

ISRAEL UPDATES

1 Samuel 30-31 A BITTER END

Good morning and thank you so much for joining us. Well, after 4 months we've now arrived at the end of our study in 1 Samuel, so would you please turn to 1 Samuel 30? Next week we move back to the NT as we continue to study the Bible, verse by verse, in order, we'll kick off 2 Corinthians next week. But this morning we'll be studying both chapters 30-31.

Last time in our study we saw that David, who was living with the philistines, he was kicked out. Remember at this point David was completely backslidden, he was relying on his flesh with disastrous results, as we're about to see in chapter 30.

The title of this morning's message is A BITTER END

Let's pray

So to remember the scene, the philistines have just denied David and his men from fighting against the Israelites. So now David and his 600 men travel back home, about 25 miles a day on foot. They're weary, tired, and dejected. They're on their way home...

1 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, While David and his band of 600 were trying to fight w/ the philistines, they left their own home of Ziklag unprotected. And the Amalekites seized the opportunity...

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. Notice that the wicked Amalekites had more mercy than David had! We learned back in 1 Samuel 27

that during his time among the Philistines, David made his living as a bandit, and whenever David attacked the land, he left neither man nor woman alive. The Amalekites were more merciful than David was.

It's always a terrible testimony for Christians when the world acts more like Christ than we do.

So picture the scene... As soldiers David and his men were discouraged that they hadn't been allowed to fight with the Philistines. But they knew they were coming home, and home meant family and familiar surroundings.

Even off in the distance they knew something was wrong. Smoke rose from their city, but it wasn't the smoke of cooking fires. It was too much smoke for that, and the smoke was too black. I'm sure they wondered why no one had come to greet them afar off — where were their wives and children? Weren't they glad to see them?

Imagine the horror as they saw their city was a burnt-out pile of rubble, and eerily silent with no voices. Make no mistake, this is a desperate situation...

3-6

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.

David has lost everything. Now even the 600 loyal men who had shown allegiance to David want to stone him. David is at the point where he has nothing else but God. He's at rock bottom

And the end of verse 6 is critical—"But David strengthened himself in the Lord His God."

And remember, this was rebellious David, this was backslidden and wayward David, and yet God shows him mercy and grace in David's time of need.

Sometimes God allows us to get to the point where we literally have nothing left, because it's only then when all our crutches are removed that we fully trust the Lord.

God doesn't do this because He's mean, no it's out of love.

7-8

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." Now it may be difficult to recall because it's been a few weeks since we were here in our study, but as David spent time with Philistines, he never mentioned the Lord once. And now, right here, when David has hit rock bottom and everything is taken from him, he strengthens himself in the Lord, then He seeks the Lord.

SHOW PIC An ephod was a special apron that priests would wear.

And there were 2 stones, the Urim and the Thummim that were used to seek or understand the word of the Lord. **CLOSE PIC**

So what's happening here with David getting the ephod? David is seeking God's word for guidance.

Folks it's the word of God that will guide us through the difficulties of our world today too. We don't need the latest gimmick or motivational fad-we need to hold God's word in our hearts.

So instead of just running off to say, 'hey I'm going to rescue my family', David first seeks God's guidance. And God says I'm going to deliver them into your hands, and you'll get everything back.

9-10

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. How weary and dejected and depressed do you have to be, knowing the enemy has stolen your family, and you're too weak to go fight for them? I don't think we can fully grasp the gravity of this scene.

There's an old quote that rings true even to this day-fatigue makes cowards of us all.

This could've been devastatingly discouraging to David. Think about it- he pursued a significantly larger Amalekite army, and he learns that one-third of his soldiers couldn't continue.

Please notice that God promised David victory, but God never said there wouldn't be further challenges along the way.

And now look how God provides...

11-12

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. David is a soldier on a mission to save his family. He doesn't have time for this! But David comes upon this Egyptian who is on the verge of death, and David surrenders his priorities, for a greater priority.

This is soooo convicting for me. Because I know what I would've done. I would've done the drive-by deed. Drop off some water and food, and 'ok back to the task at hand!' But look how the Lord is providing here...

13 Then David said to him, "To whom do you belong, and where are you from?" David takes the time to have a conversation with him-what a display of caring and kindness...

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." Plot twist!

This Egyptian was part of the troops that invaded and burned Davids town and kidnapped all the people!!!

15-20

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.” God’s promise was fulfilled exactly as He said it would be wasn’t it? God fulfilled His promise, but used David’s actions to fulfill the promise.

That’s the wonderful part of walking with the Lord-God’s promises don’t exclude us, rather God invites us to be part of it!

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. So imagine the scene, the 200 who couldn’t make it see all the people and the spoils of war, and the families that have been rescued-can you imagine the jubilation that’s taking place?

And you know, just as I know, after every awesome victory for the Lord, opposition rises up.

22 Then all the wicked and worthless men^[fn] 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.” Some of the men who fought with David said hey-these 200 who didn’t fight with us, they didn’t draw their swords, they didn’t put their lives at risk, they shouldn’t share in the spoil...

23-25

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. Hey the supply lines are just as vital as the soldiers on the front lines, and God will reward both.

We have lots of folks here who serve the LORD in invisible, behind-the-scenes ways, often supporting the much more visible aspect of the LORD’s work.

Think about it-do you know the things we find in the pews after services? Toe-nail clippings, half eaten food, you name it. We have servants who come in and clean that so when you sit there you don’t have to worry about the cleanliness. The trash and cigarette butts and beer cans all in our parking lot and vestibule-we have folks who clean that up. See God will bless them just as much as the person with the microphone.

I was in a hospital recently visiting someone who was very sick. And they said they wish they could be out there, ‘with me on the front lines.’ This man was too sick, too weary, too many machines

hooked up to leave his room. But you know what he could do—he could pray, and support those who are on the front lines!

Never forget the most important parts of the body are hidden. We can't see the lungs, or the brain, or the liver, or the stomach. Yet we couldn't function without them. So it is in the body of Christ.

Just because somebody has a microphone or a following of people it doesn't mean for 1 second they're any more spiritual than you. As a Christian you have the same HS dwelling you as they do. Just be faithful to the Lord.

26-31 David now makes political amends

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,^[fn] 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. David is no political dummy. He knew that his time among the Philistines strained his relationships with God's people. So David now seeks to make restitution and set things right with his allies, so he sends some of the spoil to the elders of Judah-13 different cities.

This is the final step in David's getting things right after his disastrous time of backsliding among the Philistines, he's mending broken relationships...

Chapter 31, the final chapter, the scene shifts to describe the tragic end of Saul and his sons

Now remember Saul has fallen into such a state of spiritual rebellion that he went and consulted a medium-remember the witch at Endor? And the prophet Samuel told Saul that both he and his sons would die the next day. Chapter 31 is that next day.

You'll notice the name of God is mentioned nowhere in this chapter, perhaps suggesting that God had handed Saul over to the consequences of his rebellion.

1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

Gilboa was the HQ of the Israeli army camp, which means that the battle was so lopsided Israel got slaughtered inside their own camp.

2 Then the Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons. And the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons. Faithful Jonathan, Saul's son and David's dear friend, is killed, fulfilling Samuel's prophecy.

3-4

3 The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was severely wounded by the archers.

4 Then Saul said to his armorbearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me."

But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid.

Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it. This is where the phrase "falling on the sword" comes from. Saul, struck by arrows and critically wounded, knew the battle was completely lost. Saul was probably afraid that the Philistines would torture and abuse him like they did to Samson.

5 And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword, and died with him. 6 So Saul, his three sons, his armorbearer, and all his men died together that same day. Now on Wednesday nights we're in 2nd Samuel, picking up where this book leaves off. And in 2 Samuel 1 we learned an Amalekite came to David with the report that the Amalekite had actually delivered the death-blow to a wounded Saul.

So which is it? It may be that Saul fell on his sword, and he was still alive, and asked the Amalekite to finish him off. Or it may be that the Amalekite simply lied and was the first one to come upon Saul's dead body, and that he told David that he killed him because he thought David would be pleased and he would be rewarded. We studied that a few weeks ago on Wednesday night.

7 And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley, and those who were on the other side of the Jordan, saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them. Look what's happened-Saul's sin, rebellion and lack of repentance affected much more than just himself or his immediate family. It literally endangered the entire nation of Israel.

The Israelites panic and flee from the land that God gave them, and now the Philistine's occupy territory on the other side of the Jordan inside the border of Israel. This was the deepest encroachment into Israeli territory ever achieved by the Philistines.

8-10

8 So it happened the next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount

Gilboa. 9 And they cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and sent word throughout the land of the Philistines, to proclaim it in the temple of their idols and among the people. 10 Then they put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan.[fn] In those days trophies of war were often placed in the temples of the conquering nations as a tribute to their gods. Remember, when the Ark was taken in battle, the Philistines placed it in the Temple of Dagon. Even David followed this practice. He placed Goliath's sword next to the priestly ephod in the Tabernacle at Nob.

They chop off Saul's head, and hang his body to the wall. It was a way to bring further shame and disgrace to an already defeated people.

This was the ultimate insult against Saul. In that culture, to have your dead body treated this way was considered a fate worse than death itself.

SHOW PIC You can go to the ruins of Beth Shan today, as the foundations to the city sit high on a hill overlooking the Roman ruins destroyed in an earthquake. **CLOSE PIC**

11 Now when the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, 12 all the valiant men arose and traveled all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth Shan; and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. 13 Then they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days. The men of Jabesh couldn't bear the disgrace and humiliation. They come at night and take the body of Saul off the wall. But if you ask me, Saul has been "off the wall" for some time.

But why did the residents of Jabesh want to give Saul's body a proper burial? Because Saul rescued Jabesh back in chapter 11 from the ammonites.

It was really an appropriate end for Saul. The man who tried to maintain his image at all costs ended up a public spectacle of shame.

And that's it, this is how 1 Samuel ends. Saul is dead, and David will become king, of course not without his flaws.