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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2283 ~ David Laments over Saul.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

David and his fighting men had been living with their families in the town of Ziklag, in Philistine territory, for some time before the Philistine armies set off to fight David's people, the Israelites, who were being led by King Saul on Mount Gilboa. The Philistine king of Gath had agreed with his commanders to send David and his men home so they couldn't fight for the Israelites in the coming battle. But when David and his men returned home, they found that Ziklag had been burnt to the ground and that all their wives and children had been taken away.

David and his men were very distressed by this and David enquired of the Lord whether he should follow after the Amalekite raiding party who had destroyed Ziklag. The Lord told him to go and assured David that all their belongings would be recovered. David and the men chased after their enemies, saved their women and their families, and they returned to Ziklag to rebuild the town. Three days later after they had returned, a young man came to David, dressed as a bearer of bad news. He was wearing the traditional manner of torn clothing and had dirt on his head.

DRAMA - [The Bible In Living Sound.](#)

In the Scriptures, we often don't know how much time has elapsed between one chapter and the next, or one event and another. But with the book of 1st Samuel finishing with the death of King Saul, we know that the book of 2nd Samuel continues on immediately after this.

The young Amalekite, who visited David and gave him Saul's crown and bracelet, was a resident of Israel. He may well have been on the battlefield looking for valuables to steal from all the slain Israeli soldiers. And he must have invented the story he told David about Saul's death because it differs greatly from the one recorded in 1st Samuel, Chapter 31. The Amalekite knew that Saul had tried to kill David for years and by giving him Saul's crown and news of his death, he hoped that David would be very pleased with this news and that he'd be given a reward.

But David and his men tore their clothes on hearing of Saul's and his sons' deaths. They mourned and fasted for Saul and Jonathan. They couldn't rejoice over Israel's battle defeat either. Do you have enemies whose sorrows make you happy? If you do, carefully consider what Proverbs, Chapter 24, says: "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles." And Romans, Chapter 12, says: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse."

David wanted to know why the Amalekite man wasn't afraid to kill the Lord's anointed king of Israel. David himself had feared to kill Saul when he had the chance. But this Amalekite had condemned himself by stating that he had been the one who had killed Saul. Whether his story was true or not, he was put to death as a confessed murderer.

David wrote a public lament, which was a poem that mourned the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. It isn't known why it's called *The Song of the Bow* in the Bible. In it, David had only good things to say about Saul and praised him as a mighty warrior. David's treatment of Saul was always kind and considerate. This disastrous battle for Israel at Mount Gilboa overshadowed the earlier memories of an extremely successful battle there, when led by Gideon in the times of the judges.

Now that Saul was dead, David was free to return to his tribal territory of Judah. But he enquired of the Lord first and God told him to go to a large city called Hebron. He and his men, along with their families, settled there. The officials of Judah came to David and they publicly anointed him as king over Judah. When David heard that the men of Jabesh Gilead on the eastern side of the Jordan River had buried Saul and his sons, David sent messengers to thank them and offer them his friendship and support.

David hoped that in return, he would win their support as he'd been chosen by God to be king over all Israel, and not just Judah. David would need support from the other Israelite cities and tribes if he was to establish his rule over the whole land.

But first, there was a civil war in Israel. War is a terrible thing. People die in their prime; property is needlessly destroyed and in the end, everyone remaining has to start building again. This war came about by political ambitions. Although Abner, Saul's commander general, had known that David was anointed by God's prophet, Samuel, to be the next king of Israel, Abner saw no place of importance for himself in such a kingdom. Abner was related to Saul, but David's general was now his nephew, Joab. Abner's influence among David's men would be so much less now that David was king of Judah. Abner therefore put Saul's remaining son, Ish-Bosheth, on the throne of Israel, and did so on the eastern side of the Jordan River. A few of the northern tribes accepted Ish-Bosheth as their king, but most people knew that Abner was really the power behind this new king. Abner was the most well-known person in Israel, after Saul, and now he was challenging David's right to the throne of Israel.

David reigned in Hebron for 7^{1/2} years. Ish-Bosheth only became king of the northern Israelite tribes during the last 2 years of David's reign in Hebron. To prevent David from extending his power northward from Judah, Abner and Ish-Bosheth crossed over to the western side of the Jordan River and went to Saul's home town of Gibeon, in the tribal territory of Benjamin, just north of Judah.

In response, Joab took some fighting men and went to Gibeon to confront Abner. They both agreed that to minimise bloodshed, just 12 men from each side would fight each other. The winning group would be called the victors and a larger battle could be avoided. However, all 24 men killed his opponent. As there was no clear winner from that contest, the entire forces of Joab and Abner began to fight each other. Abner and his men were badly defeated and Abner tried to escape.

Joab's brother, Asahel, was a very fast runner and he chased after Abner. Although Abner was opposed to David, he didn't desire to kill fellow Israelites. When he saw Asahel chasing after him, he called out to him to turn away and satisfy his desire for revenge by killing one of Abner's men. But Asahel only wanted to kill Abner. Although Abner was a very experienced warrior and he knew that he could easily kill Asahel, he didn't want a blood feud between himself and Joab. So Abner gave Asahel a second warning to turn away, but Asahel wouldn't listen. Abner killed him and then continued on his flight from Joab's soldiers.

Some people think that Abner murdered Asahel, while others think that because it was war, Asahel was a casualty of war. Either way, when Joab and his men found Asahel's body, they stopped there, no doubt horrified. They then decided to continue pursuing Abner's army, who were mostly men from the tribe of Benjamin, until Abner stopped at the top of a hill. Abner called out to Joab and asked him to stop his men from pursuing their Israelite brothers. Joab did so at that time and the battle stopped. But later on, the bitterness of Asahel's death erupted again and Joab avenged his brother's death with a payback killing.

What lessons can we take out of this section of Scripture? Firstly, we must not expect to be rewarded for doing wrong things. The young Amalekite man who brought Saul's crown to David hoped to receive much favour from Saul's death, but his story made him a murderer. What was he doing on the battlefield at all? If his story was true, how ironic it would have been, that God had told Saul to destroy all the Amalekites, which Saul didn't do and then he himself was killed by a young Amalekite on the battlefield looking for items to steal.

In his lament, we noted that David highlighted Saul's strengths but said nothing about his weaknesses. Why would David do such a thing? After all, David had hid for years in rough and difficult places of the wilderness of Israel to save his life from Saul's sword. Despite this rough lifestyle that was forced on him, David kept his heart free from bitterness and maintained a deep commitment to the Lord, even when he was greatly wronged and sinned against.

David fulfilled that love description in 1st Corinthians, Chapter 13, where it says: "Love thinks no evil." And in 1st Peter, Chapter 4, it says: "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins." David could do this because of his great trust in God and God's power. He knew that God was in charge of his life, and that even if Saul meant to harm him for evil's sake, God could use Saul's actions for good.

David's character was developed through discipline. We all need to learn this too, for often, we do the things that we like to do rather than what we ought to be doing. Our likes must be surrendered to Christ's Lordship and control, so that we don't waste time on non-essential things or even things that oppose Christ. We must learn to discipline, not only our time, but also our whole approach to life. In Matthew, Chapter 18, the Lord Jesus spoke of three hindrances: the hand, the foot and the eye.

Jesus said if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. Jesus didn't mean that we should take a knife and cut off our hand. The hand is only an instrument of sin. We need to cut the sin out of our heart. If we desire to steal, it isn't our hand that is evil but our heart. We must do whatever is necessary to remove that sin, that evil desire, from our heart in order to save our soul. We must be ready to part with what is dearest to us if it leads us to sin.

In the same way, if our feet cause us to sin by taking us within reach of some temptation, we must learn not to walk towards that desired thing unless we are willing to take hold of that thing and in return, have it take a hold of us. Many think that they can get close to temptation but be able turn back from it just before falling into the temptation. This is dangerous and deadly. You are nine-tenths of the way there when you decide to approach it.

The eye sees the things that you want and the heart covets them. Again, people think they can look at evil things but not get burnt by them. What we take in through our eyes stays in our minds much longer than what we read or hear. If any of these images or examples distracts us from the highest purpose of our life, then we should pray and ask God's help to keep a lookout for temptation before it is in front of us, beckoning us to take it up.

Part of this self-discipline is to make sure that we stay with the things we are certain God has called us to do. Some people are good starters but rarely finish anything. Be careful that you commit yourself to those things that God wants you to be involved in, and not to try to be a part of everything that comes along. The Christian position means that every believer in Christ is liberated from their born slavery to sin, to now be free to do whatever pleases God, their Lord and Master. King David of Judah gave us the example of asking God what next we should do.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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