

FIRST SAMUEL

Chapter 30

David's Wives Are Captured

Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid against the Negeb and against Ziklag. They had overcome Ziklag and burned it with fire and taken captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great. They killed no one, but carried them off and went their way. 3 And when David and his men came to the city, they found it burned with fire, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. 4 Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep. 5 David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. 6 And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God. 7 And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. 8 And David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them?" He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue." 9 So David set out, and the six hundred men who were with him, and they came to the brook Besor, where those who were left behind stayed. 10 But David pursued, he and four hundred men. Two hundred stayed behind, who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor. 11 They found an Egyptian in the open country and brought him to David. And they gave him bread and he ate. They gave him water to drink, 12 and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. And when he had eaten, his spirit revived, for he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights. 13 And David said to him, "To whom do you belong? And where are you from?" He said, "I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite, and my master left me behind because I fell sick three days ago. 14 We had made a raid against the Negeb of the Cherethites and against that which belongs to Judah and against the Negeb of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire." 15 And David said to him, "Will you take me down to this band?" And he said, "Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this band."

30:1–31:13 While Saul goes to his death at the hands of the Philistines, David is drawn into and pursues the Lord's continuing war with the Amalekites. (CSB)

30:1 *Ziklag*. C 55 mi S of Aphek, covered by David and his men in three days. (TLSB)

Amalekites. The absence of David and his warriors gave the Amalekites opportunity for revenge. (CSB)

Marauders whom Saul failed to exterminate earlier (15:17–33). They sacked small border towns of Judah and Philistia, including David's town, Ziklag. (TLSB)

30:2–5 *taken captive*. Taken away for ransom or sale in the slave trade. (TLSB)

30:4 *raised their voices and wept*. Refers to great lamentation of a ritual kind. (TLSB)

30:6 *David strengthened himself in the LORD his God*. In this critical moment, David turns to God (vv 7–8). Instead of complaining or blaming God for this latest tragedy, David poured out his feelings freely in prayer and received the comfort and strength he needed to face this darkest of days. (TLSB)

30:7 *Abiathar the priest.* He fled with David due to Saul's madness (22:20). (TLSB)

30:8 *He answered.* Unlike Saul, who sought in vain for some word from God by priest and ephod, David gets an answer from God. (TLSB)

Pursue ... overtake ... rescue. Answer was clear and unequivocal. (TLSB)

30:9 *Besor.* Stream thought to have been 10–12 mi S of Ziklag. May have been the Wadi Ghazze, on which Beersheba and Arad are situated. (TLSB)

30:10 *four hundred men.* David chose the 400 most fit to go on. (TLSB)

stayed behind. Leaving the 200 behind not only provided occasion for the institution of the share-alike statute of v 25 but also emphasized that with the Lord's help, victory can be won by small numbers over great armies. (TLSB)

too exhausted. Or, "dead tired" (related to word "corpse"). The 10 mi in addition to the 25 mi of forced march earlier in the day was the limit for 200 of the soldiers. They were left behind to remain with the baggage (v 24). (TLSB)

30:11 *found an Egyptian.* Finding a band of robbers and their spoil in the wide-open spaces of the Negeb wilderness would have been difficult. Providentially, they came upon a nearly dead man. (TLSB)

30:12 *his spirit revived.* David's men recognized that the young man might be useful to them and revived him with food and water. This detail enlivens the event's historicity. (TLSB)

three days and three nights. Given the harsh conditions of the Negeb, the young man was near death. (TLSB)

30:13 *fell sick.* A foreign-born slave was expendable. If one became ill, he was left to fend for himself, esp during a military operation. (TLSB)

30:14 *Negev.* Divided into different regions. (TLSB)

Kerethites. Along with the Pelethites, they later contributed contingents of professional warriors to David's private army (see 2Sa 15:18; 20:7; 1Ki 1:38). The name may indicate that they originally came from the island of Crete. (CSB)

Negev of Caleb. The area south of Hebron (see Jos 14:13). (CSB)

Cherethites...Judah ... Caleb ... Ziklag. Beersheba, which belonged to Judah, and Hebron, associated with Caleb, also had suffered, along with David's town, Ziklag. (TLSB)

30:15 *Swear to me.* An escaped slave who turned informer would be at the mercy of both captor and former master. Before cooperating, he wanted an oath from David that he would not be killed or turned over to his former master. (TLSB)

30:1–15 David faces his first great crisis as a leader since serving in Saul's army years earlier. The Lord aids David and the people of Ziklag through an unlikely source: an abandoned Egyptian slave. The Lord still provides for us through unlikely means, preeminently through Jesus' cross, by which He rescues us from Satan's hordes. • Deliver us from evil, O Lord, and strengthen us to assist others in their hour of crisis. Amen. (TLSB)

David Defeats the Amalekites

16 And when he had taken him down, behold, they were spread abroad over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing, because of all the great spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. **17** And David struck them down from twilight until the evening of the next day, and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men, who mounted camels and fled. **18** David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and David rescued his two wives. **19** Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken. David brought back all. **20** David also captured all the flocks and herds, and the people drove the livestock before him, and said, “This is David's spoil.” **21** Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow David, and who had been left at the brook Besor. And they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him. And when David came near to the people he greeted them. **22** Then all the wicked and worthless fellows among the men who had gone with David said, “Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except that each man may lead away his wife and children, and depart.” **23** But David said, “You shall not do so, my brothers, with what the LORD has given us. He has preserved us and given into our hand the band that came against us. **24** Who would listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage. They shall share alike.” **25** And he made it a statute and a rule for Israel from that day forward to this day. **26** When David came to Ziklag, he sent part of the spoil to his friends, the elders of Judah, saying, “Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD.” **27** It was for those in Bethel, in Ramoth of the Negeb, in Jattir, **28** in Aroer, in Siphmoth, in Eshtemoa, **29** in Racal, in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, in the cities of the Kenites, **30** in Hormah, in Bor-ashan, in Athach, **31** in Hebron, for all the places where David and his men had roamed.

30:16 *spread abroad.* Amalekites were nomadic people and felt totally secure, confident that the Philistine and Israelite armies were far to the north. Rather than huddling defensively, they returned to their typical arrangement. (TLSB)

dancing. Having laid aside their weapons, they were not ready to defend themselves against David's forces. (TLSB)

30:17 *from twilight until the evening.* David rested his troops and attacked at first light, when the celebrating Amalekites would be least prepared to defend themselves. The mission was not accomplished until the next day, when David's army finally caught up with all of the scattered enemy. (TLSB)

four hundred. Unavoidable escape of the 400 who were able to move so rapidly gives a picture of the size of the marauding bands in contrast with David's 400 troops. (TLSB)

30:18 As assured in v 8, all were recovered, including David's wives—a happy reunion for all, considering how dismal their prospects must have seemed only a day earlier. (TLSB)

David. He is now mentioned repeatedly in this and following verses. All honor, just like the earlier blame (29:4), is now given to David—an important step toward his assuming the throne of Israel. (TLSB)

30:19 *Nothing was missing.* Repeated to underscore complete success of David's rescue mission. (TLSB)

30:20 *all the flocks and herds.* The stolen plunder from the recent raids was recovered, as well as the spoils taken by the Amalekites from raids of other places. (TLSB)

David's spoil. His men proclaim his victory. What is rescued belongs to the leader, to be distributed as he sees fit. This victory further establishes David's leadership among his troops. (TLSB)

30:21 *the two hundred men.* Those who had been left behind would have been interested in both the mission's outcome and the fate of their wives and children. They were received cordially by David but not by all. (TLSB)

30:22 *we will not give them any of the spoil.* Ugly altercation tests David's leadership once again. (TLSB)

30:23 *my brothers.* David first stressed their kinship, that they were all in this together. (TLSB)

what the LORD has given us. David gently but firmly rejects the idea that their victory is to be attributed to their own prowess. Because the Lord gave the victory, no segment of David's men could claim any greater right to the spoils than any other. (CSB)

He reminds them of how richly God has blessed them by giving them victory. This was no time for such a selfish attitude. (TLSB)

30:24 *Who would listen.* David reiterates an existing principle. More significantly, he shows he is a ruler, a maintainer of law and justice. (TLSB)

30:25 *a statute and a rule for Israel.* In the manner of ancient kings, who announced their intentions to act rightly and in accord with accepted practice, David makes his ruling the law of the land, demonstrating his intention to show fairness to all and to apply such fairness firmly. (TLSB)

30:26 *elders of Judah, who were his friends.* David sent the plunder as an expression of gratitude to those who had assisted him during his flight from Saul (see v. 31), thus preparing the way for his later elevation to kingship in Judah (see 2Sa 2:1–4). (CSB)

With an eye on the future, David made some of the spoil work on his behalf, enhancing relationships not only with the elders of Judah but also with others who were loyal to the Lord. He established himself more and more securely and paved the way for his kingship (2Sm 2:4). (TLSB)

These leaders were heads of communities whom David learned to know during his exile; these communities had endured raids from the Amalekites. David had the privilege of returning some of what had been taken from them. (TLSB)

30:27–28 *Bethel.* Some of the places in the list that follows are recognizable even today. In the case of Bethel, however, this cannot be the well-known city to the north of Jerusalem. It may refer to Beth-zur, a town in the Judean hills; all of the cities mentioned lie in the southern Judean and Negeb area. (TLSB)

Jattir ... Eshtemoa. Levitical cities (Jsh 21:14). (TLSB)

30:31 *Hebron.* The most important city in the southern part of Judah. The other locations mentioned are to the southwest and southeast of Hebron. (CSB)

Region's major city, where David would be proclaimed king. Served as his capital until he captured Jerusalem. (TLSB)

30:16–31 The victory God gives David over the Amalekites provides opportunity for him to grow even stronger as a leader. When the Lord grants success and prosperity to you, consider how this increases

your opportunities and your responsibilities. Remember that God forgives you when you fail and also provides you with wisdom to manage what He has placed in your care. • “Grant us wisdom, grant us courage For the facing of this hour, ... For the living of these days, ... Lest we miss Your kingdom’s goal, ... Serving You whom we adore.” Amen. (*LSB* 850:1–4). (TLSB)