

**A PERSONAL
VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY
2 SAMUEL
by
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2Samuel 1:1 ¶ Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag;

2Samuel 1:2 It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance.

The book of 2Samuel opens by continuing the narrative that ended 1Samuel. A time marker is noted first; Saul was already dead. Context will show that David did not yet know it. The NIV Commentary noted that Ziklag is more than 80 miles from Mount Gilboa, about three-days journey.

It is also noted that David had already spent two days in Ziklag after returning from the rescue of his wives, the wives and families of his soldiers as well as recovering all the other spoil that had been taken by the Amalekites who had burned their town and looted it in their absence.

On the evening of the third day, a man showed up that presented himself before David giving evidence of being in mourning; his clothes were torn and he had dirt on his head. When he came before David, he fell to the earth and prostrated himself before him. Every action was meant to invoke a good reception from David.

2Samuel 1:3 And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped.

2Samuel 1:4 And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.

David immediately asked the man where he had come from, and he told David that he had escaped from the camp of Israel. David then wanted to know the status of the battle. The man informed David that many of the troops had fled the battle and many had been killed. Then he delivered the most important news—Saul and Jonathan were among the dead.

2Samuel 1:5 And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead?

2Samuel 1:6 And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him.

2Samuel 1:7 And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here *am* I.

2Samuel 1:8 And he said unto me, Who *art* thou? And I answered him, I *am* an Amalekite.

2Samuel 1:9 He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life *is* yet whole in me.

2Samuel 1:10 So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that *was* upon his

head, and the bracelet that *was* on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.

David then asked the young man how he knew that Saul and Jonathan were dead. The young man began to explain that he happened to be on Mount Gilboa and saw Saul leaning upon his spear. Enemy chariots and horsemen were quickly advancing upon him. Saul saw him and called out for him to come to him. Saul first asked him to identify himself, and he told the king that he was an Amalekite. Saul then basically asked the man to have mercy and kill him because he was in so much agony and knew that he was going to die. The man then declared that he stood over Saul and killed him. He then took Saul's crown from his head and his bracelet from his arm and brought them to David.

First, it should be noted that this account differs from the one given in the last chapter of 1Samuel (which I think is the correct account). There it was noted that Saul was severely wounded and asked his armor bearer to kill him so that he would not suffer the shame of dying at the hands of the Philistines. When his armor bearer proved too frightened to do so, Saul fell upon his own sword. When the armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he then did the same thing and died along with Saul. This account was recorded as a fact of Israel's history, while the account from the Amalekite is recorded as his version of the story as told David.

This man's story doesn't seem right from the start. He just happened to be in the midst of the battle, though not a soldier for either side. He declared that the chariots and horsemen were bearing down on Saul, yet he had time for dialogue to take place between him and the king with no apparent concern for his own life considering the danger pressing down upon them.

It should also be noted that the man first says that Saul is leaning upon his spear; then he says that Saul asked him to stand over him—implying that he is lying on the ground.

Coffman's Commentary made an astute observation: "Due to the great length of a spear as compared with that of a sword, this statement alone is sufficient to prove that the Amalekite was a liar. Leaning on a spear would hardly be attempted by anyone trying to kill himself, especially if he also had a sword."

Though at the time David did not have this information, we know from the account recorded in the last chapter of 1Samuel that Saul wanted to avoid being killed by an uncircumcised Philistine. In connection with that fact, it should be noted that the Amalekites were also uncircumcised.

It also seems odd that Saul would seek death at the hands of an Amalekite, since it was because he disobeyed God when told to kill Agag, the Amalekite king, that the LORD had rejected Saul as king of Israel. (1Samuel 15)

This man was smart enough to present a report that testified to having shown mercy toward Saul and of wanting to honor David by bringing him Saul's crown

and bracelet to wear when he became king. This one fact places him at the scene of Saul's death. He perhaps even witnessed Saul's death and quickly decided to take advantage of the situation in hopes of ingratiating himself into David's favor.

Obviously, both accounts cannot be true, yet both are in God's word. I think the first account given was true and provides insight into this account. If this account were true, it would be what is called poetic justice for Saul to die at the hands of an Amalekite since it was because of an Amalekite that God had rejected him as king of Israel.

Coffman's commentary also contained an interesting historical note: "Every army is followed by vagabonds, intent on gain, purchasing booty, looting or plundering wherever possible and carrying on a lucrative, illicit trade."

**2Samuel 1:11 ¶ Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that *were* with him:
2Samuel 1:12 And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.**

After hearing the man's story, David and all the men with him tore their clothes as a sign of mourning and began to weep; they fasted until the evening for Saul and Jonathan, for the troops that had died and for the people of Israel who had lost so many loved ones in the battle.

I'm sure the Amalekite must have wondered at David's grief. It was well known that Saul had sought to take David's life. Though David feared Saul enough to stay hidden and on the run, he never let his feelings overrule his honor for God and his understanding that Saul was the LORD's anointed and that he must trust the LORD to determine when the time was right for him to replace Saul as king.

David's men had also been on the run and suffered much hardship due to Saul's continued obsession to kill David. Still, they joined their leader in mourning the death of the king—probably because of their love for David and did not like to seem him in such sorrow.

That just made me think. When we truly love someone we hate to see them in pain or sorrowful. We, as God's children, should love Him so much that we sorrow over the things that grieve Him. Do we sorrow with God over the prevalence of evil, the corrupted morals of our world, the lack of respect for human life—and most of all, the untold millions that reject the gift of salvation offered to us in His Son?

2Samuel 1:13 And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence *art* thou? And he answered, I *am* the son of a stranger, an Amalekite.

2Samuel 1:14 And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD'S anointed?

2Samuel 1:15 And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, *and*

fall upon him. And he smote him that he died.

2Samuel 1:16 And David said unto him, Thy blood *be* upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD'S anointed.

This part of the narrative probably followed the end of the time of fasting in the evening.

David asked the young man where he was from, and he replied that he was the son of an Amalekite that lived in Israel. Some commentators note that this provides further testimony against the truth of the man's story because as a resident of Israel, he should have at least been familiar with the importance of honoring one whom the LORD had anointed.

David then asked the man why he had not been afraid to kill the man that the LORD had anointed as the king of Israel. It was a rhetorical question, because David had already determined to judge the man for what he had done. He ordered one of his young men to execute the Amalekite, and he did. Either before or as he was dying, David told him that it was his own testimony that determined his death sentence--He had declared that he had killed the LORD's anointed.

2Samuel 1:17 ¶ And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son:

2Samuel 1:18 (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah *the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.*)

As David mourned over the death of Saul and Jonathan, he composed a lamentation, a song to honor them, given in the following verses. He declared that it should be taught to the people as recorded in the book of Jasher. Research indicates that this book was probably a collection of ancient Hebrew poetry that no longer exists.

2Samuel 1:19 The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

2Samuel 1:20 Tell *it* not in Gath, publish *it* not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

2Samuel 1:21 Ye mountains of Gilboa, *let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.*

"The beauty of Israel" is a phrase that references the glory that Saul and Jonathan had brought to Israel. Saul and Jonathan, some of Israel's mightiest men, were killed in the high places, the mountains of Gilboa. David wishes their deaths could be kept from Philistines because he knew it would result in great rejoicing among the enemy. As learned previously, to note that the Philistines were uncircumcised evidences the low regard in which they were held by the people of Israel. David proclaims a curse against the mountains of Gilboa because it was the place that Saul, the LORD's anointed, had been killed.

2Samuel 1:22 From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

2Samuel 1:23 Saul and Jonathan *were* lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

David continues by exalting the bravery and courage of both Jonathan and Saul. He notes how both men loved one another in life and that even death could not separate them. To me, this verse, along with 1Samuel 28:19, lends credence to the thought that we will see Saul in heaven.

1 Samuel 28:16–19 “Then said Samuel....Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me....”

Again he describes them as skilled and strong.

2Samuel 1:24 Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with *other* delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

2Samuel 1:25 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, *thou wast* slain in thine high places.

2Samuel 1:26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

2Samuel 1:27 How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

David calls for the daughters of Israel to mourn the death of King Saul because he was the one that had led Israel to prosper so that they could enjoy pretty clothes and ornaments. He expresses his personal distress at the death of Jonathan. He notes how dear Jonathan was to him; he considered him a brother that loved him better than any woman could.