

## WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

May 29

### MONDAY

David, just returned to Ziklag after rescuing the hostages from the Amalekites, was apparently unaware of the details of the fighting. On the third day after the battle, a disheveled man showed up in David's camp. As he bowed before David, David asked him to explain his appearance and the reason for his coming. He explained that he had come from the battlefield where he saw many Israelites lying dead, including Saul and his son Jonathan.

#### **READ: II Samuel 1:1-4**

Here, we see how eager David was for an eyewitness's report. He had undoubtedly heard rumors of this or that, but he wanted to hear the details from a reliable source. It's a good reminder that we ought to confirm those things which we hear. We should be especially slow to accept at face value what we hear which is defamatory or slanderous. Not everything we read on-line is true! Proctor and Gamble did not really support Satan worship, we came to understand after we all switched to Tide. The believer needs to be patient enough and wise enough to check out what he hears. Especially before he passes it on as truth.

### TUESDAY

David asked the Amalekite (as he identified himself) how he knew that both Saul and Jonathan were dead. He replied that he had come across a badly wounded Saul during the battle. He explained that the battle was obviously lost and that Saul commanded him to slay him. He said that because he knew that Saul was not going to survive anyway, he had done what his king commanded him. And that he then took the crown and bracelet from Saul. He had them now, he said, with the intention of giving them to David.

#### **READ: II Samuel 1:5-10**

If we didn't know better, we might think the Amalekite's story was true. But we already read the facts, and they don't match the story we read here. He's lying. He must have reasoned that there would be profit somewhere in being the one to carry the news to David personally and in bringing him the crown and bracelet. He must have thought that he had to make his story sound convincing to be believed and that there could be no judgment against doing what the king himself commanded him to do. How foolish and how deceitful the human heart is! We see it in others (such as the Amalekite here), but oh that we would see it in ourselves. Our best attempt to rationalize our disobedience is at least as feeble as the reasoning of the Amalekite. Let us humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord. Always.

### WEDNESDAY

Hearing the Amalekite's story, and convinced that it meant that Saul and Jonathan were both dead, David and his men who were with him, mourned in the traditional ways: they ripped their clothing, wept, and fasted. David went back to the Amalekite and asked him to repeat some of what he had already told him: who he was and why it was that he had not hesitated to "destroy the Lord's anointed"?

#### **READ: II Samuel 1:11-14**

David's response is remarkable. After all, Saul had directed much of his energy towards killing David. Yet now, David mourns his death. *If we rejoice when our enemy falls, the Lord sees it and it displeases Him.* (Prov.24:17) The temptation to rejoice at Saul's demise was undoubtedly before him. Some of his followers, the ones called "wicked men" were undoubtedly doing so, and encouraging him to do so. But David understood well that vengeance belongs to the Lord. And those who leave it there with Him are therefore free to forgive and move on. And even

mourn. Not only vengeance, but also compassion belongs to the Lord. And we, his people, do well to claim that as well.

### THURSDAY

David commanded one of his men to kill the Amalekite. He did so, and David said that he had brought about his own death when he testified to killing Saul.

#### **READ: II Samuel 1:15-16**

It's hard to evaluate this passage. David was indeed justified in killing him: the Amalekite had confessed to slaying King Saul. That was something that even Saul's armor bearer would not do. (There's also the possibility that David is striking out in anger and that the Amalekite is simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.) Still, it's worth remembering that the Amalekite was lying. And in the end, he was killed because of it, when the truth would have set him free. We have often heard that one lie leads to another. And another. And another. (We all remember Bill Clinton's public example of that happening. And we may even remember a lie or two in our own life!) Sometimes, a simple lie can lead to much worse things. Such a dangerous little sin - telling a lie!

### FRIDAY

David continued to mourn the death of Saul and Jonathan by ordering that the children learn how to use a bow in their honor, and by writing a poem. In the poem, he extolled the memory of the two, and exhorted the Philistines not to rejoice in their deaths. David urged nature to mourn with him by holding back the dew and the rain. He wrote how brave Saul and Jonathan had been in battle.

#### **READ: II Samuel 1:17-23**

Was David blind to Saul's faults? Not at all. He knew them better than most. (remember: David had personally dodged the spear - more than once) But David is appropriate in his remarks; that is, appropriate in saying the right thing at the right time. He speaks not of Saul's faults. He celebrates that which was praise-worthy. Even though David cannot praise Saul for spiritual victories, he does praise him for his war victories. And also for winning the affection and loyalty of his people. There are times when we need to overlook the faults of others and focus on their strengths, are there not? And to find in them things to praise them for.

### SATURDAY

David's poem of lament continues. He praised Saul for bringing prosperity to the country. He praised Jonathan for his friendship and love. The chorus - *How are the mighty fallen!* - echoes in our ears.

#### **READ: II Samuel 1:24-27**

David exhorts the citizens to remember what Saul had done for them. The women could wear scarlet (and other delights) because Saul had brought that prosperity to Israel. David writes of his personal loss with the death of Jonathan. The friendship he had enjoyed with him had been the best thing in his life, and now it was gone. The more we love, the more we grieve. But with the grieving comes a great strength, as well. The duration of the relationship is not the issue; it's the depth and richness of it. We can be grateful to the Lord for those whom He brings into our lives. And for what remains behind after they leave. And we should all the more treasure relationships we now have with the living!