

PROMISED LAND 2: Lesson Two,
David's Rise From Obscurity and Saul's Death
1 Samuel 16 – 31; 1 Chronicles 1-10

Subject: David is anointed king and recognized as a mighty warrior, leaving Saul feeling threatened.

Main Idea: God will fulfill His purposes for us in His perfect time and way.

Principles:

1. *God is always preparing us for future roles.*
2. *God uses periods of suffering to develop our character.*
3. *Trials never last a moment longer than what is necessary to accomplish God's purpose through them.*

Introduction

As I write, it is winter. We live in a region where bad weather often makes travel difficult. Today, we are expecting 14 inches of snow and the temperatures are too low for salt and other ice-melting chemicals to make roadways safe. Schools, businesses, and even some airports are closed. The television weather reporters are advising people for a couple hundred miles in every direction to stay home.

When was the last time you had trouble getting some place you needed to go? Perhaps you have never seen snow in your life but you are regularly forced to wait for a place on an overcrowded bus or train. Or maybe your battle to get somewhere is more than just a nuisance. Maybe you have been waiting for years to leave the region in which you live but you just cannot seem to find a way.

At times, the “place” to which we need to go is not a physical location at all. Have you ever been part of a committee that can't agree and get a job done? Perhaps there is an individual you work with who has been keeping you from your potential. You may have an aging parent whose needs are forcing you to sacrifice a goal you've long worked toward. Maybe you have been waiting for days or weeks for government approval of some kind of document or struggled for years to complete required schooling, one class at a time. You might be eager to marry but unable to find a suitable life partner. Even more heartbreakingly, it is possible you cannot figure out how to move on with your life because someone you have lost someone you love, through death or imprisonment.

If you have *ever* waited and wondered how you would get “there,” wherever and whatever “there” is, you can begin to appreciate David's situation. Samuel had anointed him king over Israel. Once he had been anointed, he knew there was some “place” where he was headed (in this case, a position), but he could not possibly have guessed *how* he would ever get there or how *long* he would have to wait for it happen. After all, he was a highly unlikely candidate for the office. Saul was king and he had sons in line for the throne. How was it possible that a no-name shepherd boy, the youngest of his many brothers, from a family unrelated to Saul, would rise from obscurity to Israel's throne? As we discover in this lesson, God slowly worked out the details over many years (some estimate about 15). Ultimately, it was something that could only happen in God's time and in God's way.

I. **David's Rise from Obscurity to the Royal Palace** – 1 Samuel 16-18

A. **David's Anointing** – 1 Samuel 16:1-13

i. Saul's Rejection and David's Anointing

1. As a reminder, in the *Promised Land 2* study, we are covering four periods in Israel's history, and we are currently in Israel's United Monarchy. Saul was Israel's first king. In 1 Samuel 13-15, we learned that Saul was self-focused and disobedient, and thus, God rejected him. Samuel said that God would appoint "a man after His own heart" in Saul's place (13:14). According to chapter 16, God directed Samuel to anoint a son of Jesse. God put Samuel through the process of considering each of Jesse's sons before He indicated David as His choice. Samuel noted the impressive appearance of Jesse's oldest son, but the Lord told him that while people look at the outward appearance, He looks at the heart.
2. God often chooses to use unlikely candidates. Firstborn sons normally inherited a double portion of their father's estate and a position of authority in the family. David was the youngest of Jesse's eight sons. His father had not even considered him important enough to be called in from his shepherding duties to attend Samuel's feast. He may have been an unlikely choice by human standards, but he was indeed a man after God's own heart and the Lord was with him (16:18).
3. Because of the cultural importance of birth order, it was important that Jesse's family (and any other witnesses) knew that David was God's first choice. Each older brother had been considered and ruled out. When David was finally called into Samuel's presence and the Lord identified him as "the one" (1 Samuel 16:12), Samuel anointed him, a symbol of equipping for God's service.

- ii. David's Identity – 1 Chronicles 1-9: The books of Kings and Chronicles will be introduced in the next lesson. For now, it is helpful to simply consider what 1 Chronicles 1-9 reveal about David. The genealogical records in these chapters trace the tribes of Israel back to Adam, reflecting a special interest in the tribe of Judah, revealing that David was Judah's descendant (2:15), and showing that many kings descended from Judah and David (3:10-24), as prophesied (Genesis 3:10, 2 Samuel 7:16). A major purpose of Old Testament genealogical records is to prove God's faithfulness to His promises. God promised that David's house and kingdom would endure forever. Matthew 1 and Luke 3 trace Jesus Christ to David's royal line, indicating that He is the ultimate fulfillment of this promise. As it turned out, Jesus was even born in Bethlehem, David's hometown.

B. David, Saul's Harpist – 1 Samuel 16:13-23

i. The Spirit of the Lord

1. The Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit) is mentioned seven times in 1 Samuel 16-19 (16:13, 14, 18, 18:12, 14; 19:20, 23). Verse 13 tells us that, from the day of David's anointing, the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him. In fact, the phrase "the Lord was with David" becomes a theme in these chapters. Conversely, verse 14 states that the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul.
2. In the New Testament, we never read of the Spirit of the Lord departing from anyone. Since the time of Christ's ascension, the Holy Spirit enters into believers as a seal, guaranteeing salvation and remaining within us forever (John 14:16-17; Ephesians 1:13-14). Prior to the completion of Christ's work, the Holy Spirit did not permanently indwell individuals as He does today. In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God would come upon a person for the purpose of preparing and equipping them for a particular task or role He intended them to fulfill but would sometimes also depart from them (Judges 16:20).

ii. The Harmful Spirit and David's Musical Gift

1. Not only had the Holy Spirit departed from Saul, an evil (or harmful) spirit had come to torment him. The harmful spirit was "from the Lord" (Job 2:10) and, as is increasingly evident in the account, caused troubling moods that eventually led to mental instability.
2. David was brought into Saul's service as a harpist to soothe Saul's irritability. In addition to being an instrumentalist, David was a gifted lyricist. The Psalms are a collection of Hebrew poetry that later became Israel's hymnal. Many different individuals composed them (including one psalm by Moses [Psalm 90]). Although the titles or ascriptions found at the beginning of many of them were not a part of the Biblical text but were added later, 73 of the Psalms are said to be by, for, about, or for the use of David.¹

C. David and Goliath – 1 Samuel 17

i. The Philistines

1. 1 Samuel 17 indicates that the Philistines gathered for war against Israel. As we discovered in our last lesson, the Philistines were a primary enemy of Israel in the early history of her monarchy (they had also been her enemy during the settlement period). In the Biblical account of Saul's life, he is regularly shown fighting the Philistines and, ultimately, died in battle against them.

2. The name “Palestine,” later given to the region, is a derivative of the word Philistine. This people group occupied the southern end of Canaan’s Mediterranean coastline and had five city-states, each ruled by a king. Although their territory was small, they were a powerful and aggressive people.

ii. Saul’s Poor Leadership

1. Goliath, a gigantic Philistine warrior from the city-state of Gath, presented himself as his countrymen’s representative and challenged the Israelite army to choose a representative. His challenge was based on the common belief that the more powerful of the gods representing each of the warring parties would cause his representative to prevail. Potentially, this one-on-one duel could avert greater loss of life.
2. Previously in 1 Samuel, Saul’s own height was emphasized (10:23), but in this account, Saul and the men he was supposed to be leading were quaking in fear (17:11) because of Goliath’s extraordinary height. Goliath’s taunts went on day after day for forty days. Saul offered a reward to any Israelite soldier who would take on Goliath, rather than simply doing so himself. Although Saul valiantly fought many of Israel’s enemies (1 Samuel 14:37-38), from this point forward, he is portrayed as an increasingly ineffective leader.

iii. David’s Faith

1. Into this leadership vacuum stepped David. He arrived as his father’s messenger with supplies for his brothers. An Israelite young man was eligible for service at age 20 (Numbers 1:3) and, since Saul considered David still a boy (1 Samuel 17:33), he could not yet have reached that age.
2. Despite his youth, David saw the situation for what it really was: a defiance of the armies of the living God, and thus defiance of God Himself (17:28). Compared to God’s greatness, Goliath seemed puny to David. He had experienced God’s deliverance from wild animals while shepherding and saw this as an opportunity for all Israel and the entire Philistine army to know that “the Lord saves.” David knew the battle belonged to Him (17:47).
3. Although David’s weapon was crude, God used the skills David had developed, and David killed Goliath with only a sling and five smooth stones in his hands. With their hero dead, the Philistine army turned and ran. The Israelites pursued them to the entrance of two of their city-states, Gath and Ekron.

- iv. Saul's Question: According to 1 Samuel 17:55, after David slew Goliath, Saul inquired about David's identity. This seems strange since David, we assume, had already been serving as Saul's harpist and armor-bearer (16:21).
1. One theory is that the events of 1 Samuel 16-18 are not in chronological order and that, after introducing David to us as God's anointed king-in-waiting, by way of "flashback" the author tells us of David's earlier defeat of Goliath.
 2. A second theory is that Saul knew who David was but was asking for further information about David's family. This idea is supported by the fact that Saul had promised a daughter in marriage and the exemption from taxes to the family of the man who defeated Goliath (17:25).
 3. A third possibility is that David was called into Saul's service as a musician and armor bearer as a very young "man" (16:18), perhaps 13-15 years of age. He fulfilled these responsibilities intermittently, returning regularly to his father's household (17:15). If the Goliath account occurred several years later, yet while David was still too young to join the army (perhaps 17 or 18), Saul may not have recognized the more mature David.
 4. Other suggestions are that Saul's melancholy and declining mental state made him absent-minded or that he may not have considered that the young man he knew primarily as his musician could be of sufficient courage for such a task.

D. David's Ongoing Success – 1 Samuel 18: Chapter 18 emphasizes David's ongoing success in all Saul sent him to do and the polarizing effect of that success. For the most part, Israel loved him. The people sang his praises, even crediting his military victories above Saul's (18:16). Not the least among those who loved David were two of Saul's children: his son Jonathan (18:3-4) and his daughter Michal (18:20). On the other hand, Saul himself greatly feared David and made multiple attempts to kill him (18:10, 17, 22-25 and chapters 19-27). David humbly declined his first opportunity to become Saul's son-in-law, not considering himself a worthy candidate. Later, when given the opportunity again, he killed twice as many Philistines as was required to earn Michal's hand in marriage.

Summary Statement: While David was awaiting the fulfillment of God's promise, surely wondering how he would ever "get there," God was at work bringing an unknown shepherd boy to prominence in Israel.

Principle: *God is always preparing us for future roles.*

Ephesians 2:10 tells us that God has work for which He created each of us, work He prepared in advance for us to do. Each of us was born at just the right time in history, into just the right family, in just the right place (Acts 17:26) and with just the right personality to do what God designed for us to do. He has worked together every life experience for our good (Romans 8:28) and to prepare us for what lies ahead.

Illustration: At one time in my life, I felt certain the Lord was calling me into a role with greater responsibility. Year after year I waited and nothing changed. Eventually, I was asked to take on yet another role, one that did not suit my taste at all and seemed like a dead end. Nevertheless, when the Lord's time finally came and He put me into the position to which I had felt called, the circumstances were so unusual that the things I had learned in the "dead-end" job actually propelled me to greater success more quickly. God had prepared me in an unexpected way, but it turned out to be exactly what I needed.

Until we reach heaven, God is continually preparing us for future roles. Only a few will ever be kings, queens, or high-ranking leaders, but God is equipping every one of us for work of eternal significance. Each stage of life, each experience, and each job prepares us for what lies ahead.

Application: Has the Lord put a dream in your heart, a special calling on your life? Like David, you may have a pretty good idea what God wants you to do in the future. Or you may just now, for the first time in your life, be considering that God has special work for which He designed you. What task, however menial or difficult, will you commit to do with all your heart as unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23), knowing that "your labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58), that "in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8), and that He will fulfill His purposes for you in His perfect time and way? What difficult period of waiting will you embrace? If you have given your life to the Lord, then you can be sure that whatever you are doing right now, wherever you are right now, God is preparing you for what is next.

Transition: David appeared to be much closer to becoming king at the close of chapter 18 but, as it turned out, he still had years of waiting ahead of him. Because Saul felt threatened by his success, something David never would have wanted happened: he became Saul's targeted enemy.

II. David's Years as a Fugitive in Judea – 1 Samuel 19-26

A. David's Supporters – 1 Samuel 19-23

i. David's Flight

1. Among those who aided David as he fled from Saul were Jonathan, Michal, and Samuel. Although Jonathan was the successor to Saul's throne, he had become David's closest friend and was willing to step aside in deference to God's will (20:15, 23:17). Michal helped David escape out a window, where he fled to Samuel.
2. When Saul discovered David was with Samuel, he sent three successive groups of men to capture him. The Holy Spirit brought all three under His influence, and instead of doing the work for which Saul sent them, they prophesied. Finally, Saul went in person, but the Holy Spirit came upon him even more powerfully than the others. Ordinarily, kings did not prophesy, but "God did the extraordinary in order to move a recalcitrant king's heart to see the error of his ways."ⁱⁱ
3. In a private rendezvous, David and Jonathan said their farewells and swore an oath of allegiance that extended to protecting one another's descendants.
4. After that, David remained a fugitive for probably another 10 years (we can assume he had reached his twentieth birthday by the time he began leading Saul's military campaigns [1 Samuel 18] and we know that he was thirty when he began to rule over Judah at Hebron [2 Samuel 5:4]). During these years, he composed a number of the Psalms. In them, we see David's heart: his passion for justice, his concern for God's glory, and his love for God and His word.

ii. Other Helpers

1. *Ahimelek the Priest* (21:1-9): Although Ahimelek the priest did not understand the nature of David's "mission," at David's request, he permitted him to eat the sacred bread and take Goliath's sword. It appears that David lied to Ahimelek. If so, it is not the only occasion on which David's fallen nature is evident in the scriptures. Another possibility is that "the king" to whom David referred as having sent him on this secret mission was none other than the Lord Himself.ⁱⁱⁱ
2. *Achish, king of Gath* (21:10-15): David fled into the Philistine territory of Achish, king of Gath. Although David had slain Goliath, the giant from Gath, perhaps he hoped that Achish would provide protection for anyone who was as equally despised by Saul as he. However, David's defeat of Goliath was too recent and, once he realized his danger, he pretended to have become insane.

3. *David's Family and Band of Misfits* (22:1-5) David hid in the cave of Adullam, where his brothers and his father's household joined him. No doubt, David's position with Saul put them at risk as well. In addition, four hundred men who were in distress, in debt or discontented gathered around David and he became their commander.
 4. *King of Moab* (22:3-4): David sought refuge from the king of Moab for his parents. Perhaps his request was granted through family ties. David's great-grandmother Ruth was a Moabitess.
 5. *A Prophet and a Priest* (22:5, 22:20-23, 23:6, 9): During David's years in exile, God graciously provided him with a prophet and a priest. The prophet Gad came and warned David not to remain at the cave at Adullam but to flee into the wilderness of Judah. Then, Abiathar the priest arrived at David's camp. He was the sole survivor of the priests that Saul slaughtered in paranoia, believing all had been complicit with Ahimelek in assisting David's flight. Abiathar brought with him the ephod. This piece of the high priest's clothing had two stones on the shoulders, each with the names of six of Israel's tribes engraved on it. Over the ephod was a breastplate with twelve precious stones (one for each tribe) and the mysterious Urim and Thummim. The ephod and breastplate are often referred to jointly as simply "the ephod." In some manner that the scriptures never explain, these were used for decision-making.
- iii. David's Escape from Keilah (23:1-29)
1. David learned the Philistines were fighting against the Judean town of Keilah. David understood that enemies of Israel were enemies of God. He used the ephod to consult the Lord about whether he should get involved. After receiving the Lord's confirmation, David and his men saved the people of the town.
 2. However, Saul was told of David's arrival at Keilah and sent an army to intercept him. When David heard, he once again inquired of the Lord, left Keilah, and kept moving from place to place among the wilderness strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph, along with his men (who now numbered 600 [23:13]).
 3. Jonathan was able to locate David and bring him encouragement, but God kept Saul from ever finding David. Even after the Ziphites betrayed David's location, Saul searched for him day after day without success.

B. David's Mercy Tested – 1 Samuel 24-26

- i. Saul in the Cave – chapter 24: On two separate occasions, David declined opportunities to take Saul's life. The first time, Saul was relieving himself in a cave where David and his men happened to be hiding.
 1. David's men viewed the circumstances as proof that the Lord had given Saul over to David. However, David wisely understood that opportunity is not always evidence of God's leading. Circumstances alone are never proof of God's will in any situation. David held a high view of God and His Law. He respected Saul's position and he trusted God's sovereignty. He refused to usurp Saul's position by murdering him and continued to wait for God to fulfill His purpose for him in His time and way.
 2. When Saul learned that David had spared him, he wept and confessed that he had treated David badly. He even told David that he knew the kingdom would one day belong to him. Nevertheless, David saw how unstable Saul had become and wisely remained in hiding. Soon after, Saul resumed his ill-willed search for David.
- ii. David and Nabal – chapter 25
 1. Chapter 25 begins by informing us that Samuel died. Although he has receded into the background of the Biblical story since David's anointing, he was still very much recognized as an important figure in Israel at the time of his death.
 2. The account of David's decision to kill the wealthy and wicked Nabal is sandwiched between the two accounts in which he refused to take Saul's life. David and his men had offered protection and friendship to the households of the leaders of Judah while they patrolled the region (for that was where they were hiding). Nabal was one of those who had benefited from David's presence (25:16). Nevertheless, when David sent his men requesting provisions, Nabal refused and insulted them.
 3. Infuriated, David took four hundred of his men and set out to destroy Nabal's household. Meanwhile, Nabal's beautiful and intelligent wife Abigail heard what had happened and (without informing her husband) gathered a large gift of food and drink, hoping to intercept David and pacify him. Her wise appeal to David's conscience successfully dissuaded him from committing murder. She thus spared her household and, in the process, won David's affection.
 4. When Abigail returned home and told Nabal how narrowly he and his sons had escaped death, his heart failed him and ten days later, he died.

5. David then sent for Abigail and she became his wife. Saul had given David's first wife, Michal, away to another man. In the meantime, David had taken Ahinoam of Jezreel as a wife. Thus, Abigail became David's third wife. The Bible never condones polygamy; it highlights the problems caused by it. God's plan for marriage was always a monogamous, lifelong commitment between one man and one woman. Nevertheless, the Bible portrays its characters as they were. Although wrong, polygamy was an ancient tradition (Genesis 4:19) that Abraham and many of his descendants adopted.
 6. After David had so victoriously overcome the temptation to take Saul's life, we might wonder how he could have succumbed to temptation to avenge himself against a lesser man. Here we find a warning: if we are not careful, celebration of one spiritual victory can sometimes blind us to other lurking temptations. We might avoid a "greater sin" and, in the next moment, commit a "lesser" one (1 Corinthians 10:12-13).
- iii. Saul Asleep in His Camp – chapter 26: Once again, the Ziphites informed Saul of David's location. As Saul and his men approached, David found their camp and crept into it in the middle of the night while they were sleeping soundly. He again had an opportunity to kill Saul, but said, "The Lord forbid that I should lay a hand on the Lord's anointed" (26:11). Instead, he took Saul's spear and water jug as proof of how close to him he had been. When David was at a distance, he called back to Saul and rebuked Abner, Saul's commander, for allowing anyone access to Israel's king. As before, Saul acted remorseful for pursuing David. He spoke words of blessing over him and then the two parted ways.

Summary Statement: Even though David knew he had been anointed as Israel's king, he spent years as a fugitive, awaiting God's timing. God used these years of suffering to help prepare David for his future role.

Principle: *God uses periods of suffering to develop our character.*

During that time, David had the opportunity to hone his military and leadership skills, but more importantly, God built his character. David surely learned patience, wisdom, and discernment in leading a motley crew of discontents and social misfits. He developed sympathy for those who were treated unjustly. His appreciation for God's faithfulness and the faithfulness of friends grew, as did his respect for God's prophets and priests, and his love for God's people. He learned to lie down and sleep in peace, trusting the Lord to keep him safe (Psalm 3:5, 4:8).

No one enjoys suffering, but there are things we learn from it that are hard to come by any other way. Romans 5:3-5 says, “Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Application: Waiting to get somewhere can be trying, but those who suffer have a choice. We can be embittered by it or bettered by it. What has been your attitude toward current hardships? Are you resentful and bitter? If we trust God to fulfill His good purposes in His time and way, we will always come out better.

Transition: Even though Saul blessed David and the two parted on good terms at the end of chapter 27, David remained (understandably) distrusting of Saul. As it turned out, they never again saw one another in this life, but David did not know that would be the case.

III. David’s Retreat to Philistia and Saul’s Death – 1 Samuel 27-31, 1 Chronicles 10

A. David and the King of Gath – 1 Samuel 27

i. Decision to Relocate

1. The Ziphites had repeatedly reported David’s whereabouts to Saul. David reasoned that Saul would eventually kill him if he remained within the geographical boundaries of Saul’s authority and decided to relocate inside Philistine territory, where he remained for 16 months.
2. Commentators are mixed in their opinion about David’s decision to relocate inside Philistine territory. The text states that David “thought to himself...” (27:1). Since any mention of consulting the Lord is strangely absent, it is possible that God merely permitted what was not in accord with His perfect will. Those who believe David made a mistake by leaving the boundaries of Israel and entering into an arrangement with their enemy will see the compromising situations into which he came as consequences of his poor decision. However, no explicit comment on the rightness or wrongness of David’s decision is indicated in the text.
3. Over time, David’s reputation as Saul’s enemy had spread. Although David had had to feign insanity to protect his life from the king of Gath earlier, by this time, Achish likely saw it as an advantage to have David, his enemy’s enemy, joining his camp. In exchange for protection, Achish expected David’s loyalty. Although David addressed Achish with deference, there is no reason to believe that he ever intended to support the Philistine cause. In fact, the account reveals just the opposite.

ii. David's Raids

1. Achish granted David the town of Ziklag, from which he apparently expected David to raid the nearby towns of Judah. Instead, David raided the camps of Israel's enemies, killing every man, woman, and child to ensure he was never found out. Since the people groups David raided were among those God sentenced to death when Israel settled Canaan (Deuteronomy 20:16-17), it seems that David turned a period of exile into an opportunity to resume Israel's conquest of Canaan. Additionally, he was protecting Judah from these enemies and providing needed food and income for his men by way of the plunder.
2. David lied to Achish about his ventures. Again, the text simply states what David did. Although Achish may have had no right to the truth and David's lie may have been the lesser of two evils,^{iv} it is also possible that David was not trusting God as he should have been.

B. Saul and the Medium – 1 Samuel 28: The last chapters of 1 Samuel bring David's exile to a climax by contrasting the final, pathetic events of Saul's life with David's victory and determination to find strength in the Lord.

- i. Saul's Desperation for Guidance: When the Philistines gathered their forces to fight Saul and the Lord no longer answered him (28:6), Saul hoped to somehow contact Samuel for guidance. Although the Mosaic Law forbade God's people from consulting mediums and spiritists (Exodus 22:18, Leviticus 19:26b, 31; 20:27, Deuteronomy 18:10-13), Saul sought out a witch to help him contact the dead. According to the text, Samuel appeared to Saul, foretelling the Philistines' victory and the deaths of Saul and his sons. When Saul heard this, he was filled with fear and "his strength was gone" (28:20).
- ii. Views about Who Saul Saw: It is possible that a trick of the witch caused a psychological apparition in which Saul thought he saw Samuel. Since most often, demons are the powers behind cultic "miracles," it is also possible that Saul saw a demon that temporarily took on Samuel's appearance. However, the text indicates the witch's surprise at Samuel's appearance. What she saw was obviously not anything like what her past experiences had produced. This leads many to conclude that, in this unusual instance, the Lord permitted Samuel to actually appear. The accuracy of Samuel's predictions concerning the Philistines' victory and the deaths of Saul and his sons supports this idea.

C. David's Dismissal from Battle and the Amalekites' Raid – 1 Samuel 29-30

- i. David's Awkward Position: In chapter 29, David is again the focus. Achish expected him to join the Philistines in battle against Israel. Obviously, this put David in a very awkward position. He could not refuse without making Achish suspicious, nor could he fight against his own countrymen. The Lord graciously delivered David from the plight when the Philistine commanders refused to support Achish's decision and insisted that David and his men return from the battle encampment to Ziklag.
- ii. The Amalekites' Raid
 1. On their return, David and his men found Ziklag burned by Amalekite raiders. Worse yet, all their family members had been carried off as captives. David's men were so bitter that they considered stoning David, but David found strength in the Lord his God (30:6). If he had previously erred, the Lord used this trial to bring David to repentance and restore his reliance on Him.
 2. After consulting the Lord through Abiathar and the ephod (the first mention of his having done so after relocating to Philistia), David and his tired men pursued the Amalekites. In the end, they recovered every family member that had been taken captive, as well as their flocks and herds.
 3. David returned to Ziklag victorious and sent some of his plunder as a gift to the elders of Judah. Unlike Nabal, many of them may have given provisions to David and his men during the years they wandered and hid in the Judean hills and desert. Perhaps, David wanted to repay them. He also knew that someday, as a new king, he would need their support. Surely, he gave out of sincere friendship as well.

D. Saul and His Sons' Deaths – 1 Samuel 31: While David was facing down the Amalekites, Saul was engaged in battle with the Philistines. David returned to Ziklag victoriously, having recovered his family and further strengthened his relationship with the Judeans. Saul lost his fight against the Philistines and his three sons in death, including Jonathan. After Saul himself was wounded, he took his own life. 1 Chronicles 10:13-14 summarizes, "Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord; he did not keep the word of the Lord and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the Lord. So the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse." It all happened just as Samuel had said.

Summary Statement: After years of fleeing from Saul, God removed David’s tormenter from this world and opened the way for him to become king. The greatest obstacles to David’s ascension to Israel’s throne were swept away in a single day.

Principle: *Trials never last a moment longer than what is necessary to accomplish God’s purpose through them.*

Conclusion

Dear friend, you will get where you need to be in God’s time and way. We never know the ways in which He is orchestrating circumstances or working in hearts and lives so that, in a single moment, our trial may suddenly and unexpectedly end. Some trials last a lifetime but none lasts a moment longer than what is needed to accomplish God’s good purpose through it. Do you wonder if you are “getting there,” wherever or whatever “there” may be? Don’t give up! You may be just around the corner from that “place” you have been longing to reach!

ⁱ Kidner, Derek (1973). *Psalms 1-72* (p. 33). Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press.

ⁱⁱ Kaiser, W. C., Jr., Davids, P. H., Bruce, F. F., & Brauch, M. T. (1996). *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (p. 216). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bergen, R. D. (1996). *1, 2 Samuel* (Vol. 7, p. 221). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

^{iv} Bergen, R. D. (1996). *1, 2 Samuel* (Vol. 7, p. 262). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.