

## 1 Samuel 30 - No One to Go to But God - Part 2

There is a song by Three Dog Night that goes:

One is the loneliest number that you'll ever do.  
Two can be as bad as one,  
it's the loneliest number since the number one.

The point is that being all alone is bad, but sometimes being with other people who make you miserable can be just as bad as being all alone. Being all by yourself is not always the worst possible scenario.

Here, I think it's safe to say that 600 is the loneliest number that David ever knew. He was actually in more danger and despair with 600 of his own men than he had ever been in with Saul or the Philistines.

As you know, prior to this situation David and his men had gone to the Philistines to seek protection from Saul who was trying to kill them. They had been with the Philistines for a little over a year when the Philistines asked them to help in the battle against Israel. Then the Philistines changed their mind just before the battle because they figured David and his men would probably be a liability in battle. There was a good chance they would turn on the Philistines in the midst of battle. So they send David and his men home. Only when they get home they find that their wives and children have all been taken, all their stuff is burned, and they have no idea where anyone is.

And since David is the leader, there is now open talk of stoning David to death because of this tragedy. David's popularity has evaporated literally overnight. His own troops - many of whom are his own family - want to kill him. And although he is surrounded by 600 men, he is all alone.

And that was really the basis for what we talked about last time: there will be many times in life - maybe even now - where you feel all alone. Maybe one is the loneliest number and you're doing one right now. But maybe you're surrounded by people and feel alone. That happens, too.

And at the same time I think there's this innate feeling inside of us that that shouldn't happen. We know that in Christ we should have perfect unity and joy and fellowship. Maybe we look back to a time in life at college, or another church, or Bible study we were part of, or camp, or some other time when it just felt like there was closer connections.

I have to tell you, this tension of being unified in Christ, and yet feeling lonely, is nothing new. The church in Rome struggled with not judging people who ate differently than they did. The church in Corinth had factions for about a dozen reasons. The Galatians were making distinctions between Jews and Gentiles so much so that even the apostles Peter and Barnabas were caught up in sin and disfellowshipping Gentile brothers. This is nothing new.

Christ's church is broken. We are redeemed, but we are broken, and that brokenness often isolates us. You ever go a party or gathering or whatever where there are going to be a lot of people and you're excited to see everyone and halfway through you're like "Why did I even come? I feel more lonely now than before I got here." I'm a pretty outgoing person and that happens to me.

But do you realize heaven is not a permanent vacation on a deserted island somewhere in the south pacific where we don't have to interact with anyone but Jesus? Heaven is packed with people: multitudes from every tribe and tongue and language and nation. Maybe that concerns some of you introverts but if you think heaven is full, remember that the broad road with all the masses on it goes where? Hell - most people are on that road. It's like when an airline overbooks the plane, but instead of having to wait for another flight they just keep jamming people in a plane. That's on fire.

Why is heaven so great? And why should we rejoice in the multitude of people? Because Jesus is there and sin is gone. All the reasons we feel abandoned - our sin and other people's sin - is gone. It's not just not imputed to us anymore, it's that we are fully glorified. This is what Jesus has done through his death and resurrection for

believers. He has cleansed us, and washed us from our sin that reality has begun now, but it will be perfected in the future.

There's no loneliness in heaven. There's no disappointment and sadness and sorrow with people because we will be made perfect. Think of a Christian person who you have the biggest problem with right now. You'd be happy if you never saw them again. In heaven your friendship will be so strong, and your fellowship so sweet, and the grace so genuine that you can't imagine eternity without them anymore than without Jesus. That's the reconciling power of final glorification that Christ accomplished in his death and resurrection.

But in the mean time we fight loneliness. And we fight faithfulness in the midst of loneliness. And although we know that Jesus will never leave us nor forsake us, even our Christian friends and family do on this side of glory. What do we do then?

We've already seen that we can and should weep. We saw that we should strengthen ourselves in God. That is, especially when we feel alone and isolated and in despair we need to remind ourselves that God's salvation is most clearly seen when we are weakest. And we saw that our instinct should be to pray earnestly. I want us to look at 4 other things we see in David as he wrestles with isolation and despair.

#### 1) We still need to show grace in the midst of tragedy. Read 11-15

So usually when we are wronged is when the worst version of ourself comes out. I know it does for me.

When someone cuts us off in traffic, someone is rude to us, our sister takes our stuff or breaks our stuff. When your kids use your tools and don't put them away. When your husband leaves his towels and other garments strung all over the house. I do that just so my wife has a trail so she can find me in case I get lost.

But it's when we're wronged that all the pride and selfishness comes out. When we're hurt, it's easy to lash out at other people. And especially if others deserve blame and rage. The problem with that is that it doesn't reflect the character of God.

**Prov. 29:11:** A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.

Here David comes across an Egyptian - number 1 enemy of the people of God in the entire OT - who was helping the Amalekites - also a huge enemy of the Israelites. So this is David's sworn enemy, who is helping David's other sworn enemy.

And what's David do? He feeds him and gives him water and helps him to see if he knows what happened to his family. Now, the guy says he'll tell David where the people went as long as David promises not to kill him. And we might think we'll David's in a bind. He's got to keep this guy alive and treat him well in order to get the information.

No, he doesn't. David could have revived the guy and then tortured him for the information. If you've watched any of the coverage about military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past 10 years you know one of the big discussions is whether or not we should torture terrorists. Politicians like to call it "enhanced interrogation." Whether or not it works is a different discussion, but David is not in some kind of bind where the only thing he can do is treat this guy like royalty.

But I think it's the grace of God in David's life that causes him to treat this young man the way he does. What else would cause someone to be gracious and kind to an enemy who has no leverage over you? It's David, who when he could have killed Saul and doesn't, calls **himself** a dead dog, a flea, a worthless bird that Saul keeps chasing all over the mountain. When he is in the place of greatest possible strength he shows mercy and grace and humility.

Why does he do that? David recognizes the grace he has received from God. David has no intrinsic goodness of his own that he looks to. He realizes that it was only by God's grace that he has been anointed, only by God's grace that he will lead Israel. And if he - a wretched sinner - has been shown that grace by God, surely he can show it to his enemies.

**Rom. 12:19-21:** “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Why do we do that? Is it just because God says so? Well, maybe. But more than that it's because God has shown us that kind of mercy in Christ.

**Romans 5:10:** While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.

This is what causes us to show others grace even in the midst of our own tragedies - because, like David, we've experienced the grace of God in Christ. And if we really have no capacity to show that same grace, then we might need to reevaluate whether or not we are in the faith.

So we are still called to show grace in the midst of tragedy.

2) Even in tragedy we are called to be faithful to do **all** that needs to be done. Read 16-20

So David and his men slaughter them all. And they slaughter them all night long. And he is victorious.

But let's use our sanctified imagination just a little bit. Remember that everyone is still against David. Best we know people are still calling for him to be put to death - there's nothing to indicate otherwise. And then they come across the enemy - the Amalekites. These are the same Amalekites who attacked the weakest of Israel as they fled from Egypt that have again attacked the weakest of the Israelites when there were no men to guard them.

But, aside from rescuing his own family, David has very little motivation to help his men who have basically turned against him. I don't know about you, but usually when people turn on me and criticize me I'm motivated to do about the least amount possible for them. Why help them if they're going pick me apart? Why give any effort at all? Especially if they're calling for my head!

That's where David is at. “Hey, you guys are big and bad, you go get what's yours. I'll fight to get to my family - but you're on your own after that.” What would we call that kind of attitude?

Bitterness. Bitterness is really unforgiveness that manifests itself in harshness and criticism or slandering people. It can manifest itself in inaction or sabotage, or many other ways. You hurt me, I'm undermining you.

So on the one hand, we need to be careful that we don't become the constant criticizer of all that people do and say. There's nothing that tears your kids down or husband down or wife down more than constant criticism. Encouragement to gentle-criticism ratio should be like 10 to 1.

But on the other hand we need to be careful not to be controlled by the criticism of others. David is burdened by the criticism of his men, but he's not controlled by it. He's actually controlled by the promises of God that there will ultimately be deliverance. Remember that God has told him directly that he will be victorious.

BTW: You know what you do if you're in a situation where you are constantly criticized? And this isn't to legitimize constant critics, this is to offer grace and hope to those of you who endure criticism because it can be overwhelming and suffocating. Listen to Charles Spurgeon on criticism:

Spurgeon: “Brother, if any man thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him; for you are worse than he thinks you to be. If he charges you falsely on some point, yet be satisfied, for if he knew you better he might change the accusation, and you would be no gainer by the correction. If you have your moral portrait painted, and it is ugly, be satisfied; for it only needs a few blacker touches, and it would be still nearer the truth.”

You get what he's saying? When people criticize us we should rejoice that they don't even know the real truth about who we are. Only God knows that. And praise God that although he knows how much of a scoundrel we really are, that through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus he pardons all our sins.

When we are discouraged and criticized, that's when we are most likely to do the least. My flesh says that if I were in David's shoes I'd be like: "I'm getting my family and then I'm out. You guys can fend for yourselves."

But it's the gospel, that we are accepted by God in Christ and he's the only one that matters, that causes us to keep going when we have no motivation to go.

And by any estimation this was an absolutely amazing victory. Not only was morale low because they had no idea if anyone was still alive. And for David morale was especially low since his own people despised him. But these guys would have been physically exhausted.

Remember they had travelled 50 miles with all their equipment from Ziklag in the south to Aphek in the north to fight with the Philistines. They get up there and the Philistines reject them, and they immediately travelled 50 more miles south back to Ziklag. That's marching 100 miles in a week with all your fighting gear and all your food provisions.

Then they get back, the families are gone, Ziklag is in ashes and they march 16 more miles until they find this Egyptian near the brook Besor - a small stream. And remember, the Egyptian said that the Amalekites had left him 3 days earlier. So there's another 2-3 day march after the women and children. **Look at Vss. 9-10,**

These are the mightiest men who have ever walked the planet and a third of them were too tired to go on. **Read 17-20**

The man had marched 150 miles with all his gear 10 days straight, 3 days of which were in utter discouragement, 1/3 of his men couldn't go on then he goes on a 24 hour rampage against the Amalekites.

And notice the numbers: 400 young men of the Amalekites escaped on camels. These weren't kids, "young men" means they were young twenty-somethings - these were soldiers in their prime who had to flee on camels because that's the only way they could get away from David and his men fast enough. So 400 fighting men high-tailed it out of there. How many men did David have in the battle? 400. How many men did David slaughter? Probably thousands. This was arguably the greatest military feat of David's life - even more amazing than Goliath.

Who does that? Who goes all out in utter exhaustion and discouragement for the benefit of those who despise him? Someone who is consumed with zeal for the Lord of grace. Someone who is so profoundly moved by the grace they have received from God that their faithfulness knows no bounds.

So we show grace in the midst of tragedy and we are faithful in the midst of tragedy because our Lord has showed us amazing grace.

### 3) We are called to show mercy even to those who can't help. Read 21-25

Again, put yourself in Bible Land. You've just travelled 100 miles non-stop and you can't go any farther. You're so exhausted that you can't travel any farther, even though you know the life of your wife and kids - if they're even alive - is on the line. That's exhaustion - so they just stay with the baggage. And 400 guys still push on and save your wife, your kids and all your stuff because you were too tired.

And the 400 guys - trolls as they are - their attitude is: "You didn't help rescue. You didn't roll up your sleeves and fight. So you can have your wife and kids but we're hanging on to your stuff. We fought the battle, you sat around napping - thanks for all the help."

David says absolutely not. No, the whole army - all 600 - get part of the spoil. Why? What's his reasoning? Because it's all the Lord's anyway. **Read 23-25**

Bottom line: God gave the victory. Was David the one marching and swinging the sword? Absolutely. But who gave the victory? God. The men who fought were no more deserving of the spoils than the men who stayed behind to guard the baggage.

**Psalm 18:34:** He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

**Psalm 144:1-2:** Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle; he is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.

David's hands are trained, but it's the Lord who subdues. So there's no pride in David as he brings back the families and spoil of those who were guarding the baggage. The only reason he went on and they didn't was because of God. There's no boasting or pride.

This is the basic principle Paul lays out in the 1 Cor. 12 about how we're all different parts of the same body. One person is an eye, another a nose, another a foot, another an unpresentable part - basically a private part. But we are all part of the same body. So when one part rejoices we all rejoice. When one part suffers we all suffer.

Just like David and his men all serve the Lord their God, we all serve the Lord our God - the Triune God - it him who gives us strength. And whether it's in church or business or whatever, the issue is not how much can we get out of other people, it's how much can we give and share with them? It's not how much can I keep but how generous can I be to those who aren't gifted like I am?

This is an amazing work of God in David's life. And he's not about to spoil it by shutting out those who hadn't the strength to go on. He shows mercy to those who are weaker.

But he doesn't stop there.

4) In the midst of God delivering him from this rejection and loneliness and tragedy He celebrates God's provision. **Read 26-31**

This is really an amazing ending. David uses this tragedy turned blessing turned tragedy turned blessing into an opportunity to bless his own kinsmen: the Israelites. He no longer brings spoils to the Philistine king Achish, who rules in Gath. He brings them to his people - the to elders of Judah in southern Israel.

Interestingly, just as David is destroying the Amalakites, the Philistines are destroying the Israelites up in the north. Saul and his sons Jonathan, Abinadab, Malchi-shua are killed in battle. Two wars are being fought. One where Yahweh gives victory to his anointed king David. Another where he stamps out Saul's family line forever in judgment.

What I want to point out is that David doesn't know that Saul and Jonathan are dead when he gives out the gifts. He's not politicking or glad handing people to gain their favor. He's genuinely celebrating this victory. A lot of times we use peoples' weakness to gain the upper hand. Where we can look good and gain an advantage over them at the same time. That's really treachery in our hearts. But David's not doing that. He really is just celebrating with his people.

Let me ask you something: why did this happen? Why did God allow the Amalakites to come and take the families and burn the city? It seemed like God had just given a massive deliverance to David from the Philistine army situation only to come back to tragedy. And then God promises to overcome the Amalakites but in the midst of all of that David is an outcast. What's that about?

What that's about is **Deut. 25:17-19**. What Amalek did to the Israelites as they were coming out of Egypt was so heinous that God made it part of the Mosaic Law that they should be destroyed. **Read**

So once you're in the Land, go destroy Amalek. The Israelites had been in the Land, but you know who they were never able to defeat? The Amalakites. But, from **1 Sam. 30** when David destroyed them, the Amalakites are never mentioned again in the Bible.

You know **Rom. 8:28** that we quote so often: God works all things for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose? The point of that passage is an encouragement for when what we're going through isn't good. When what we're going through is the worst.

David's tragedy and loneliness and utter rejection turned into being a fulfillment of the Law no other generation could make happen. Maybe your tragedy and your loneliness isn't a fulfillment of the Law, but the same God who used David still uses us and our situation for his glory even when it feels like one is the loneliest number. Stay faithful to the Lord who has shown you mercy.

**Pray**