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1 SAMUEL 30

1 Samuel Series

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we want to serve you and we want to now prepare ourselves for this week. We love you, we commit ourselves to you. You know what's ahead for this week even though we don't. We know you know our anxious thoughts and you have all the hairs of our heads numbered. You know our thoughts in general. You know everything about us and you know what we need today. So Lord, I ask that you would take pieces of the things that I've prepared that you've shared with me this week and use them strategically in people's lives to prepare them for the week that they're to face. We look forward, Father, to your grace that you give to us today. In Jesus' name.

I'm excited about this particular teaching session because we come in the application to this really interesting truth. So I'm eager to get here. But we have to take this verse by verse to get there. I want you to know it's such an important truth that it's something that can apply to all of our lives. In fact, in the dialogue David sees it as so important that he declares it as a statute for all of Israel from then on. So this is a big thing. He turns it into a governmental rule based on an experience he had while he's working with his soldiers. So you'll see that he makes that statement in 1 Samuel 30:25. It says this was so important to him that *David made this a statute*. That means it's pretty important. And it's going to be helpful for us as we try to understand how to apply this to our lives as well.

So would you please stand with me? We're going to read this passage of scripture together. I'm going to read it, but I want you to stand in honor of God's word. This is a passage we're going to refer to at the end of our time today. In Colossians 3:10-12 it says – *Put on the new self*. Knowing this is Christians he's writing to, that's you and me. We have an old self and a new self. *Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

In other words, there's no room for supremacy. Whether it's ethnic or religious or any kind of supremacy, there is no Jew or Gentile and so on. And then he gives the word *therefore*. The word *therefore* is going to give us the application then because of this commonality that we have and we recognize this particular truth. *As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with (five words) compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience*. When you get that idea, these are the five qualities that result. And that's all going to tie into what we're going to talk about today.

You may be seated.

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David recognizes that this is a statute. This is something that is so important that he wants us to know about it. God has included this part of David's story in the passage for us.

Now we're in 1 Samuel going verse by verse and we come to 1 Samuel 30. To bring us up to speed, if you weren't with us last time, I want you to know that what happened was at a point of discouragement David left Israel to escape Saul's attack and he went to live in the enemy territory. In other words, he went to live with the world, as sometimes Christians do today. He got some immediate relief, as is often the case today when you go and spend some time with the world you get some immediate relief. But the problem is there's eventually going to be a price that's paid. Bad things are in store if you start becoming friends with the world. And that happened with David we saw last week.

Eventually then the Philistines where he was living were going to fight his own people and he was now a part of the Philistines. So they're going to fight, he's on the wrong side, he's caught in the middle, and it's a difficult place for him. God worked it out and they all got pink slips and had to leave the army. They headed out and they're on their way back home. That's where we're going to pick up the story, a little overlap from last week. But we're going to pick it up from 1 Samuel 30:1.

They're on their way home to Ziklag. It takes three days to get there. *David and his men reached Ziklag on the third day. Now the Amalekites had raided the Negev and Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag and burned it, and had taken captive the women and everyone else in it, both young and old. They killed none of them, but carried them off as they went on their way.* So this is a tragedy that's taken place, a very difficult challenge for David and his men.

The passage continues by saying – *When David and his men reached Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. They were just so upset that they came to the end of their strength in their crying. David's two wives had been captured—Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the Lord his God.*

Now we talked about that strength that comes to any of us when we're in the midst of a challenge. We talked about that grace that God allows us to experience last week.

But we have a crisis at this point. It's unfortunate that the men are trying to stone David or they want to at least stone him. They're upset. It's often typical that when things are not going well that you blame the leaders. David could have seen this in advance. He could have solved this problem. He could have gotten us out of it, but he led us into this problem, so it's David's fault. Unfortunately, David gets blamed for this. Maybe he's partially at fault in the midst of this problem, but what needed to take place in this moment is that they needed to encourage their leader. This is a leadership moment.

Now some of you are leaders. You know you're leaders because a problem starts to develop and nobody seems to be doing anything about it and you see that something needs to be done and you have this initiative that you bring in to the situation, or at least you want to. That's what a leader does. A leader sees problems and brings solutions, like communicating the solution and problem-solving and providing vision and evaluating, all of these things.

In fact when I talk and teach about leadership I refer to eleven tasks of a leader. I've created a sheet about this and I've put it at the information table. So if you want the sheet that contains eleven tasks of a leader, you can get it off the information table on your way out. It's different for a Christian leader, by the way, than a non-Christian leader. I would suggest that the non-Christian leader has ten tasks in their leadership arsenal, but the Christian leader has eleven.

We're going to see David interacting here and I'll point out the eleventh one or the one that's true about Christians as we go through here. But we have this situation in which David is going to step in and he's going to be the leader to solve or rescue or just lead the people to where they need to be. Very important part of what David is going to do.

Let's look at the passage as it continues. It says in verse 7 – *Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelek, "Bring me the ephod."* Now the ephod was this linen garment that the high priest wore. It was part of his uniform that God designed. It had over it a breastplate that had twelve stones, one stone for each of the twelve tribes. It was worn over his chest because God wanted the high priest to be very sensitive that he was representing the people. It's such a beautiful picture of the people of Israel over his heart. If you're a leader of any kind, you want to keep the people that you're leading over your heart. If you're leading them, your responsibility is you want to be thinking about them, so that's what the breastplate was.

But there was a pocket in his uniform and the pocket contained the Urim and the Thummim. We don't exactly know what they are, but they're some kind of dice-type thing or rocks that they would throw, and God would speak somehow through them. So David now is calling upon God for answers to the situation. I want you to see there's a problem. What does David do? He goes to God. Let's read the verse and then we'll talk about them.

"Bring me the ephod." Abiathar brought it to him, and David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?"

"Pursue them," he answered. "You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue."

Now those of you who have followed along in the story know that there's somebody else trying to seek the future at the very same time. Remember Saul? Remember there's a battle about to start between the Philistines and the Israelites up north, three days journey north. Saul wants to know the future, but because he's in rebellion against God, he's not getting any answers from God, so he goes to a witch at Endor. He wants to know the future as well. He wants guidance, so he goes to this witch. Here David is going to the Lord. It's just a great contrast in showing us that David is a man after God's own heart.

He knows there's a problem here; I need to do something about it. I'm the leader. What am I going to do first? I'm going to go to the Lord and ask God to sort this thing out. Lord, I don't know what to do. Do we pursue, do we not pursue? And so the Lord tells him through Abiathar the priest, "Go ahead and *pursue them. You will overtake them and succeed in the rescue.*"

So now what David has to do is go back and communicate that information to his team. He has to tell all these six hundred guys this is what we're going to do. So he tells them and they're ready to go.

So in verse 9 it says – *David and the six hundred men with him came to the Besor Valley, where some stayed behind. Two hundred of them were too exhausted to cross the valley, but David and the other four hundred continued the pursuit.*

Let me show you a map of what this looks like. Just so you get the idea so you can feel the sorry for the two hundred. That's what I want you to do. I want you to feel sorry for the two hundred who couldn't go any further. I mean their wives, sons, and daughters were captured, but they were just too worn out to do anything about it.

The battle was taking place between the Philistines in the red and Israel in the green up north in the valley of Jezreel. That's three days journey from Ziklag, which is about down in this place in the south. And when the men were kicked out of the army (in other words they can't fight because they're Jewish and they might turn on us), they made their three-day trek back down to Ziklag.

When they got there, things were in disarray, burned up, all their people were taken captive. So he goes before the Lord, what should we do? God says go after them. Well they're the Amalekites. The Amalekites were nomadic people. They didn't live in the city. They were nomads and they were drifters and moved around in the area south of this but north of Egypt. So down in that area is where they're roaming around. There's no definitive place you're going to go to find them. So it wouldn't be easy to find them.

But they head out and they go south fifteen more miles to Besor, which is a river that runs east and west. They get to that river and that's where the problem starts to take place. The guys are going, "We just can't go any further. We've marched sixty miles with all of our stuff on. We get to our town and we're just worn out and discouraged and distressed because our families are missing. Then we go walking another fifteen miles. We just can't do it. We're stuck. We're overwhelmed." So in that moment two hundred of them stayed with the stuff and four hundred of them went on to find the Amalekites. That's the picture we have.

We'll come back to these two hundred after the battle is done, but let's read on in the passage which says this. As they were going on and moving past the Besor river and going south, *they found an Egyptian in a field and brought him to David. They gave him water to drink and food to eat— part of a cake of pressed figs and two cakes of raisins. He ate and was revived, for he had not eaten any food or drunk any water for three days and three nights.*

This seems like a Good Samaritan kind of activity that's taking place. They don't know who he is. They don't know why he's there. But they do something kind even before they know who he is or why he's there. After he is revived then David is going to find out he's part of the raiding party. He's going to get some good insight and even gets him to be a guide to take him there.

I just want to point out that that's what happens many times when we are Good Samaritans. That we care for people unexpectedly. We do unexpected acts of kindness. It often comes back to us, and that's what's going to happen with David.

David asked him, "Who do you belong to? Where do you come from?"

He said, "I am an Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite. My master abandoned me when I became ill three days ago. We raided the Negev of the Kerethites, some territory belonging to Judah and the Negev of Caleb. And we burned Ziklag."

David asked him, "Can you lead me down to this raiding party?"

He answered, "Swear to me before God that you will not kill me or hand me over to my master, and I will take you down to them."

So through this providential meeting and David's men caring for this guy, they're able now to have a guide that's going to take them to where they didn't know where to go. So God had told them to go, but didn't tell them exactly where they were going. Just take the steps. Isn't that interesting. They had to take the steps and start moving and then God led them further once they got going in that direction. We don't have to know all the answers of where we're going in order to start obeying the Lord. That's what faith is. We don't have all the answers. We start doing the right thing and trust God for the difference. David is doing that and now God has revealed this very important guide who's going to take them down to this place.

He led David down, and there they were, scattered over the countryside, eating, drinking and reveling because of the great amount of plunder they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from Judah. Now I'm sure they were not on guard at this point because they imagined this battle was taking place in the north, all of Israel is up there, the Philistines are up there. They had free reign in the country. They came up and raided everything. They had no idea that David was rejected from the army and that he was on their tail now.

David fought them from dusk until the evening of the next day. So that's a whole day, another 24 hours. Just think about the strength necessary to do this. This is a very busy several days that they had. *Till evening of the next day and none of them got away, except four hundred young men who rode off on camels and fled. David recovered everything* (that word *everything* is important) *the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back.* It's just amazing that God's grace is here and he's able to get all these things back. *He took all the flocks and herds, and his men drove them ahead of the other livestock, saying, "This is David's plunder."*

So he's on his way back. God has rescued him from the challenging situation. And now we come back to Besor, because we have to come back to where the other two hundred guys are.

Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow him and who were left behind at the Besor Valley. They came out to meet David and the men with him. They had two or three days now to rest up. Because it took them that time to get to these guys, fight the battle for a day, and then come back. So these guys are rested up now, two or three days.

As David and his men approached, he asked them how they were. Isn't that an interesting thing right in the middle here? This is what makes a Christian leader different from someone who's not a Christian. I don't care whether it's in business or in your family or on a sports team. Wherever you are, a Christian leader isn't only concerned with the bottom line, with profits, with getting things done. The Christian leader is someone who's also caring about the people that they're leading. Caring about them – "How are you doing?"

So David comes back and says to them, "Hey, how are you doing? I know your back was really bothering you, you couldn't get any further, so you had to rest here. How are you doing? Oh and you. You were limping and your feet wore out on you. I understand that. Boy, that was really hard for you. I got it. You were just so overwhelmed I know you're just so tired you couldn't take another step. How are you doing now?" So this care that David does in the midst of this situation I think is very commendable and something we can learn from.

Now get ready for the dialogue. Here's where our application is coming. *But all the evil men and troublemakers among David's followers said, "Because they did not go out with us, we will not share with them the plunder we recovered. However, each man may take his wife and children and go."*

Now this is a very interesting statement and it really reflects a common thinking today that people have who are not Christians. There's going to be a really big truth of vital truth taught right now. It really draws a line between the way Christians should think and the way non-Christians think. David is going to illustrate that in just a moment. But these guys basically their statement is "we did it, we earned it, we should get the reward." They're focusing on their own selves and what they've done in their own work. Because they worked for it, they should get it. You might even start agreeing with that because in our culture to a great extent, you work and you get paid. I did the work; I get paid. That's the thinking that they're saying that these guys shouldn't get anything.

But listen to David's statement. *David replied, "No, my brothers, you must not do that with what the Lord has given us. He has protected us and delivered into our hands the raiding party that came against us."*

Notice what David is saying. Who is responsible for the plunder that they all have here and for conquering the battle? Is it because somebody did some great works or is it because of God's grace? Ah here we have it. Works versus grace. Those who focus on works, those are called evil men and scoundrels in the other translation. David's view is grace, that God is the one.

Look at the words again. *"No, my brothers, you must not do that with what the Lord has given us."* The Lord has given us this battle. The first thing he does is he restores the dignity to the people who were back there who must have been feeling bad about the fact that they didn't go

and fight and they couldn't, they were stuck, they were troubled. For whatever reason they didn't have the strength necessary to go on. He's restoring their dignity. There's no room in God's kingdom for spiritual superiority. Thinking you're better than someone.

That's the teaching that Paul gives in 1 Corinthians when he's talking about the spiritual gifts. Because here's the temptation. We all have one. If you're a Christian, you have a spiritual gift and the temptation for all of us is to think my gift is better than everybody else's. So Paul is saying – *The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you."* No. You can't do that. But the temptation is to view our own gift as really valuable because "you need me." That's what we all say to each other. "You need me here. If I wasn't here, then things wouldn't get set up," or "if I weren't there, people wouldn't be cared for." So we say those things and we start valuing ourselves more than other people. So Paul is saying about spiritual gifts that you can't do that. God has created a body and each one has its own parts. He's doing that to reduce the spiritual pride that anybody might have.

One of the things I like to encourage parents to do with their kids is to play games. Because when you play games with kids, it's a microcosm of life. They have to learn how to take turns, they have to learn not to touch the playing board when it's the other person's turn, they have to learn how to give encouraging words to the other person who's not doing too well in the game. When you're playing games, you have to learn how to lose. You know there's some kids who do not like to lose and they get so angry when they lose. They have to learn how to lose and they also have to learn how to win. Sometimes when kids are playing a game, they'll say, "Ha. I win. So you have to clean up the game." In other words, "I'm better than you are, so you have to do the servant task." But I would suggest that if Jesus was playing the game, He'd say, "I win, so I'll clean up the game."

I think that knowing how to manage our successes is a really important skill for any of us. Not just playing a game on a table, but the money that the Lord has provided for you, the prestige that you have, the reputation, the things that you have come from the Lord. If you start thinking, "I've earned this, I've got this," then you start holding onto things pretty tightly and you can develop a spiritual pride that gets in the way, just like the evil guys. I think I can find myself more easily relating to the evil guys and the scoundrel way of thinking than David's way of thinking in this passage. When I'm doing that, then I'm starting to think in terms of works and not grace. Because everything that we have is a result of God's grace and the gifts that He's given to us.

So David says, "*No, my brothers, you must not do that with what the Lord has given us. He has protected us and delivered into our hands the raiding party that came against us.*"

What David is basically saying is what we read in the Psalm 127:1, which says – *Except the Lord builds a house, they labor in vain that build it.* God is the one who's given you what you have. If you have a car, it's because God has given it to you. If you have a job, it's because God has given it to you.

If you get A's at school, what do you think about the person who gets B's or C's? Maybe God has allowed you to learn faster. Maybe you can remember things better. Maybe you get it

quicker. That's why you get A's. That's very important that you realize that because you want to do all you can to take advantage of the gifts that God has given you intellectually to do what you need to do. It is not good enough for you to get B's if you're capable of getting A's.

God gives those gifts. He gives some five, some two talents, some one talent. If you're a two-talent person, you maximize those two. If you're a five-talent person, you maximize those five. If you're a five-talent person, you don't pretend you're a two-talent person and say, "I can just slough off here." You do your work and you do it well because you have been given a task to do and you have been given grace by God. But it doesn't mean that you're a better person than the person who gets C's. The person who gets C's, God has a special plan for that person. They may have some other skills and abilities that you weren't even aware of that God wants to use in their life. It's all about this concept of grace that pours down on us and we need to recognize how huge that is, that God gives us grace in our lives.

Before we go on, I just want to talk to you about the people who stayed back at the brook. Maybe you were at that place where you wished that you could be a missionary and go out to Brazil (where we have our missionary team out there) and serve with them. Or maybe you wish you could go out and translate the scriptures in one of the languages that hasn't been translated yet. Or maybe you wish you could build churches in Kenya or do medical missions in Haiti, but you can't for whatever reason. Maybe because you have a family that you're caring for. Or maybe because you have other commitments here that prevents you from being able to. Or maybe you can't physically take on that kind of work.

What do you do if you're not spiritually strong enough to do something or you're physically challenged in an area, or you're just worn out by life? Is that an excuse to stop you? No. These guys had a job to do. Their job was to stay with the stuff. That's their job. They stay with the supplies. I would suggest that we have that same responsibility if we aren't going ahead somewhere and doing something out on the front lines, we can still have a part in the ministry that God has by staying with the stuff. It's a part of the process.

Listen to what else David says to illustrate this. Verse 24 – *“Who will listen to what you say? The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All will share alike.” David made this a statute and ordinance for Israel from that day to this.*

Did you hear what he did? He says those who stay behind with the stuff get the same reward as those who are out fighting the battle. Why? Because there are support people that are necessary to help with the battle. Those guys all went and fought the battle. They were able to leave their supplies somewhere guarded while they went out and fought the battle. Those support people were very important.

That's really strategic because I would suggest that if you're praying regularly for some missionary somewhere that we're supporting or you're supporting, you're participating in the support of that missionary. If you're giving financially to God's work, you're going to benefit just as much as the person who's out in the front lines or who's leading people to the Lord here. You get the same reward. That's the idea that's presented here. I just think this is a great life

truth that gives us such encouragement to serve the Lord right now where we are. We don't have to go somewhere else. Maybe God will call you out of that in something because often the support people are the ones who end up going out and doing those other things. It's great. But if you're out there or you're back working on the supplies or supporting those who were out there doing it, you get the same reward. That's such a neat concept.

I learned this concept many years ago and I try to live by this. I just want to give you an illustration of how I do this. You know that I speak around the country. Yesterday I was returning back from San Francisco where we spoke in a couple churches. In two weeks we're speaking at First Baptist Church Dallas. First Baptist Church Dallas is like a mega church. Their church building is a whole city block. It's just a huge church and we're speaking at that church. We have the privilege to teach a parenting seminar there.

Now occasionally when we go out and speak, they give the speaker a gift, like a speaker's gift, that has some water in it and some snacks and maybe something about the area or something. So they give this gift. It's my policy that when we get these gifts that as soon as I see the gift, I say, "That's not mine. That belongs to the team." I may have something out of it, but I take that gift back to the office and we share it together for those who are working in the office who aren't out there doing the work. I just think that's the concept that's being taught here and that we can share with those who are supporting us out on the front lines. It's a fascinating ordinance that David set up then that would be used continually from then on.

David had this real heart of understanding God's grace. If you understand God's grace, you become a giver, someone who gives to other people and shares with other people. That's what he does in the end of the passage here. *When David reached Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to the elders of Judah, who were his friends, saying, "Here is a gift for you from the plunder of the Lord's enemies."* Look at the list of all the people that got the gift. *David sent it to those who were in Bethel, Ramoth Negev and Jattir; to those in Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa and Rakal; to those in the towns of the Jerahmeelites and the Kenites; to those in Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athak and Hebron; and to those in all the other places where he and his men had roamed.*

Wow. David was eager to pass the message on or pass the gift on because he understood a very important concept – that everything we have comes because of God's grace, not because of the fact that we're great warriors or because we are of great intellect or because we know certain things that are better than other people. It's only because of God's grace that any of us have anything.

That's the message I think that's being taught in Colossians 3:10-12 where it says – *Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.* So God is continuing to renew us in this knowledge, to continue to change us, to continue to help us to grow to be the people He wants us to be. And this truth comes into our understanding of people. We can't view ourselves as superior to someone else. That's why this whole white supremacist thing is so sad and it's so much against what Christ teaches.

This is what Christ teaches: *There there is no Gentile or Jew.* Now even in the early church there was a struggle among the Jewish people that they thought that somehow the Gentiles needed to

become more Jewish because Jewish was God's chosen people. And God is saying no. *There is no Jew or Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

And then comes the *therefore* and we have the five words. *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with* these five words. And these are the five words. Just imagine having these five words. I need those in my life. You know how I'm going to get them? By recognizing how much God has given me. God is so gracious in allowing me to have what I have. I've become so thankful that I'm more patient with people. I've become so thankful and grateful that I'm humble about what God has given to me. That I'm so grateful and thankful that I'm compassionate with other people, and not judging them, or quick to criticize, or be cruel, or complain. Because God has given me those things.

It's just a really good statement about humility. Humility is recognizing the role of God in others in my successes. Yes, I may get the goal, but it's the whole team that gets the credit. God wants us to understand it and recognize it. It takes away some of that pride that's in our heart. It gets in the way of what God wants to do more deeply in our lives.

The reality is we're all sinners. Every one of us – child, young person, adult – we're all sinners. The only way that we get a personal relationship with God is by accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and our Savior. You don't get it by earning your salvation. You don't get it by saying, "Oh I do really well. I'm serving God," or "I'm doing good things and therefore God's going to let me into heaven." It doesn't happen by works. It happens because of God's grace, the very fact that Jesus Christ died on the cross for you and your sins. So you must make a decision to accept Jesus.

It isn't about just going to church regularly or giving to the poor. It's not just about reading your Bible. All those things are good, but that's not what gets you into heaven. What gets you into heaven is accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. Because it's grace. It's God's grace given to you. You can't earn it. It is a gift. And once you receive that gift, then you're just so grateful for what God has done, then you end up doing these things these works, as we might say, but it starts with God's grace in our hearts.

If you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you need to do it today. You can't earn your way to heaven. It only comes by asking Jesus Christ to live inside of you, to accept the gift that He's provided through His grace.