

Ryan Milne

1 Samuel / 2 Samuel 1

[God's truth, justice, and covenant faithfulness endure over human lies and sin, calling us to grieve rightly, revere His authority, and find mercy in Christ, the true and faithful King.]

Text: 2 Samuel 1

Call: *"The grass withers and the flower fades,"*

Response: *"But the word of the Lord endures forever."*

From Lies To Lament

1. The Lie (v1-10)

1.1 The Amalekite's arrival (v1-2)

1.2 The false report of Saul's death (v3-10)

2. The Law (v11-16)

2.1 The urgency of godly grief (v11-12)

2.2 The sanctity of God's anointed (v13-14)

2.3 The punishment of transgression (v15-16)

3. The Lament (v17-27)

4. Application And Call To Christ

5. Questions For Study

Introduction

Awakening Church, as we turn to 2 Samuel, we continue a story already in motion. First and Second Samuel were once a single book, tracing God's covenant faithfulness through the prophet Samuel, the rise and fall of Saul, and now the reign of David.

The main character is not David, or Saul, or Samuel, it is God Himself. He preserves His people, raises rulers, and fulfills His promises.

Over the past weeks, we have celebrated Advent, marked the new year, and ordained deacons, all reminders that God's kingdom does not rest on human strength, but on His faithful rule. Today, this afternoon, we will see that truth again:

God advances his purposes through patient trust, obedience, and covenant faithfulness.

I have planned to go through the text of 2 Samuel chapter 1 under three headings: The Lie. The Law. The Lament.

1. The Lie (v1–10)

1.1 The Amalekite's arrival (v1-2)

Before we speak about the man who arrives, **verse 1** requires that we first speak about David.

After his great rescue mission, David returns to Ziklag. He does not yet know where he is going or what comes next, but he knows he needs a place to stay. And once again, we are reminded of God's quiet providence. The Lord had preserved David from participating in the battle to the north. The Lord had directed events so that David and his men were not present when Saul fell. And the Lord had preserved the people who were taken from Ziklag and brought them home.

Ziklag had been burned, but it was not reduced to nothing. There was still shelter. There was still a place for David and his men to gather, to recover, and to wait on the Lord.

Then **verse 2** tells us that on the third day, a man arrives from the northern battle, from Saul's camp.

His arrival is anything but accidental. This man has had days to plan his approach. He comes with dirt on his head and his clothes torn. These are outward signs of grief. He falls to the ground before David and pays him homage. Everything about his appearance and behavior is carefully crafted to look sincere.

But Awakening Church, we must learn not to be quick in equating sincerity with truth.

A man can look deeply sorrowful. A man can act respectfully. And still speak a lie.

After this dramatic entrance, David naturally begins to ask questions. And this sets the stage for us to compare the story this man tells with the account we already have from the Holy Spirit in 1 Samuel.

1.2 The false report of Saul's death (v3-10)

In **verses 3-4**, David gets the summary immediately. The battle has been fought. Israel has been defeated. Saul and Jonathan lie dead among the slain. And the man speaks as though he has witnessed it all with his own eyes (and he might have). Every word is chosen carefully. Every detail is offered with confidence. His goal is persuasion. He is just setting the stage here; he has more to tell, and even evidence to present that should guarantee the result he is after.

In **verses 5-6**, David presses him further. He asks how these things happened. David listens

carefully, because he understands something this man apparently does not. Appearances can deceive. Words can be shaped. And human claims do not determine the truthfulness of God.

We already know, because Scripture has told us, that Saul fell on his own sword. So we know immediately that this report is false. But David listens with discernment, recognizing that God's providence and covenant purposes are never moved forward by clever storytelling or human manipulation.

Then in **verses 7-10**, the man reaches the climax of his story. He claims that he himself delivered the final blow. He invents a conversation between himself and the wounded king. He presents Saul's crown and armlet as proof. And only now do we learn something crucial. This man is an Amalekite.

He must have thought that no one would invent such specific details about the final moments of a king. And since Saul was truly dead, there would be no one left to contradict him. The crown and armlet would seal the story. Everything is designed to draw David in, to gain his trust, and to secure favor or position in the coming kingdom.

Verse 10 shows just how thorough this deception was. He covered every possible reaction. If David rejoiced, the Amalekite could claim credit. If David grieved, he framed the story so that Saul requested it and was already dying. Whether David responded with relief, anger, or sorrow, this man believed he had positioned himself to benefit.

But all of these lies stand in direct opposition to the truth of God.

And what this Amalekite did not understand is that God's truth always stands victorious over human falsehood. Lies may look convincing. They may sound sincere. But they cannot overturn God's covenant promises. They cannot redirect His purposes. They cannot dethrone the king He has chosen.

Even the most dramatic human claim cannot defeat the faithfulness of God, who preserves His covenant purposes through His appointed king.

Up to this point, we have seen a carefully crafted lie, but now the narrative turns from deception to discernment. The story moves from what the Amalekite said to how God's revealed law judges what has been said and done.

2. The Law (v11-16)

2.1 The urgency of godly grief (v11-12)

Now, as we move into **verses 11-12**, the tone of the text shifts.

This section I have called the Law, and it begins not with argument or interrogation, but with grief. We are not told what the man who brought the news expected David to do. Perhaps he assumed David would rejoice now that Saul was gone. But David stops the questioning, and the Holy Spirit shows us something entirely different.

David tears his clothes. His men do the same. And they mourn.

The text presents this grief as right and fitting. There is no hint that David overreacted or underreacted. This is godly sorrow in the face of God's judgment. And we should notice the scope of it. David does not mourn only for Jonathan, his beloved friend. He mourns for Saul, the Lord's anointed. He mourns for Israel, the people of God. His grief is wide because his heart is ordered by covenant concerns.

This scene presses us to examine our own responses. True Spirit led sorrow is not limited to personal loss. It mourns sin. It mourns the damage sin brings to God's people. And it mourns the dishonor done to God's name. David models for us that godly grief is not optional or delayed. It is urgent and serious.

This also helps us with a real tension in Scripture. We are called to grieve over sin, and we are also called to pray for God's judgment against sin and the wicked. Those are not opposing responses. David shows us that righteous grief mourns sin itself, not personal inconvenience or wounded pride. And when we pray for judgment, we are entrusting justice to God, not taking it into our own hands.

Simply put, we grieve sin, we mourn its consequences, and we trust the Lord to judge rightly and faithfully.

We understand this instinctively in everyday life. There is a right response for the moment. Joy and sorrow are not erased by one another, but ordered together by wisdom.

And Scripture ultimately teaches us this by pointing us to Christ. Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. He wept over Jerusalem. Yet he also knew true joy. He rejoiced in the Spirit. He endured the cross for the joy set before Him.

Christ entered a world under judgment and met it with holy sorrow and obedient trust. His tears teach us that grief in the face of sin and death is righteous. His joy teaches us that grief does not cancel hope.

And it is that right, reverent, and ordered response to God's purposes that now brings us to the next question in the text. Oh, I can imagine after all that David and Saul have been through, this Amalekite had no idea what was running through the mind of David.

How has the Lord's anointed been treated?

2.2 The sanctity of God's anointed (v13-14)

Now in verses 13-14, the focus narrows. This Amalekite assumed that David was driven by the same hunger for power that ruled his own heart. He believed David would see Saul's death as an opportunity seized and a problem solved.

But David responds not with ambition, but with discernment.

In **verse 13**, he presses the man on his identity. Where are you from? What is your relationship to Israel? This is not a small question. The answer matters. This man was no ignorant outsider. He had lived among the covenant people. He was either the son of a proselyte or descended from an Amalekite who had joined himself to Israel. He would have known the law. He would have known the name of the Lord. He would have known the sacredness of the king.

And that makes David's question in **verse 14** land with full weight.

"How is it that you were not afraid to put out your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?"

I cannot imagine what went through this man's mind when David asked that question. The Amalekite assumed that no moral boundary would restrain David from taking the throne. David assumed that the fear of the Lord should have restrained the Amalekite from ever lifting his hand.

Those are two radically different hearts.

David's reverence for Saul was not situational. It was not convenient. It was a settled conviction. Time and again, when temptation was strong and justification would have been easy, David refused to touch the Lord's anointed. Now that same principle must be made public. David must be cleared and kept clear of any suspicion. Not simply shown to be politically wise, but revealed as a man who fears God.

Before we move on to verses 15-16, the text presses us toward an issue that weighs more and more heavily on our own societies. David's question also confronts the idea of euthanasia. Not by command, but by example (not with prescription but through description).

Why did you not refuse, as the armor bearer had refused? Even in suffering and danger, Saul's life remained in the Lord's hands. Providence could still act. To deliberately end life was not mercy. It was a presumption.

We live today in what many faithful Christians would describe as a culture of death. Abortion has been normalized. Infanticide is openly discussed. Euthanasia is praised as compassion and promoted as a solution to burden. But Scripture presents a radically different vision.

Death is an enemy. Life is a sacred gift breathed out by God Himself. When the Lord set life and death before His people, He commanded them to choose life. The modern embrace of euthanasia rejects the gift and instead calls the curse good.

David's question should still confront us. Where is our fear? What do we treat as sacred? Do we truly believe that life and authority belong first and finally to the Lord?

The culture of the world, in our time, has spoken on these issues, and in our text, the Amalekite has spoken. His heart has been exposed. And now David will act, not as a grieving friend, but as a king who bears the sword of justice.

2.3 The punishment of transgression (v15-16)

Now we come to **verses 15-16**, and here we see the punishment of transgression. David may not have known every detail of what happened on Mount Gilboa, but he judges according to God's revealed law. No one strikes the Lord's anointed with impunity.

The Amalekite receives justice, and it is justice marked by a striking irony. He is punished for what he said he did, even though, as we know from the 1 Samuel 31, he did not actually do it. Yet God's judgment still finds him. God repays him according to the intent of his heart and the confession of his mouth, even if not according to the historical fact of the event.

As Dale Ralph Davis notes, the Amalekite received what he deserved, even though the story he told was false. God's justice exposes the lie and returns the punishment the man claimed for himself.

This is more than an isolated incident in Israel's history. It is a preview of what will be true for all people on the last day. Jesus Himself tells us that nothing concealed will remain undisclosed. He is the one appointed to judge the secrets of men. The Amalekite stands as a warning: no falsehood, no hidden motive, no self-serving scheme escapes the justice of God.

We can also notice how David administers justice. His sentence rests squarely on God's law, not on personal vengeance or political calculation. He does not lash out emotionally. He asks a legal question rooted in covenant categories: "How is it that you were not afraid to put out your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" This is the language of the law, not of rivalry between David and Saul.

Under God's law, intentional killing demanded death. Whoever sheds human blood must have his blood shed. Even if the Amalekite's story were true, assisting in Saul's death would have been unlawful. Saul had not been lawfully executed, and the Amalekite was not a divinely appointed agent of judgment. He took upon himself an authority God had not given.

More than that, Saul was the Lord's anointed king. Scripture consistently teaches that no one may raise a hand against the Lord's anointed apart from God's direct command. David had refused on multiple occasions to harm Saul because he understood this principle. The Amalekite's claim was not only murder, it was covenantal sacrilege, an assault on what God had consecrated.

And we should notice how God's law works here. David judges the Amalekite by his own words. In Scripture, self-condemning testimony establishes guilt, and false witnesses are warned they will bear the punishment of their own lies. By confessing what he claimed to have done, the man sealed his own fate. No further witnesses were necessary; his own mouth had condemned him.

The sentence rests on three converging realities.

First, murder demanded death.

Second, touching the Lord's anointed was forbidden.

Third, the accused had confessed with his own mouth.

From the Holy Spirit's perspective, the truth was already clear: Saul fell on his own sword, and the Amalekite's story was false. God's truth stands firm, even in the midst of human deceit.

From David's perspective, he may not have known for certain that the man was lying. Yet that uncertainty does not weaken the justice of the verdict. The Amalekite's sin was revealed in his intent, his confession, and his disregard for the fear of the Lord. David does not act as Saul's rival, grasping for power. He acts as the anointed king, faithfully applying God's law. He enforces the covenant, not his own ambition.

Now, through David, justice has been carried out. The Amalekite has received the punishment his own words demanded. But the story is not over. The king's heart turns, and the Spirit shows us grief that honors God and mourns the fallen.

3. The Lament (v17-27)

3.1 Covenant Faithfulness and Compassionate Mourning (v17-27)

In verses **17 through 27**, David does not respond with celebration, relief, or quiet satisfaction. He responds with lament.

At this point, Scripture may raise a question for us. What do I do with the times God's people are called to rejoice at the downfall of the wicked? Don't they sing in Exodus when Pharaoh's army is drowned? Don't we hear the Psalms rejoice when God shatters His enemies?

How can I tell if David's reaction is the correct one? How can I tell which reaction I am called to have?

The answer is not in contradiction but in context. Scripture never teaches us to gloat over personal enemies. It teaches us to rejoice in the righteous judgments of God. And it also teaches us to mourn when covenant collapse brings suffering to God's people, even when that collapse comes through divine judgment.

Saul's death is not just the removal of a threat. It is the fall of the Lord's anointed, the exposure of Israel's sin, and the cost of rebellion borne by the whole nation. David does not rejoice because an enemy is gone. He mourns because God's people have been wounded and God's name has been dishonored.

Scripture holds both truths together. We rejoice when God defeats His enemies in righteousness. We mourn when sin brings ruin within the covenant community. Wisdom is knowing which response fits the moment.

And Scripture does not leave us without guidance in making that discernment. When we are faced with the fall of the wicked, the judgment of evil, or the removal of an enemy, we should ask ourselves a few searching questions.

Am I celebrating the end of evil, or the suffering of people?
Is my joy rooted in relief, gratitude, and trust in God's justice, or in hatred and pride?
Would this celebration soften my heart in gratitude toward God, or harden it against those made in his image?

Those questions do not weaken our confidence in God's judgment. They guard our hearts from confusing righteousness with resentment. They help us rejoice where Scripture calls for joy and mourn where Scripture calls for tears.

David's lament shows us that a godly heart does not respond mechanically. It responds wisely. It rejoices when God's justice is displayed. It weeps when sin brings ruin. And it submits both responses to the fear of the Lord.

This lament is not a sentimental weakness. It is not a performative display of grief. It is a measured, Spirit-led expression of covenant faithfulness through compassionate mourning. David grieves for Saul, he grieves for Jonathan, and he grieves for Israel. Because the fall of the king is the loss of the people, and the dishonor of the Lord's anointed is a wound to the covenant community itself.

David's sorrow tells us something about his heart. It's a heart deeply attuned to the

covenant relationship between God, the king, and the people. He understands that when sin brings ruin, the cost is real, and it is worthy of tears.

And we need to notice this carefully. David's compassion does not cancel judgment, and it does not compromise covenant truth. Judgment has already fallen. Saul is dead. The Amalekite has been punished. Justice has been upheld.

And yet, within that settled covenant order, something real happens; David mourns.

He honors what God had established, even when that establishment had been marred by sin. His lament shows us that covenant faithfulness is not cold or detached. It is expressed with reverence, restraint, and mercy. David teaches us that it is possible to uphold righteousness without hardening the heart.

Before we close this afternoon, there are two observations in this national song of tribute and mourning that I want us to notice.

First, in **verse 18**, we are told that David instructed Judah to learn this lament, and that it was written in the Book of Jashar. Scripture mentions the Book of Jashar only twice, here and in Joshua chapter 10. It appears to have been a well-known collection of poetic material in Israel, likely preserving songs, laments, and accounts of heroic acts connected to the Lord's work among His people.

David's lament over Saul and Jonathan would have belonged naturally in such a collection.

But we should be very clear about this. The Book of Jashar was not inspired Scripture. God did not preserve it as covenant revelation, and it does not carry the authority of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit references it within inspired Scripture to situate this lament within Israel's historical memory.

That reminds us that Scripture alone is God breathed and sufficient, even when it acknowledges other historical sources known to the people of God.

Second, and more importantly for our cultural moment, we should address **verse 26**.

This verse has often been twisted by unbelieving and liberal interpreters to suggest something improper about the relationship between David and Jonathan. Those readings do not arise from the text. They arise from modern categories and sinful imaginations being forced onto Scripture.

David says, “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.”

David is not speaking of romantic or sexual love. He is speaking of covenant loyalty, sacrificial faithfulness, and steadfast devotion.

Jonathan bound himself to David in covenant. He protected David at great personal cost. He risked his position, his inheritance, and eventually his life out of faithfulness to the purposes of God and love for his friend.

When David says that Jonathan’s love surpassed the love of women, he is not diminishing marriage or marital affection. Scripture elsewhere makes clear that marital love is good and ordained by God. What David is doing is highlighting the uniqueness of Jonathan’s loyalty.

This was a different kind of love, not a purer love, but a different kind. It was the love of a covenant brother who chose faithfulness over self-preservation, truth over ambition, and God’s will over personal gain. In his grief, David is saying that a bond forged in shared obedience, danger, and trust in the Lord is rare and costly.

This kind of language should not surprise us if we know our Bibles. Scripture regularly uses strong emotional language to describe righteous friendship and covenant bonds. Proverbs tells us there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Jesus Himself says that greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

That is the kind of love Jonathan showed.

So David’s words in verse 26 are not a confession of a secret, disordered affection. They are a holy lament over the loss of a covenant ally and a faithful friend. His grief honors God, it honors Jonathan, and it teaches Israel how to remember the righteous without corrupting God’s design for love, friendship, and covenant faithfulness.

And in all of this, David becomes a teacher for us.

He refuses to gloat over the downfall of an enemy. He refuses to exploit tragedy for personal gain. Instead, by personal example and by the Word of God, he teaches Israel, and he teaches Awakening Church how to grieve rightly.

He shapes our hearts toward loyalty to God and compassion for His people.

His compassion does not override covenant principles. It flows within them.

His tears do not deny God's justice. They acknowledge its cost.

And in mourning the fallen king, David shows us that true faithfulness embraces both justice and mercy.

4. Application And Call To Christ

God's judgment and mercy direct us to Christ, the faithful covenant King

In our culture today, judgment and mercy are almost always pulled apart. Many voices, both outside the church and too often, tragically from within it, insist that mercy must silence judgment, as though the two were enemies rather than companions ordained by God. There are two ways to wind up in a ditch when dealing with this topic, and the world has mastered both.

The first is when mercy is redefined as emotional affirmation, and justice is treated as cruelty.

The second is by running to the opposite extreme. Judgment is proclaimed without compassion, truth is severed from love, and the result is not holiness but despair.

Scripture refuses both distortions, and it does not merely give us a better balance. It gives us a Person.

True gospel mercy is never detached from righteousness. True compassion never ignores holiness. We need to understand and live in a way where steadfast love and faithfulness meet, that kind of place where righteousness and peace kiss each other. That meeting place is not found in human sentiment; it's only found at the cross of Christ.

Those two phrases are not made up by the way, love and faithfulness meeting, and righteousness and peace, which kiss. It's directly from Psalm 85.

Psalm 85:10–13 “Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each

other. Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky. Yes, the Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps a way.”

In this Psalm, Israel prays for covenant restoration, asking God to return in mercy and compassion, without yet knowing how or through whom He would answer that prayer.

God enters into human history to fulfill those words, to satisfy that need! The cross of Christ shows us what David in chapter one only foreshadows.

In the cross of Christ, judgment is not denied, and mercy is not diluted. The Judge of the world himself bears the punishment so that mercy might be offered to sinners. In Romans 3, we see how all this happened: God put Christ forward as a propitiation by His blood, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

This is exactly where David’s actions point us, to Christ, always to Christ.

David mourned in covenant loyalty. We mourn in repentance.
David honored the Lord’s anointed. We trust in the Lord’s Son.
David upheld justice under the law. We flee to mercy at the cross.

Awakening Church, this text should press us toward a response.

We are called to grieve sin and the destruction it brings to God’s people, knowing that rebellion against a holy God is never light or harmless. James tells us to be wretched and mourn and weep, not in despair, but in repentance.

We are called to fear the Lord and submit to His authority, trusting that His Word is true and His judgments are righteous altogether.

But above all, there is one response that gathers all others into itself. Every one of us must cast ourselves upon Christ.

David mourned in covenant loyalty. We mourn in repentance.

David honored the Lord's anointed. We trust in the Lord's Son.
David upheld justice under the law. We flee to mercy at the cross.

David's lament in this chapter trains our hearts for the gospel. It teaches us to feel the weight of sin without denying the goodness of God. It prepares us to see that judgment is real, but God's mercy is greater still.

The eternal Son of God took on flesh, born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life under the law we have broken. He died the death we deserved. He rose bodily on the third day. He ascended to the right hand of the Father. And He will return in glory to judge the living and the dead.

For all who repent and believe, forgiveness is offered. Reconciliation with God is granted. Eternal life is given.

So come to Him.
Come to the greater David.
Come to the faithful King.

In Christ, judgment is satisfied.
In Christ, mercy is secured.
And in Christ alone, your soul can be saved.

5. Questions for Reflection and Discipleship

Please be encouraged to use these questions for reflection throughout the week and Awakening discipleship group discussions.

1. How do you respond when someone presents a story or news that seems convincing but

may not be true? How can we follow David's example of discernment? (v2)

2. When faced with difficult or shocking news, do you take time to ask questions and seek understanding, or do you react immediately? How does David's questioning model wisdom? (v5-6)
3. How do you typically grieve sin, loss, or the brokenness in the world? Does your grief reflect God's perspective or just personal emotion? (v11-12)
4. What would it look like for you to grieve sin and its consequences while still trusting God's covenant promises? How can we cultivate Spirit-led sorrow in daily life? (v11-12)
5. Are there areas in your life where you struggle to show reverence for God's authority? How does David's respect for Saul challenge your view of authority and holiness? (v14)
6. When you confront wrongdoing or sin, yours or others, do you act out of vengeance, fear, or obedience to God's law? How can David's example guide your responses? (v15-16)
7. How does the Amalekite's punishment remind us that God sees our intentions and motives, not just our actions? How does this affect the way you confess and repent? (v15-16)
8. How do you mourn the loss, sin, or suffering in the lives of others without letting compassion override God's truth? (v17-27)
9. In what ways does the tension between judgment and mercy point you to Christ personally? How can you rely on Him when facing sin, guilt, or injustice in your life? (v11-16, v17-27)
10. What is one specific step you can take this week to grieve sin rightly, submit to God's authority, and cast yourself on Christ for mercy? (v11-27)

Questions for small children during family devotion:

Please be encouraged to use these questions in family devotion throughout the week, especially for young minds learning about Christ.

1. Who was David sad about in this story, and why? (v11-12)
2. Why was it wrong for the Amalekite to hurt Saul, even though Saul was not a good king? (v14)
3. What can we learn about God when He sees what people do and thinks about what's in their hearts? (v15-16)
4. How does Jesus show both mercy and justice better than anyone? (v11-27)
5. When you feel sad about sin or people being hurt, what can you do to bring it to God? (v11-12, v17-27)
6. How can we follow David's example and trust God, even when bad things happen? (v11-27)