in praise and worship. Meeting together with other believers. These are not things we do to earn God's favor or to save us. These are things we do in obedience that continue to strengthen us. We do these things because this is what active faith does, based on what we believe to be true. It is how a life that is anchored to the Truth of Jesus Christ endures crisis and pain.

Once we took a group of teenagers rappelling in the Wichita Mountains in southwestern Oklahoma. To call them mountains is generous. We would get folks geared up, secured and harnessed in, and then two or three hops down and you're at the bottom. But before we started, we had to search for something to anchor our safety line to so we could safely belay folks who would rappel down. Our expert climber had us find as large a tree as we could. He preferred a tree because trees are deeply rooted. They won't budge or move. We anchored to something that was stronger than us, immovable, secure. We didn't have to create something to anchor to, we just had to find what was already there and trust it. Faith in Christ means accepting the truth of God's word and securing your life to it.

That happens through a personal faith in Jesus Christ, one begun by your decision to choose Jesus as Savior and Lord. Then you begin the work of expressing your faith in active ways, such as prayer, Scripture, worship, fellowship, evangelism, service and ministry.

Doing these things everyday establishes patterns of seeking truth, advice, wisdom and help. Now, the question is, are you looking to the Truth that was already discovered for you in Christ or are you searching to discover some other truth? What are you anchoring your life to? Is it secure? Have you accepted Jesus as your truth or are you trying to find truth outside of Christ? Looking for truth outside of Christ is blindly flailing around, trying to desperately fix what is broken in your life all on your own. It is seeking to discover what has already been discovered. Don't look any further. Anchor your life to Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT:

Okay, intrepid explorers. What is one place to eat that you have discovered and could recommend to your friends about which they may not know? How do you feel when someone recommends a new place to you? How do you feel when you find a new restaurant and really like it and recommend it to a friend? How do you feel when you realize that they have already discovered your restaurant? Do you ever ask them why they never told you about this place if they had discovered it and liked it?

What is the most secure place in your life, the place where you go when trouble surrounds you?

Think back to the time when you chose to trust what the Bible says about Jesus to be true – when you were saved. What is that story?

What concrete expressions of faith do you enjoy and do well? What concrete expressions of faith do you struggle with? (i.e. memorizing Scripture, worship etc.)

Have you ever anchored your life to some truth that let you down, failed you? For example, a person may put their trust in money or in a friend, and those things might not have been able to solve the problems.

In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul talks about working out your salvation in fear and trembling. What do you think that means? Does it mean that you have to work for and earn salvation? Does it mean that, once saved, you continue to respond with actions that deepen your personal faith?

Can you remember any times in your own life when you were strengthened in God's presence and His Word gave you confidence in doing something?