

How the Mighty Have Fallen

Text: 2 Samuel 1

Introduction: Following the American Revolution, George Washington was the most admired man in the Western world. He had led an outmatched army to victory over the British Empire. He was beloved by his troops. He was respected by the nation. And in that moment, he could have taken advantage of the opportunity to seize power for himself. That's exactly what some of his closest allies thought he should do. And they encouraged him in that direction.

But instead of grasping for more power, Washington surprised everyone. He resigned his commission and returned to private life. Years later, after serving two terms as president, he shocked the world again when he stepped down voluntarily. Washington's restraint helped shape the young nation and earned the respect of even his enemies.

Lin Manuel Miranda captures the shock of Washington's decision in his hit musical *Hamilton*, when King George sings, "They say George Washington's yielding his power and stepping away. Is that true? I wasn't aware that was something a person could do."

The truth is that the kind of restraint in leadership that George Washington exhibited is rare. More often, people grasp for power. They do whatever it takes to exalt themselves. No matter the cost to others or even themselves.

That's one of the things that makes the opening chapter of 2 Samuel so striking. King Saul is dead. His son Jonathan is dead. David has already been anointed as king. The crown is there for the taking. But David doesn't exalt himself. He doesn't seize power. He mourns. He grieves the loss of a man who tried to kill him and the friend he loved like a brother.

We're starting a new sermon series in 2 Samuel. This morning we're going to be looking at chapter 1. I encourage you to go ahead and turn there in your Bible if you haven't already. We also have 1-2 Samuel Scripture journals available for you to use throughout the sermon series for note taking and personal study.

If you didn't get one when we studied 1 Samuel, I encourage you to pick one up before you leave today. If you're using the black pew Bible in front of you, 2 Samuel 1 is on page 237. If you don't own a Bible, we invite you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave.

(Read 2 Samuel 1...Pray)

David's response to Saul's death teaches us something very important about godly leadership: **Godly leaders trust God and His timing rather than seizing power for themselves.** And in David's grief, reverence, and restraint, we see the kind of leader that God honors. We also begin to get a glimpse of a far greater King to come.

But the chapter begins with...

I. The cautionary tale of an Amalekite sojourner (2 Samuel 1:1-16).

A. If you were with us for our study of 1 Samuel, you'll remember that the book ended with the death of King Saul.

1. Now, 2 Samuel begins with the words "After the death of Saul" (vs. 1a).
 - a. 2 Samuel is the continuation of the story that began in 1 Samuel.
 - b. In fact, 1-2 Samuel were initially only one book. They were later divided in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the OT. They were probably divided due to length.
2. We're also reminded that David was not present when Saul died.
 - a. The text says, "When David had returned from striking down the Amalekites, David remained two days in Ziklag" (vs. 1b)
 - b. David and Saul were estranged due to Saul's jealousy and efforts to kill him.

- c. And if you want to remind yourself of all that took place there, you can go back and read the last few chapters of 1 Samuel.
3. So, as 2 Samuel begins, David does not yet know that Saul is dead. But he's about to find out. And that's really what chapter 1 of 2 Samuel is about.
- B. There's a man who comes and tells David that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead.**
1. The author tells us that the man came from Saul's camp. His clothes were torn, and he had dirt on his head (vs. 2a).
 2. One commentator says that "The arrival of this man that day in Ziklag was surprising, perplexing, and ominous. He is neither named nor identified in any other way (yet). Who was he? Where did he come from? Why had he come to Ziklag? What news did he bring? The answers to these questions were far from obvious to anyone witnessing the scruffy stranger's entrance into the ruined town of Ziklag that day" (Woodhouse, 33).
 3. The text says that when he came to David, he fell to the ground and paid homage (vs. 2b).
 4. We still don't know who the guy is yet, but there's not yet any clear reason to be suspicious of the man.
 5. David asked him, "Where do you come from?" (vs. 3a).
 6. The man responded, "I have escaped from the camp of Israel" (vs. 3b).
 7. David is immediately interested. Again, David knew that there was a battle between the Israelites and the Philistines, but that was it. He didn't yet know what had happened.
 8. So, he asks, "How did it go? Tell me" (vs. 4a).
 9. The man responds, "The people fled from the battle, and also many of the people have fallen and are dead, and Saul and his son Jonathan are also dead" (vs. 4b).

10. David had known that Saul's day would come. David said back in 1 Samuel 26:10, "As the Lord lives, the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish." Now all three of these things had come to pass in the one event (Woodhouse, 37).
11. I think it's hard for us to feel the weight of this news. Here we are in 21st century America. 3,000 years removed from the events that day on Mount Gilboa. But for David, this was all very fresh. Very real. Very weighty. Israel's king was dead. And not only was Saul Israel's king, but he was also in a sense David's enemy. At least that's how Saul and even David's men saw it. Even if David himself did not quite see it that way. To David, Saul was the king. He was God's anointed.
12. But David must have perceived that something wasn't quite right about this whole situation. Because he questions the man further. He asks, "How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead" (vs. 5).
13. The man says, "By chance I happened to be on Mount Gilboa" (vs. 6a). Now, that should be our first clue in the text that something isn't right here. How does a person "by chance" end up on a mountain in the middle of a war zone?
14. Then he says, "And there was Saul leaning on his spear" (vs. 6b). Now, if you go back and read chapter 31 of 1 Samuel, you won't find anything there about Saul leaning on his spear. But that doesn't mean it didn't happen. Chapter 31 is not an exhaustive account of EVERYTHING that happened leading up to the death of Saul. But this idea of Saul leaning on his spear might add to our perception that something is a little off here.
15. Then the man says, "And behold, the chariots and the horsemen were close upon him" (vs. 6c). Again, we can't put our finger on it yet, but it just seems like something isn't quite right. There's no mention of chariots or horsemen in 1 Samuel 31. The topography of a mountain doesn't seem like it would lend itself very well to chariots. Certainly not chariots that were

moving fast enough to wage an attack. But, you know, maybe so...

16. Then, in verse 7, the man inserts himself into the story. He says, “And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called to me. And I answered, ‘Here I am.’ And he said to me, ‘Who are you?’ I answered him, ‘I am an Amalekite.’ And he said to me, ‘Stand beside me and kill me, for anguish has seized me, and yet my life still lingers.’ So I stood beside him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen” (vs. 7-10a).

- a. Now we know this guy is full of it. We know from 1 Samuel 31 that this is not how Saul died.
- b. It was read during our Scripture reading this morning, but let me read verses 3-6 of 1 Samuel 31 for us now: “The battle pressed hard against Saul, and the archers found him, and he was badly wounded by the archers. Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, ‘Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and mistreat me.’ But his armor-bearer would not, for he feared greatly. Therefore Saul took his own sword and fell upon it. And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him. Thus Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, on the same day together.”
- c. Now, these are not just two perspectives of the same event. Some of the details overlap a bit. But ultimately, the Amalekite’s story contradicts what we saw in chapter 31. Saul did not ask the Amalekite to kill him; he asked his armor-bearer. The Amalekite did not kill him; Saul fell on his own sword. He took his own life.
- d. I wonder if you see what this Amalekite is doing. He’s trying to make himself the hero of the story. He must have known about the beef between Saul and David. I don’t know if he knew that David had been anointed as king, but perhaps he did.

- e. Either way, he must have expected David to be excited when he found out that Saul and his son were dead.
- f. In fact, look at the second half of verse 10. The Amalekite says to David, “And I took the crown that was on his head and the armlet that was on his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord” (vs. 10b).
- g. Regardless of whether he knew that David was already supposed to be the next king of Israel, this Amalekite sees this whole thing as an opportunity. An opportunity to get in good with someone who could now become king in Israel. This man apparently thought that if he helped David become king, then David would remember him and give him a place of honor in his kingdom.

C. The man clearly wasn’t expecting David’s response.

1. First David responded with grief. Look at verses 11-12. (Read vs. 11-12)
 2. We’ll come back to David’s response of grief in a moment, but let’s look first at his further questioning of the man who brought the report.
 3. David asked, “Where do you come from?” (vs. 13a).
 4. The man responded, “I am the son of a sojourner, an Amalekite” (vs. 13b).
- a. We first learned that the man was an Amalekite up in verse 8 when he was telling his story of what he said to Saul. But this is the first time he has identified himself directly to David as an Amalekite. Which must have been shocking for David. Remember, David had just finished “striking down the Amalekites” (vs. 1). Now, there’s a man claiming to be an Amalekite telling him that he killed King Saul.
 - b. We know from our Bibles that “the Amalekites had long been hostile enemies not only of the Israelites but of Israel’s God” (Woodhouse, 40).

- c. What was an Amalekite doing on Mount Gilboa, and what was he doing now in Ziklag? Why was he bringing this report to David—the man chosen to be God’s king?
 - d. But not only was he supposedly an Amalekite, he also identified himself as the son of a sojourner. This term translated “sojourner” “refers to a non-Israelite who lived more or less permanently in Israel” (Woodhouse, 48). This answers some questions we might have about the man. It is possible that, as a resident alien, he was serving in Saul’s army. Maybe that’s why he was on Mount Gilboa in the first place. Being a resident in Israel may also explain his presumed knowledge of David and his reputation.
 - e. By claiming to be the son of a sojourner, the man wanted David to know that though he was an Amalekite, he was not an enemy. He did not belong to the Amalekites. He wanted David to believe that he could trust him.
5. Remember, this is the first David has heard about Saul’s death. He doesn’t have the benefit we have of having read 1 Samuel 31 first. We don’t know how much of the man’s story that David believed.
 6. But what we do know is that David was not pleased with the man’s report. He asked, “How is it that you were not afraid to put out your hand to destroy the Lord’s anointed?” (vs. 14).
 7. Then David got down to business (vs. 15-16). (Read vs. 15-16)
 - a. “The Lord’s anointed” is Bible language for the one chosen and appointed by the Lord to represent the Lord as His king” (Woodhouse, 49).
 - b. By taking Saul’s life, this man had put himself in the place of God. Only God has the authority to raise up His anointed, and only God has the authority to remove him.
- c. Also, to oppose the Lord’s anointed is to oppose the Lord.
 - d. David had made all of this very clear previously when he had spared Saul. Even Saul’s armor-bearer understood the significance of acting against the Lord’s anointed.
 - e. This Amalekite disregarded all of that, and he paid the price. He received his just punishment for acting against the Lord’s anointed. If he was in fact a resident of Israel as he claimed, he should have known better. He expected to gain from concocting this false story. Instead, he died because of it.
- D. The fate of this Amalekite sojourner serves as a warning to us.
 1. It doesn’t pay to attempt to seize power and exalt yourself. God is sovereign. He exalts whom He exalts. And He humbles whom He humbles.
 - a. Psalm 147:6 says, “The Lord lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.
 - b. Jesus said, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt. 23:12).
 - c. James 4:10 says, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”
 - d. Maybe you’re tempted to do something at work that will make you look good and make everyone else look bad so that you can receive the promotion you desire. Let the fate of this Amalekite sojourner be a warning to you.
 2. Not only did he try to exalt himself, but he did so by wrongdoing. He lied about killing God’s anointed.
 - a. The truth is that whatever we may hope to gain by doing wrong is short-sighted.
 - b. This is God’s world. It may seem for a moment that the wicked prosper. But they will not prosper forever. God is a God of justice. In due time, He will right every wrong.

c. It never pays to sin against God.

We've seen the cautionary tale of an Amalekite sojourner. Now I want us to contrast that with...

II. The exemplary righteousness of God's anointed (2 Samuel 1:17-27).

A. We've already seen David's initial response to the news that Saul and Jonathan were dead (vs. 11-12).

- 1. David tore his clothes and so did all the men who were with him (vs. 11).**
- 2. And they mourned and wept and fasted (vs. 12a).**
- 3. Notice what the author says there in verse 12. They mourned, wept, and fasted "for SAUL and for JONATHAN his son and for the PEOPLE OF the LORD and for the HOUSE OF ISRAEL" (vs. 12b).**

- a. David's response to Saul's death is fascinating to me. Remember that Saul has been trying to kill David since chapter 18 of 1 Samuel. David had opportunities to kill Saul, but he refused because Saul was God's anointed.**
- b. Now Saul is dead, and David didn't have to do anything. Now David is to become king. We might expect David to feign sorrow but be internally excited. That doesn't seem to be the case. Instead, David is genuinely sorrowful.**
- c. And David is not just sorrowful for his friend Jonathan but for Saul as well. David also understands the significance of what has happened for the nation. The text says that he mourned "for the people of the Lord" and "for the house of Israel."**
- d. David gets it. He's ready to be king. Because he's much more concerned about the nation than himself.**

- e. The text doesn't say it explicitly, but it's undoubtedly implied in David's mourning. He's also concerned for God's glory. There are a lot of parallels between this defeat of Israel at the hands of the Philistines and the defeat Israel experienced back in 1 Samuel 4 at the hands of the Philistines. There the ark of God was captured, and Phinehas' wife named her baby boy Ichabod because she said, "The glory has departed from Israel!"**
- f. When David said in verse 20, "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon," David's concern for the glory of the Lord is implied. He says in verse 19, "Your glory, O Israel, is slain on your high places!" Israel's glory is the Lord's glory. David doesn't want Israel's defeat and the death of her king known in Gath and Ashkelon because it will cause them to make a mockery of Israel and her God.**
- g. They would say that Israel and her God are weak. They would say that their gods were more powerful than Israel's God. The Philistines would give God's glory to their idols.**

Application: I wonder if you recognize that in a similar manner to the way that Israel represented God to the nations in the OT, we represent God to the world around us today. On Tuesday night, we were at the National Night Out event put on by the Spotsylvania Sheriff's Office. One of the reasons that we do events like that is because we need to be known in this community as a people who are active and involved in the community. We don't just huddle together in our building on Sunday mornings. We go out and seek to serve and be a blessing to our neighbors. And as we do, the reputation of our church is at stake. And not only is the reputation of our church at stake, but the reputation of our God is also at stake.

This became very clear to me in one of the conversations that I had with someone Tuesday night. I was telling him who we are and where we're located. And he lives out this way, so he knew where our church is located. He then told me that he was glad to see us out there because he has always thought of us as a sleepy little church.

Now, I'll tell you that I was offended by his comment to a certain extent. But only so much because as I've thought about it more and more since then, I don't think his comment was at all a fair or true characterization of our church or our involvement in the community.

But it reminded me of the importance of our work in the community. That's the perception that many who drive down Brock Road have of Goshen Baptist Church. We're a sleepy little church. That's what we're up against as we seek to make an impact in this community for the sake of the gospel. And it's not just our reputation that is at stake. God's reputation is at stake because we claim to represent Him.

And just like David was driven by a concern for God's glory in his mourning, we must be driven by a concern for God's glory in all that we do as a church. We can't always control how people view our church. But we can make sure that what that guy said about our church is never true. May we never settle for being a sleepy little church that huddles together on Sunday mornings but has no real impact on the community around us.

B. David's mourning for God's glory leads to the lament that we see in the second half of the chapter.

- 1. It is a lament from David that focuses on Saul and Jonathan, his son. David commanded it to be taught to the people of Judah. And therefore, it was to be written in the Book of Jashar. The Book of Jashar has been lost to history. It was likely a collection of songs or poetry associated with major figures of Israel's history (Woodhouse, 56). But thankfully, we have David's lament recorded for us here in the text of 2 Samuel.**
- 2. We've noted already the tragic nature of Saul's death for the nation. I think it's hard for us to fully grasp just how tragic this all was. We tend to think of Saul as a bad guy and David as a good guy. And Saul's death opened the door for David to become king. So, we might be inclined to think of Saul's death as a good thing. But that is not how it would have been viewed in Israel, and as we can see from his lament, that's not how David viewed it either. It was a tragedy.**
- 3. The mighty, namely Saul and Jonathan, had fallen.**

- 4. One of the things that stands out as you read this lament is how glowingly David speaks of Saul. We're not surprised to see him speak so glowingly of Jonathan. Jonathan was David's friend. He was like a brother to him. They had made a covenant with one another. David fully expected Jonathan by his side when he became king. But now, that was not to be. So, David says, "Jonathan lies slain on your high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women" (vs. 25b-26).**
- 5. We expect David to talk like that about Jonathan. But why does he speak so glowingly of Saul? Saul and David were estranged from one another. Saul had tried to kill David on multiple occasions. It's not exactly the same because Saul's death had national significance, but if we think about our own experiences with the death of those closest to us, we can understand the idea of remembering the good and not dwelling on the bad when a person dies. Saul's death was a tragedy for the nation. There had even been a lot of good during his reign as king. It was right for David to remember that about Saul in his death.**

But that's where the chapter ends. With Saul's death and David's lament. We'll have to wait until next week to pick the narrative back up in chapter 2. We've seen the cautionary tale of an Amalekite sojourner. We've seen the exemplary righteousness of God's anointed. Now, before we close, I want to take just a moment to point you to...

III. The better King, David's Son.

I said at the beginning of the sermon that the main idea of 2 Samuel 1 is that **godly leaders trust God and His timing rather than seizing power of themselves.**

The antithesis of that idea in 1 Samuel 2 is the Amalekite sojourner who concocts a lie about being the one to kill Saul in an apparent attempt to earn favor with David. He tries to seize power and influence for himself by lying about his involvement in the death of Israel's king.

On the other hand, you have David who has refused to usurp Saul's authority and elevate himself. We saw two occasions in 1 Samuel where David had the opportunity to take Saul's life and was even encouraged to do so by his men, but on both occasions, he refused. He refused to raise his hand against the Lord's anointed. And even now, Saul is dead, but David's first thought is not to take control and ascend the throne as king. His first response is to mourn. His mourning is personal. But it's also on behalf of the nation. Saul's death is a tragedy in Israel. In all David's interactions with Saul, even to the very end, there was never any evidence of rivalry or conceit. He was always careful to consider Saul as more significant than himself.

I think we can't help but be reminded this morning of another King in Israel who did nothing from rivalry or conceit. In humility, He counted others as more significant than Himself. He was in the form of God, but He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. He made Himself nothing. He took the form of a servant. He was born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Saul's death was a tragedy in Israel. But as we will see in the chapters to come, God brought good out of tragedy. David would become king. He would lead God's people as God's anointed. And through David, Israel and the nations would be blessed.

The death of the Lord Jesus was also a tragedy. The Amalekite sojourner was a lawless man who claimed to kill King Saul. But Jesus really did die at the hands of lawless men. Saul took his own life in selfishness to preserve his own dignity. Jesus gave His life as a sacrifice to save sinners like you and me.

Yes, Jesus' death on the cross was a tragedy. But like we'll see in 2 Samuel, God brought triumph out of tragedy. On the third day after Saul's death, David mourned because Israel's king was dead. But on the third day after Jesus' death, heaven rejoiced because the King of kings was not dead anymore. He was raised from the grave. And He is alive now forevermore!

God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Conclusion: What about you? Have you bowed your knee to King Jesus? Have you confessed with your tongue that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father?

The Bible says that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

It is with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!