

David, Waiting for the Kingdom

Waiting for the Lord

In the rest of 1 Samuel we see David, the anointed king, waiting for the promised kingdom. This was a time of preparation. It was a time of humiliation and danger as He faced opposition and threats on his life from the hand of Saul, the outgoing king. A favorite theme of David in the psalms was “wait for the Lord,” 5 times specifically, “wait” alone, of the Lord, 23 times.¹ Our own struggles need to be informed by this same dynamic as we wait for the Lord in our own lives and apply New Testament truth about growth, that God uses testing in our journey to become like Jesus Christ. Few things test our faith like waiting for God to act in His own timing and for His own purposes. It should be of some comfort and encouragement for us to persevere in faith as we see God’s faithfulness to David. We, also, must fight the “little battles” as we grow and serve and wait, trusting in His faithfulness, even as our own unfaithfulness is exposed. The New Testament reveals this kind of testing as part of the process of character growth we must all go through (James 1:2-4).

DAVID GOES TO THE PHILISTINES

David was despairing of the fight and the flight, so he came upon the bright idea of taking refuge among the enemies of the Lord and Israel, the Philistines. This period is covered in 1 Samuel 27, then 29-30, with 28 being parenthetical, about the extent of Saul’s moral decline. This move to the Philistines, speaks, again, of the liberty David believes is part of his relationship with his Lord. However, if he thought the fight and flight were arduous and risky, he was about to find out that there were perils whatever path he chose.

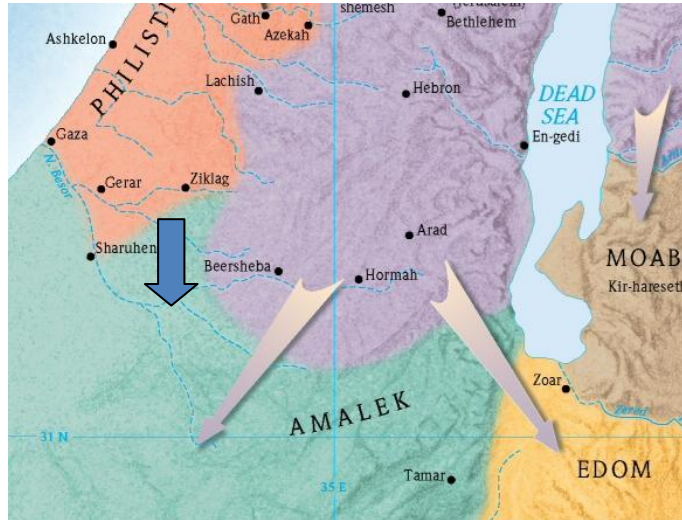
Now it seemed, to David, the best thing to do was opt for safety. David thought Saul would not pursue him into the territory of Israel’s mortal enemy of the time, Goliath’s people, the Philistines. He was right, but it was an uneasy alliance, as we shall see. David and his 600 men brought their households to Gath, Goliath’s home town, and found refuge with Achish, king of Gath. He was received gladly and given the city of Ziklag as the ragtag (1 Sam 22:2) band’s home. David was there for a year and 4 months and the city remained with Israel/Judah “to this day” (ch 27:6), the time of the writing of 1 Samuel, sometime later,

Verses 8-12 tell of raids, while at Ziklag, that David and his men made into the territory of Israel’s long-time enemies, the Geshurites, Girzites and most importantly the Amalekites. “For they were the inhabitants of the land from ancient times, as you come to Shur even as far as the land of Egypt” (v 8). The Amalekites had been enemies of Israel from the time of their departure from Egypt led by Moses and Aaron. Even Saul had sinned and lost the monarchy because of them by not obeying God to destroy all living things belonging to these people in the city of Amalek (1 Sam 15:1-9). They kept alive the best of the animals and their king Agag. So the Lord took the kingdom from Saul and chose David to lead the people as king. This brings us to the current situation as David waits for the kingdom while Saul is still alive.

¹ 5 times total in Psalms (English) 2 times in Psa 27:17; “wait” alone, of the Lord, 23 times. [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995). All scripture quotes are from this version unless otherwise noted.

David takes the opportunity, while living in relative safety in Ziklag, to avenge the Amalekites and their allies and collect spoil from them to sustain his men and their families, permitted now by the Lord. We are told, “David attacked the land and did not leave a man or a woman alive, and he took away the sheep, the cattle, the donkeys, the camels, and the clothing. Then he returned and came to Achish” (v 9).

Achish was curious of David’s activities and asked where David had been. Again, David relied on the freedom of his relationship with God and



David was given Ziklag and raided south.²

said he had raided the territory of Judah in the south instead of “the Geshurites and the Girzites and the Amalekites” (v 8). He wanted Achish to believe he was solidly in the Philistine camp by raiding Judah. His practice of killing all human life in the cities of Israel’s enemies was designed, we are told, to perpetuate the myth that he had attacked cities of Judah, earning the trust of Achish, his guardian. “David did not leave a man or a woman alive to bring to Gath, saying, “Otherwise they will tell about us” (v 11). “So Achish believed David, saying, ‘He has surely made himself odious among his people Israel; therefore he will become my servant forever’” (v 12). David even prepared to go to war with the Philistines against Israel and, in 28:1-2, Achish was ready to, “make you my bodyguard for life” (28:2)!

Wisdom is akin to deceit, except for motive. What makes David’s actions godly wisdom instead of a lie or deceit is his godly motive, to accomplish “the purpose of God in his own generation” (Acts 13:36). He sought the will and heart of God. May we, also, be full of faith to do the will of God and not the will of man, that is, the will of those around us. The liberty that David exercised at times came from and out of his relationship with God. He had peace with God and was free to act in wisdom regardless of the appearance. We have even more reason to be secure in our relationship with the Lord and follow the Spirit in our daily lives. So let’s do it!

THE PHILISTINES GO TO BATTLE WITHOUT DAVID

Sooner or later it was going to come to this. David would be called upon to go to war with the Philistines with his new-found protector, Achish. In 1 Samuel 29 this circumstance actually occurred and is described for us. The Philistines gather at Aphek to fight against the Israelites. David and his men join the forces of Achish as the lords of the Philistines assemble. What is David going to do? Fight against the people of God? He has been going out of his way to avoid fighting the Lord’s people, even lying to Achish about his raids against the enemies of God, saying he was raiding Israeli cities and killing all inhabitants who could possibly expose him.

² Thomas V. Brisco, [Holman Bible Atlas](#), Holman Reference (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 99.

One would expect David and his men to be sweating profusely about the situation, wondering what would come of this. David's liberty in Christ had put him in a tight spot from which he could only be delivered by his faith/trust which he exercised going to the Philistines in the first place. He would have to be delivered by God, again, from what he could not deliver himself.

It's like God to be creative, right? His deliverance is different every time. This time the lords of the Philistines, themselves, come to the rescue! The other leaders of the Philistines are not so gullible as Achish. So in verse 3 of chapter 29 we find them questioning Achish's judgment at allowing David and his men, Jews, to come to the battle against their own countrymen, fellow Jews. Achish tries to stand up for David and his decision to allow them in this fight but the other "commanders of the Philistines were angry with him" and said, "Make the man go back, that he may return to his place where you have assigned him, and do not let him go down to battle with us, or in the battle he may become an adversary to us. For with what could this *man* make himself acceptable to his lord? *Would it not be* with the heads of these men? 'Is this not David, of whom they sing in the dances, saying,

"Saul has slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands" ' (v 4-5)?

So Achish sent David and his men home. David protested enough to stay in character but not enough to be persuasive. "So David arose early, he and his men, to depart in the morning to return to the land of the Philistines," (v 11). The Lord, again, had delivered David, His anointed, in yet a different way and he "saw the salvation of the Lord on his behalf" (2 Chronicles 20:17), as Jehoshaphat his son would also see later in different circumstances. As in the different circumstances of our lives God is not different. He does not change but is always faithful to "those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose" (Romans 8:28).

TRAGEDY IN ZIKLAG

Instead of a joyous homecoming, David and his band of pseudo-Philistines found that the city they had been gifted by Achish had been attacked by the Amalekites (see p 2, paragraphs 1-2, above) and burned, taking everyone captive and taking spoil from the city. This was a tragedy for David and his men. All their wives and children had disappeared with the attackers. The text says, "David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep" (30:4).

Moreover, his men were talking about stoning David, "for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters" (v 6). The men who traveled with David were loyal to him, but their spiritual commitments were



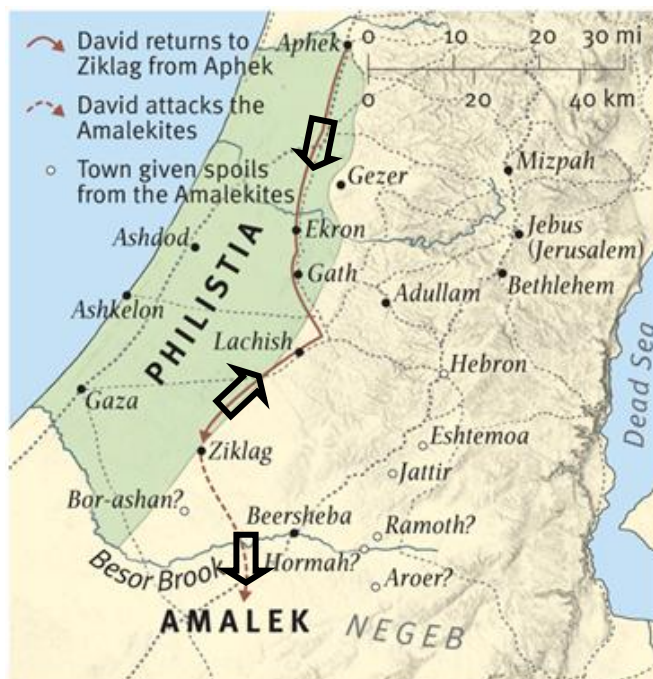
Tragedy in Ziklag³

³ James J. Tissot, 'The Women of Ziklag Taken into Captivity' (1896-1902), gouache on board, The Jewish Museum, New York.
https://www.jesuswalk.com/david/06_david_strengthens.htm

undoubtedly not the same or as deep as David's. They had trouble with other decisions David had made, e.g. not killing Saul when they had the chance (see text), but now they had enough.

“Because of all my adversaries, I have become a reproach,
Especially to my neighbors,
And an object of dread to my acquaintances; Psalms 31:11.

How should one deal with tragedy when it inevitably occurs? What should one do when forsaken by those you depend on or when facing a huge loss. The inevitable temptation is to think we are forsaken by God and to feel and think we are up against an impossible mountain we cannot climb. To say we should turn to the Lord is an obvious answer and often trite and without substance. To actually do it requires one to die inwardly in order to find the strength we do not have in ourselves. Paul says, “we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:11). David himself would say, “The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation” (Psa 118:14). David often refers to the Lord in the Psalms as the source of his character, as “my strength” (7 times, more implied)⁴. We know from the New Testament that this exchange of life and character only happens upon the death of the believer, as Paul refers to coming to the end of oneself. To become partakers of this “divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4) requires being “delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor 4:11, above) as David did so long ago and without the aid of scriptural instruction about the process. However, the Lord does not change.



The Journey that Exhausted 200 of David's Men
walk back to Ziklag. When they discovered the tragedy, they “wept until there was no strength in them to weep” draining them emotionally and physically. Then probably without rest they set out

So in the face of this tragedy, David really did turn to the Lord, “David strengthened himself in the Lord his God” (v 6d). Having done this first, He then prayed and sought the word of God. “David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, ‘Please bring me the ephod.’ So Abiathar brought the ephod to David and David inquired of the Lord, saying, ‘Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?’ And He said to him, ‘Pursue, for you will surely overtake them, and you will surely rescue all.’ So David went” (v 7-9a).

Recent events had required a physical toll from David and his men. It was a three day walk from Ziklag to Aphek to join forces with Achish and the other Philistine lords in the north of Philistine territory opposite the Sea of Galilee. Then it was another 3 day

⁴ Psa 18:1, 28:7, 31:4, 43:2, 59:17, 62:7, 118:14; other substitutional identity references; Psa 18:1-2, etc. “my strength, my rock, my shield, my salvation, my stronghold, even my righteousness (Heb and Sept Psa 4:1).

after the raiders and got as far as the Brook Besor (see map in Appendix for these journeys) where some 200 of the band were too exhausted to continue (v 10).

Having found an informant from the raiders, an Egyptian slave abandoned by them, he was nourished and cared for by David. Having regained his strength, he was found to be a treasure-trove of important intelligence for David and his distraught followers. Upon questioning he revealed things about himself, the identity of his master and the raiders, as well as a history of their activities raiding southern Israel and Ziklag. He also agreed to show David where the raiders were.



They found them “spread over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing” (v 16). So, even in his extreme weariness, “David slaughtered them from the twilight until the evening of the next day; and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled”(v 17). Interesting final comment, included for an unknown reason! “So David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and rescued his two wives. But nothing of theirs was missing” (vs 18-19a). David recovered everything, people and livestock and other spoil. Similar results present themselves when we “turn to the Lord” in the face of tragedy.

<https://sceanutgallery.com/tag/david-destroys-the-amalekites/>

POLICY CHANGE

Not only has David been learning to trust the Lord in tragedy and wait for His deliverance but now we see a generous streak in him, the desire to treat people fairly, even in the face of tradition and expected behavior, which often amounts to law or unwritten rules expected to govern our relationships with others. We all face this at times. We of the new covenant know that those in Christ “are not under law but under grace” (Romans 6:14) so we are more free to go over and beyond to exhibit the character of God and show grace to others.

In the last 11 verses of 1 Samuel 30 this is what David does to set a new standard of grace by changing expected behavior toward others. Those of his men that stayed with the gear and baggage at the Brook Besor were about to be denied their share of the spoil by, “all the wicked and worthless men among those who went with David” (v 22). This would actually have been standard practice but David changed the rules, “‘as his share is who goes down to the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike.’ So it has been from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day” (vs 24-25).

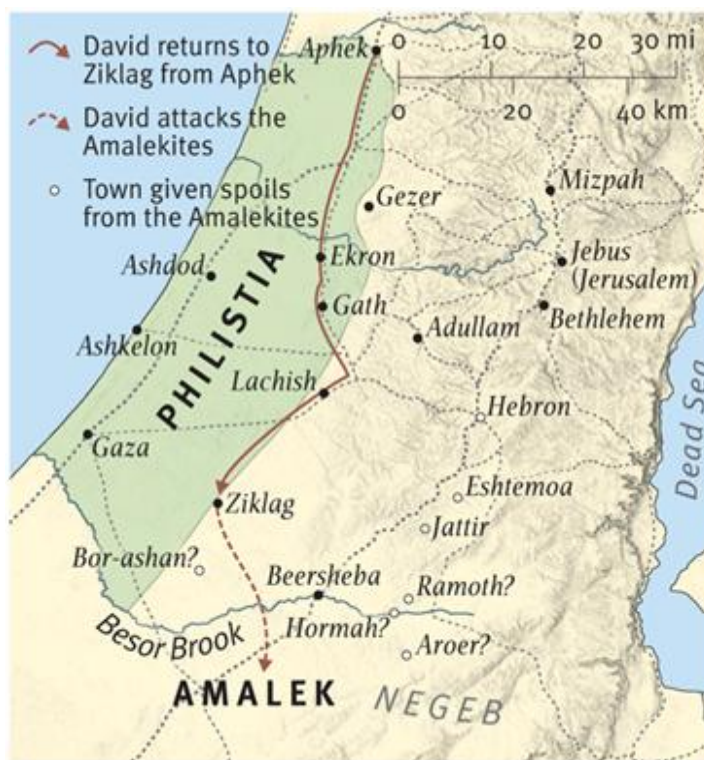
Even more than that, after returning to home at Ziklag, he split the spoil further by sending some of it “to the elders of Judah, to his friends”(v 26). 13 cities or family groups were included in this act of grace. Apparently, these were places David and his men frequented as they fled from Saul and lived in exile in Ziklag, mingling with and providing protection for these fellow countrymen

(v 31). They were, also, among the first to formally recognize David as king of Israel in the not too distant future.

Again, the New Covenant king saw through the Law to grace and learned what his distant son would later teach, “Give, and it will be given to you . . . by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return” (Luke 6:38). “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

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Appendix



David Recovers Plunder from the Amalekites. (1 Samuel 30:16–31) David and his men sought refuge in Philistia, the Philistines gathered their forces at Aphek to attack the Israelites. The Philistine commanders, skeptical of David’s loyalty in battle against his fellow Israelites, sent him to his home in Ziklag. When David arrived, he discovered that the Amalekites had raided the Negeb and burned Ziklag to the ground, carrying away many captives and belongings. David and his men pursued them, crossing the Besor Brook and attacking the Amalekites. He recovered all that had been taken, returned to Ziklag, and sent a portion of the spoils to the leaders of towns in the region (the locations of Bethel, Siphmoth, Racal, and Athach are unknown).

John D. Currid and David P. Barrett, Crossway ESV Bible Atlas (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 124.

