SECOND SAMUEL

Chapter 1

*David Hears of Saul’s Death*

**After the death of Saul, David returned from defeating the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days. 2 On the third day a man arrived from Saul’s camp, with his clothes torn and with dust on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honor. 3 “Where have you come from?” David asked him. He answered, “I have escaped from the Israelite camp.” 4 “What happened?” David asked. “Tell me.” He said, “The men fled from the battle. Many of them fell and died. And Saul and his son Jonathan are dead.” 5 Then David said to the young man who brought him the report, “How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?” 6 “I happened to be on Mount Gilboa,” the young man said, “and there was Saul, leaning on his spear, with the chariots and riders almost upon him. 7 When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, and I said, ‘What can I do?’ 8 “He asked me, ‘Who are you?’ “ ‘An Amalekite,’ I answered. 9 “Then he said to me, ‘Stand over me and kill me! I am in the throes of death, but I’m still alive.’ 10 “So I stood over him and killed him, because I knew that after he had fallen he could not survive. And I took the crown that was on his head and the band on his arm and have brought them here to my lord.” 11 Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. 12 They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the Lord and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. 13 David said to the young man who brought him the report, “Where are you from?” “I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite,” he answered. 14 David asked him, “Why were you not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the Lord’s anointed?” 15 Then David called one of his men and said, “Go, strike him down!” So he struck him down, and he died. 16 For David had said to him, “Your blood be on your own head. Your own mouth testified against you when you said, ‘I killed the Lord’s anointed.’ ”**

**1:1** *After the death of.* See Jos 1:1; Jdg 1:1. The narrative thread of 1 Samuel is continued. 1 and 2 Samuel were originally one book (see Introduction to 1 Samuel: Title). (CSB)

 *David returned from defeating the Amalekites.* See 1Sa 30:26. (CSB)

*striking down the Amalekites*. Revenge for when they had raided Ziklag and taken David’s wives (1Sm 30. (TLSB)

 *Ziklag.* See note on 1Sa 27:6. (CSB)

**1:2** *his clothes torn … dust on his head.* See note on 1Sa 4:12; see also Jos 7:6; Ac 14:14. (CSB)

Symbols of mourning. (TLSB)

*fell to the ground*. Sign of obedient honor. (TLSB)

**1:8** *Amalekite.* It is not necessary to conclude from v. 3 that this Amalekite was a member of Saul’s army. His statement that he “happened to be on Mount Gilboa” (v. 6) is probably not as innocent as it appears. He may have been there as a scavenger to rob the fallen soldiers of their valuables and weapons. It is ironic that Saul’s death is reported by an Amalekite (see 1Sa 15). (CSB)

**1:9–10** Cf 1Sm 31:4–5. Saul’s armor may have prevented the sword from penetrating deeply, or perhaps the Amalekite plundered the battle site after Saul’s death. (TLSB)

**1:10** *I stood over him and killed him.* The Amalekite’s story conflicts with 1Sa 31:3–6, where Saul is depicted as taking his own life. It appears that the Amalekite fabricated this version of Saul’s death, expecting David to reward him (see 4:10). His miscalculation of David’s response cost him his life (see v. 15). (CSB)

*sure that he could not live*. Attempt to justify the assisted suicide. (TLSB)

Kings often went to battle in full royal clothing (cf 1Ki 22:30–32). (TLSB)

 *I took the crown.* Apparently he got to Saul before the Philistines did (see 1Sa 31:8–9). (CSB)

Kings often went to battle in full royal clothing (cf 1Ki 22:30–32). (TLSB)

*armlet*. Royal bracelet worn on the upper arm. (TLSB)

*I* *have brought*. Messenger implies that David is Saul’s rightful successor. He may have hoped for a reward. (TLSB)

**1:11** *took hold of their clothes and tore them.* See note on 1Sa 4:12. (CSB)

Symbol of David’s grief that his enemy Saul had died. (TLSB)

**1:12** *mourned and wept.* David and his men expressed their grief in typical Near Eastern fashion (see Ge 23:2; 1Ki 13:30; Jer 22:18). (CSB)

They not only mourned the death of Saul and Jonathan but also the defeat at Gilboa, which was a national tragedy. (TLSB)

 *fasted.* See 3:35; 1Sa 31:13. (CSB)

**1:13** David confirmed the man’s identity before taking action. (TLSB)

*Amalekite.* The man was probably unaware of David’s recent hostile encounters with the Amalekites (see v. 1; 1Sa 30; see also note on 1Sa 15:2). (CSB)

Resident aliens who owed obedience to King Saul. (TLSB)

**1:14** The Amalekite understood nothing of the deep significance that David attached to the sanctity of the royal office in Israel (see note on 1Sa 24:6). (CSB)

 *the Lord’s anointed.* See note on 1Sa 9:16. (CSB)

Hbr *mashiach*. Used also in OT for the promised Messiah. To destroy the Lord’s anointed king was to reject the Lord, who had designated him Israel’s leader. (TLSB)

**1:15** *strike him down!* David displays no personal satisfaction over Saul’s death and condemns to death the one he believes to be his murderer (see note on v. 10; see also 4:10). (CSB)

The Amalekite was guilty of murder and deserved to die (v 10). David commissioned a soldier to carry out the execution. (TLSB)

**1:16** *Your blood be on your own head.* The Amalekite’s own testimony brought about his execution (see Jos 2:19; 1Ki 2:37). (CSB)

Expression of condemnation. (TLSB)

 **1:1–16** The Amalekite confesses that he had assisted with Saul’s suicide and now expects a reward. Instead, he receives capital punishment for killing the Lord’s anointed king. God is the author of human life, and He wants innocent human life protected. Yet, He has given the sword to the government for the punishment of evildoers. Most important, God is the author of eternal life in the Messiah, Jesus, our Savior. • Lord, thank You for good government. Increase my respect for Your gift of human life. Amen. (TLSB)

*David’s Lament for Saul and Jonathan*

**17 David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan, 18 and ordered that the men of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar): 19“Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights. How the mighty have fallen! 20“Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice. 21“O mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dew nor rain, nor fields that yield offerings of grain. For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul—no longer rubbed with oil. 22From the blood of the slain, from the flesh of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied. 23 “Saul and Jonathan— in life they were loved and gracious, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. 24“O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold. 25 “How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights. 26I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women. 27“How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished!”**

**1:17** *lament.* It was a common practice in the ancient Near East to compose laments for fallen leaders and/or heroes. (CSB)

Lit, “chanted this lament.” (TLSB)

**1:18** *lament of the bow.* Perhaps David taught his men to sing this lament while they practiced the bow (Israel’s most common weapon; see, e.g., 22:35) as a motivation to master the weapon thoroughly so they would not experience a similar defeat (see note on Eze 21:9). (CSB)

 *it should be taught to the people*. David wanted his lament to become a national song of mourning to pay tribute to Israel’s first royal family and to remind the people that the Lord would bless them through the office of king. Despite Saul’s weaknesses, the Israelites had firmly united under him against their enemies. (TLSB)

 *Book of Jashar.* See note on Jos 10:13. (CSB)

**1:19–27** A funeral dirge. (TLSB)

**1:19** *Your glory.* A reference to Saul and Jonathan as divinely designated leaders of God’s covenant people, who had achieved many significant victories over Israel’s enemies (see 1Sa 14:47–48 and note). (CSB)

Or, “gazelle.” Image of a powerful buck, master of the area it inhabits, lying dead in a place that should have provided protection. (TLSB)

 *heights.* Of Gilboa (see vv. 21, 25; 1Sa 31:1). (CSB)

 *How the mighty have fallen!* The theme of David’s lament (see v. 27). David’s words contain no suggestion of bitterness toward Saul but rather recall the good qualities and accomplishments of Saul and Jonathan. (CSB)

**1:20** *Tell it not in Gath … Ashkelon.* As the major Philistine cities located the closest and farthest from Israel’s borders, Gath and Ashkelon represent the entire Philistine nation. David does not want the enemies of God’s covenant people to take pleasure in Israel’s defeat (as he knew they would; see 1Sa 31:9–10) and thus bring reproach on the name of the Lord (see Ex 32:12; Nu 14:13–19; Dt 9:28; Jos 7:9; Mic 1:10). (CSB)

 *uncircumcised.* See note on 1Sa 14:6. (CSB)

**1:21** *O mountains of Gilboa.* As an expression of profound grief, David rhetorically pronounces a curse on the place where Israel was defeated and Saul and Jonathan were killed (for other such rhetorical curses see Job 3:3–26; Jer 20:14–18). (CSB)

Because Saul’s blood had been poured out on them. (TLSB)

*defiled*. With dirt and blood. (TLSB)

 *no longer rubbed with oil.* Leather shields were rubbed with oil to preserve them (but see note on Isa 21:5). (CSB)

To keep Saul’s wicker and leather shield from growing brittle. Supple leather better resisted arrows. (TLSB)

**1:22** Saul and Jonathan had many military victories. (TLSB)

**1:23** *in death they were not parted.* Even though Jonathan opposed his father’s treatment of David, he gave his life beside his father in Israel’s defense. (CSB)

Terms of deep affection. Of Saul’s sons, David mentions only Jonathan, his trusted confidant and companion. (TLSB)

**1:24** *clothed you*. Saul’s victories had created a stable society that allowed the Israelites to prosper. (TLSB)

*scarlet* … *gold*. Most expensive wool cloth, with fine embroidery. (TLSB)

**1:26** *more wonderful than that of women.* David is not suggesting that marital love is inferior to that of friendship, nor do his remarks have any sexual implications. He is simply calling attention to Jonathan’s nearly inexplicable self-denying commitment to David, whom he had long recognized as the Lord’s choice to succeed his father rather than himself (see notes on 1Sa 20:13–16). (CSB)

David loved Jonathan as a brother. (TLSB)

**1:27** *weapons of war.* Probably a metaphor for Saul and Jonathan. (CSB)

Mourning the loss of two great warriors. Cf v 22.

 **1:17–27** David sings not only of his love for his friend Jonathan but also of his respect and admiration for King Saul, a man who had forced him to live as a fugitive for more than 12 years. Like David, we should not delight in our enemies’ downfall but commend their families to God in prayer. How mercifully God treats us, even though we by nature were His enemies (Rm 5:10). • I praise You, O God, for Your amazing grace to me and all sinners in Christ Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)