

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

A Tangled Web II Samuel 1:1-16

Intro: At the end I Samuel, the outlook 4 God's people is grim: Israel's leadership wiped out, portions of her territory evacuated. Some escaped w/ their lives, others did not; their corps littered the side of Mt. Gilboa. It's a sad sight: Israel is scattered like sheep w/o a shepherd. It's a dark time, a tragic time. Truth be told, I Sam is a sad account of 1 disappointment after another: judgment on ungodly leadership (Hophni & Phinehas); rejection of prophetic leadership (Samuel) & degeneration of royal leadership (Saul). Here is the kingdom of God & the people of God enduring 1 failure after another. At this point in Israel's history, nothing looks quite as dismal as Gilboa, but actually, it's not what man sees that counts. YHWH, who looks on the heart, has chosen a shepherd 4 those scattered sheep.

As we move into II Samuel, let's not automatically assume that the outlook will improve much. It does, in large part, 4 Israel. There is relative stability & security during David's reign. But, in David's life, there's trouble piled upon trouble. It seems David & distress walk together his entire life (19:7b). But, even tho David's the premier human character of the book, II Sam is not about David. In fact, it's not even about covenant kings. Its about a covenant God who makes covenant promises 2 a covenant king thru whom He will preserve His covenant people. This is how we must constantly approach this book if we are 2 accurately understand what is happening in the biblical narrative.

1-2- 3rd day- On the day that David & his men were slaughtering the Amalekite raiders, the Philistines were wiping out Saul & his army on Mt. Gilboa. The next day, while David was returning to Ziklag, the Philistines were humiliating Saul by desecrating his body & those of his sons & this Amalekite messenger was starting off 2 bring the news 2 David. It took him at least 3 days 2 get 2 Ziklag, which was about **80 ml** from the battlefield. So it was on David's 3rd day back in Ziklag that he received the tragic news that Israel had been defeated & that Saul & 3 of his sons were dead. David probably expected bad news b/c this guy wore all the signs of genuine grief: torn clothes & a dirty head.

3-10- *I...killed*- The Bible gives 3 accounts of the death of Saul & his sons: **I Sam 31:1-13**; here & **I Chron 10:1-14**. The accounts of **I Sam** & **I Chron** are virtually identical w/ the exception of the author's commentary in **I Chron 10:14** that states it was **YHWH** that killed Saul & his sons & 4 seeking guidance from a medium. Neither of them match the account given here. Why the discrepancy? Obviously, he told the story this way 2 put himself in a positive light!

But how was David 2 know? He didn't have the benefit of the other written accounts & everything about this guy seemed 2 reflect Israel's disaster. There's no question that he had been on the battle ground – he had Saul's insignias of kingship: the golden arm band & the crown he wore on his helmet. An there was no reason 2 question his sincerity. After all, no ones going 2 walk 80 ml unless they're serious about something. This fellow has 2/b sincere & in all reality he was. Unfortunately, He was only sincere about getting himself a government job!

11-12- *mourned*- the initial reaction of David & his men must have shocked the Amalekite, causing him no small amount of trepidation. I'm sure he assumed everybody in Ziklag would rejoice upon hearing of Saul's death, knowing that it meant the end of their self-appointed exile & their dangerous fugitive way of life. He probably expected 2/b rewarded & 4 bringing such great news but, although he had heard David's story, he obviously didn't know David's heart. In David's eyes, Saul was never his enemy, he was David's king & on the 2 occasions when David had the opportunity 2 take Saul out, he made it clear that he would never, could never, lay a hand on the Lord's anointed.

David's sorrow was real & surprisingly, so was his men's. These men all had their own reasons 2 hate Saul but it appears David had ultimately convinced them of the **sanctity** of being the Lord's anointed. Here, they follow the example of their leader & answer all of Saul's hatred & venom w/ respect. But their sorrow wasn't just 4 Saul. It was 4 Jonathan & the fact that Israel had been so soundly defeated. Israel was now in a desperate & dangerous position.

13-16- "Oh what a tangled web we weave; when 1st we practice 2 deceive." When David asked where he was from, this guy probably thought David was about 2 reward him. He should have chosen his words a little better b/c it

was his response that actually sealed his fate. He claimed he was an Amalekite, the son of a **resident** alien. This was also a lie. He was more likely a “camp follower” who made his living scavenging behind the Philistine army. By claiming 2/b the son of a resident alien, he was asking 4 certain privileges specified in the Mosaic Law: equal justice & freedom from oppression 4 the stranger; privileges he didn’t deserve. But here’s the problem w/ his response: if he were truly the son of a resident alien (immigrant) he would have lived in the land of Israel long enough 2 know that the king of Israel was the Lord’s anointed & he would also have been aware of the sanctity of the Lord’s anointed. His execution; which was just; was ultimately the result of his own testimony!

“But, he didn’t really kill Saul!” That doesn’t matter. If his story were true, he deserved 2 die 4 murdering **YHWH**’s anointed. If the story wasn’t true then the fact that he made up this story in hopes of being rewarded reveals the depravity of his heart. In the end, he was an Amalekite; the very people Saul was commanded by **YHWH** 2 annihilate so when David ordered his execution, he was simply obeying the Lord’s command, something Saul had failed 2 do.

This passage deals w/ the same question that confronted David in **1 Sam 24 & 26**, namely: [How is the kingdom going 2 come into David’s hands?](#) Will he wait 4 it 2 come in **YHWH**’s timetable or will he seize it by his own efforts? Obviously, this Amalekite believed that there were times when **YHWH**’s promises needed a little push. But neither David nor the narrator seem 2 agree w/ this position. In fact, the primary lesson of this passage, if not of all Scripture, is simply this: **kingdom life must be governed by kingdom principles**; several of those principles are at work here.

1) Exposing the Lie – Why’s there such a disparity between the Amalekites account of Saul’s death & the biblical account? Simple: the Amalekite lied. If you’re ever faced w/ the choice of believing a biblical narrator or an Amalekite, always believe the narrator. After all, have you ever met an Amalekite you could trust? Of course not!

So, this Amalekite received justice, but its *justice* mixed w/ *irony*. He’s punished 4 what he said he did even tho he didn’t do it! He got what he should have gotten even tho it wasn’t based on an actual occurrence. Here’s the point we need 2 see: God’s judgment **found** him! It found him in

his lie & repaid him according 2 his **intent** if not his action. So, right here on the 1st page of the book, we run smack into **the God who exposes us**; the God that **desires truth in our inward parts** (Ps 51:6a) or as **Ps 90:8** puts it, the God who sets **our secret sins in the light of** His presence!

This isn't the last time we'll see this in scripture. There w/b Amalekites in the church. Ananias & Sapphira try 2 boost their popularity in the church w/ a little lie & get twin graves & matching headstones 4 their trouble. But even if we're able 2 dupe kings & churches (which isn't hard 2 do), Jesus Himself teaches us in **Luke 12:2-3** that no 1 will escape the next D-Day (**Disclosure**). This episode at Ziklag isn't an isolated event. In the kingdom of God, we deal w/ a God who **sees, exposes & judges**. **J** should know, He's the 1 authorized by God 2 judge the secrets of men (**Rom 2:16**)

2) Urgency of Grief – What does this have 2 do w/ life in God's kingdom? It must have some value b/c grief is the central focus of this story. **Vs11-12** are the structural center of the passage but I wouldn't have told the story that way. It seems more logical (**or at least more tidy**) 2 go from **vs10** right into **vs13**. It's just weird having that Amalekite just standing there while all this weeping & wailing is going on. Let's take care of the obvious problem 1st then deal w/ the sorrow after. That may be our biggest concern but it's not the author's. In his mind, the Amalekite can wait. He knows that the most important part of this story is the sorrow & wailing of David & his men over Israel – her fallen leaders & warriors. The people of **YHWH** have been crushed – the sincere expression of grief cannot wait.

The grief of David & his men is impressive. The desperate condition of the people of God disturbed them! Why is this significant? B/c this principle should have the same control over our lives in God's kingdom today. We have no problem identifying & pointing out the unbelief, apostasy & spiritual coldness that exists in the church today. But, do we feel a similar obligation 2 mourn over those same deficiencies? The Body of Christ is rife w/ spiritual & moral problems & it's necessary 2 observe & analyze them but the danger in doing this is that it's so easy 2 take on a "holier-than-thou" attitude, an evangelical arrogance so to speak, which is actually a **contradiction** of the gospel. Rather, the unbelief or error in the church should drive us 2 mourning & grief, 2 sorrow & prayer. It should call us 2 intercession & seeking God's face more than in making declarations against it.

3) **Safety of Fear** – We have been taught (rightly) that fear is a bad thing, a failure of faith. 4 the most part, that is exactly true. But, this text reveals that there is a certain amount of safety that comes from a specific type of fear. Note David's query in vs14, "**How was it you were not afraid...**" In David's estimation, if he had been living in Israel 4 any length of time, he should have known better! The sanctity of YHWH's anointed king was law 4 David – it was the principle that controlled him in I Sam 24 & 26; that prevented him from mistaking temptation 4 opportunity. This Amalekite **assumed** that nothing would stop David from seizing the throne; David **assumed** that 1 fear should have stopped this Amalekite from killing the king – "**Why were you not afraid?**"

David's question reveals a principle that should guide the ethics & behavior of all in God's kingdom, the principle of a **healthy, saving fear**. We're not talking about a **terror** or **dread** but more along the lines of Ps 111:10, "**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...**" Proverbs goes on 2 tell us it is a "**strong confidence**" & "**a fountain of life**." This is a respect 4 both the person of God & His expectations. It's a fear that **preserves**, a **godly fear** that should control us. The story's told of a Polish prince who always carried a picture of his father next 2 his heart. At times of temptation or trial, he used 2 take it out, look at it & say, "**Let me do nothing unbecoming so excellent a father**." This is the way all the Father's children should live their lives – controlled by a fear that is grounded in love & respect. The best way 2 prevent ourselves from disparaging the reputation of our Lord is 2 strive every day 2 bring honor 2 His name thru our actions & attitudes. A surly frame of mind can cause just as much damage as a sinful activity, sometimes more.

I must admit, this is a lot 2 digest. We've just started in the book & God's already ruffling our feathers. If it seems like we're starting off on a depressing key, don't blame me – blame it on that lying Amalekite! But even this poster child 4 stupid moves can be of assistance 2 us if he forces us 2 analyze our own hearts. Does the fear of displeasing my Lord guide my life? Oh, how it would save us from making so many foolish, damaging choices. Do I ever sincerely grieve over the dire spiritual condition of the church? Sure, you can't cry all the time but do we ever pray about it, earnestly? I have 2 confess that I drop the ball on this 2 often. But, the most disconcerting principle has 2/b the fact that our God sees all, will disclose all & ultimately, judge all. Now, that might not sound pleasant & it won't be; for

anyone. Is there any possible way of avoiding this? Thankfully, yes! **1 John 1:9**, "***If we confess our sins, He is faithful & just & will forgive us our sins & cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***" The context of Jesus statement in **Luke 12** was concerning hypocrisy, which is nothing more than assuming you are righteous when you're really not. The only cure for hypocrisy is confession & repentance. Whether you're a believer or not, the solution is the same: come to Jesus, confess your actions as sin & repent. And, if you haven't already – ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart. 😊