

What Is Enough To Secure A Place In The Kingdom?

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Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[0 : 00] For today we're in 2 Samuel chapter 1. Our passage is only the first 16 verses.! So verses 1 through 16.! I read this and I invite you to receive it, trusting that it's God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear, sufficient word.

It's his very own word for you and me, his people. 2 Samuel 1. Now it came to pass, after the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had stayed two days in Ziklag, on the third day, behold, it happened that a man came from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head.

So it was when he came to David that he fell to the ground and prostrated himself. And David said to him, Where have you come from? So he said to him, I have escaped from the camp of Israel. Then David said to him, How did the matter go? Please tell me. And he answered, The people have fled from the battle. Many of the people are fallen and dead. And Saul and Jonathan, his sons, are dead also.

So David said to the young man who told him, How do you know that Saul and Jonathan, his son, are dead? Then the young man who told him said, As I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa, there was Saul leaning on his spear.

[1 : 19] And indeed the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. Now when he looked behind me, he saw and called me, and I answered, Here I am. Then he said to me, Who are you?

So I said to him, I am an Amalekite. He said to me again, Please stand over me and kill me, for anguish has come upon me, but my life still remains in me.

So I stood over him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen. So I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them here to my Lord.

Therefore David took hold of his own clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him. And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son, for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

Then David said to the young man who told him, Where are you from? And he answered, I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite. So David said to him, How was it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?

[2 : 33] Then David called one of the young men and said, Go near and execute him. And he struck him so that he died. So David said to him, Your blood is on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, I have killed the Lord's anointed.

The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Let's pray.

Oh Lord, we trust your promises about your word, that your word is sharp.

It pierces through where no man can, in the hand of the Holy Spirit. Lord, we ask that your Holy Spirit will take your word, even this ancient narrative, and that your spirit will shine the light of Jesus Christ on this ancient passage, and apply it to our lives in a way, Lord, that you intended when you gave this to your church.

We pray that you will help the preacher, Lord, to proclaim truths that exalt you, that are right, and that edify your body. We pray for your church, Lord, to receive you by faith, to have discerning ears, to be pulled deeper and deeper into your word.

[4 : 08] And we thank you, Lord, for how though we are so limited, you are so powerful. And we pray, Lord, that you will minister in your powerful way, despite our weaknesses, that you'll do this for your glory in our lives, we ask.

Amen. Well, to survive in this world, we have to find out what is enough.

What's enough study time to get an A for that teacher? How fast do I have to run a mile in order to make a team? How many times do I have to practice my lines to be ready to perform them live on the stage?

For some of you, it's how much do I have to go above and beyond to get the bonus, to get the five-star rating? How much is enough? And today's passage forces us to face the same question as this young Amalekite.

He wants to secure a place in David's rising kingdom. David has been anointed by God. The word anointed is Messiah.

[5 : 22] The word Christ is anointed. So David is a shadow for us of the coming kingdom. And there's no question more important for you and me today than that as well.

What is enough to secure a place in the kingdom? I think we can learn from this non-example four things that are not enough.

And then with God's help to answer from Scripture what is enough. So number one, is it enough to secure a place in God's kingdom knowing who the true king is?

I want to argue that it's not enough to simply know who the true king is. Look at verse one. It came to pass after the death of Saul when David had returned from the slaughter of which group?

Which people? The Amalekites. Remember the Amalekites, the predatory parasites that sneak in and prey on the weak? The ones who burned down Ziklag and carried off all the women and children?

[6 : 30] That's who David just went out and with God's power they slayed them. Now 400 of them, I think it was, they fled off on camels. And David had come back now having rescued the women and children, they're back in the ashes of their town.

He stayed there two days, smelling that smell, the fire that these Amalekites had set to their city. But at least it's with his family, with their wives, their children.

They get to see one another again. Verse two says, on the third day, behold it happened that a man came from Saul's camp. The narrator unfolds small but important details gradually.

That's all we get for now. You can see almost the silhouette walking towards them of a man. And it's from the direction of where this battle took place. And as he gets closer, they can see his clothing, their torn clothes.

And there's dust on his head. This is what you would do if you're grieving and mourning publicly. You want people to know right away, I'm a person that's hurt and injured emotionally. Give me space.

[7 : 39] And ask me what's going on. Outwardly, this man appears to be emotionally distraught, undone. And so it was, when this man now gets very close and he came to David, he falls to the ground and prostrates himself before David, the man anointed to be the king under the Lord over his people.

Well, this initial impression we get of this man is one who outwardly appears to be on the side of Israel. Outwardly, he appears to be humble, meek, and one who belongs to the kingdom of heaven coming to earth in this shadowy form in Israel.

And let's just pause right here because it's hard to interpret these Old Testament passages correctly and the science of correctly interpreting God's word is called hermeneutics.

And then when we go to apply God's word, we often get it wrong as well. So here's a very simple rule we need to remember on difficult passages like this. We are always the worst person in any narrative.

That's us. Let's just start with that. And then the next part is what does this reveal about God? So right away, let's recognize that this Amalekite, this man approaching David, prostrating before David, this is who we need to identify with.

[9 : 06] Some of us have known the emptiness of this type of worship. Maybe some today who this is the only type of knowledge of God that you have.

Let me put on an outward show of reverence to him and maybe he'll remember me when he comes in glory and power one day. Brothers and sisters, for you and me, that's been part of our testimony. Is that enough to know who the true king is and put on an outward show of religion? It's not enough, is it? In Matthew 8, 29, the demons recognize the son of God walking the earth and they say to him, what have you to do with us, son of God?

Have you come here to torment us before the time? The demons knew who the true king is. It's Jesus Christ. Christ. And that's not enough to have a place in his kingdom. Not only is that superficial worship and knowledge of God insufficient, but also doing what we guess the true king wants done is also not enough.

[10:27] Doing what we guess the true king wants done is also not enough to secure a place in his kingdom. That's what the Amalekite tries next. Look at verse 3. David said to him, where do you come from?

So he said to him, I have escaped from the camp of Israel. Well, the immediate thought that David has here is I want to hear the report because again, he's been off fighting a different battle, saving back his women, the women and children from Ziklag.

And he's been wondering now for two days, is the battle over? How did it go? And this is the first report he gets. So it's what's on David's mind in verse 4. David said to him, how did the matter go? Please tell me. And he answered, the people have fled from the battle. All of Israel retreated. They ran away. Many of the people have fallen dead, including Saul and Jonathan, his son.

They're also dead. We can put ourselves there with David. This is his beloved friend, his brother in the battle, the one who had recognized David as the one that God has anointed and chosen.

[11:37] I would love to have a place in this kingdom. And he hears these words that Jonathan and Saul are both dead. What's on David's mind in verse 5?

David said to the young man who told him, how do you know that Saul and Jonathan, his son, are dead? Isn't that one of the early stages of grief? It's shock and denial. I just got to know if this is going to even sink in.

Are you an eyewitness? Do I need to accept this hard truth from you? Verse 6, then the young man who told him said, as I happened by chance, it already makes you wonder if that's a stretch.

That's what this Amalekite's claiming. As I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa, there was Saul leaning on his spear. Well, you can look back to the last chapter of 1 Samuel, chapter 31, verse 4b, says that Saul leaned on his sword, not his spear.

Now, we know more than David knows. We've heard the narrator's account. David hasn't. But we're already even more suspicious. If at first it was profiling him for just being an Amalekite, maybe that was wrong, but now we're suspicious of his report.

[12:56] And then what he says next, indeed the chariots and horsemen followed hard after Saul. Well, chapter 31, verse 3, says it was the archers who got Saul.

Three times in one verse, the archers, the archers, the archers, not the chariots. Verse 7, now when he looked behind him, he saw me and called, and I answered, here I am.

This Amalekite's positioning himself as a servant to the king of Israel. Here I am. In Hebrew, it's a heavy word. It's the same response of Abraham to God.

Here I am, God. I'm your servant. It's the response of Moses at the burning bush to God. Here I am, God. And Isaiah in the throne room, here I am. It signifies total availability and submission to the greater king.

And this Amalekite's portraying himself as faithful, obedient servant of the king of Israel. And he's trying to say that anything I did was just out of my duty now to the one who I've said is my king.

[14:05] In verse 8, he said to me, who are you? So I answered him, I am an Amalekite. He said to me again, please stand over me and kill me for anguish has come upon me but my life still remains.

The word anguish, Shabbat, it's rare and difficult to translate this. Some scholars suggest it refers to a seizure, like a spasm of all the muscles.

Perhaps implying that Saul's armor, there's the armor of Saul making another appearance, had become a trap for him and he's suffocating. Maybe he was paralyzed by the terror of the moment. The Amalekite uses this specific medical sounding term and it adds detail to the story and maybe this part is true that he did seesaw there.

By the way, he walked away with the bracelet and the crown. He did get those somehow. So maybe those details are accurate. Verse 10, so I stood over him and killed him because I was sure he could not live after he had fallen.

[15:13] So the Amalekite's claiming I did the right thing. I took the old man out of his misery. He was in anguish and I just was doing a gracious thing.

I was mercifully letting him die in peace, end his suffering. But he's saying that I'm the one who killed Saul and now we know he's bearing false witness.

He's lying. Chapter 31, verse 4b says that Saul killed himself. The Amalekite is most likely trying to take credit for something he thought the true king, David, would want to have done.

He's guessing at what the new king wanted to happen and telling this report to promote himself in the eyes of the rising king. But doing what we guess the true king wants done is not enough to secure a place in his kingdom.

How many of us have approached God that way? I don't know what God wants but I think God wants me to do this or that and so I'm going to do these things and my intention is to get some points in God's eyes and be able to present this back to God.

[16:29] Look what I have done for you, Lord. And our Lord Jesus warned about that in the New Testament. He doesn't want our sacrifices. He wants us to obey him.

And what he's called us to do is very simple. Believe in me. Follow me. I will be the king of your life. I will be your good shepherd.

Abide in me. That's what he calls us to. Our flesh, we want to go around doing what we guess he wants us to do. Adding on what we think are good works in order to secure a place in his kingdom. And that's not enough. Number three, giving what we think the king wants to receive is also not enough to secure a place in his kingdom. Giving what we think the king wants to receive is not enough to secure a place in his kingdom.

Look at verse 10. The Amalekite continues, I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm and I have brought them here to the Lord, to David.

[17:34] I could have sold these, I could have bartered them away. It's a lot of gold and silver in my hands. My clothes are torn and I'm bringing them to you, David. But it's a transaction.

It's bartering. These are very valuable. But what's even more valuable is a high place, a standing secured for me in the kingdom of this new king. The Amalekites saw a power vacuum over the Israelites who David had just defeated the Amalekites.

And by bringing the crown and the bracelet to David, he was essentially crowning David himself.

Likely hoping for a high-ranking position or some kind of massive financial reward for delivering the news and the emblems of the power David would soon hold.

In verse 11 we read, Therefore David took hold of his own clothes and tore them. And so did all the men who were with him. And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son, for the people of the Lord and for the house of Israel because they had fallen on the sword.

It shows you David's heart one more time. It's not for the crown. It's not for what this world could offer. His heart is for the Lord's anointed and his son and the people of God.

[19:04] The whole house of Israel for his brothers in battle who were all slain by the sword. Many of these would have been those same 3,000 skilled soldiers who had been chasing David and his men around in the wilderness all these years.

These Benjamites who they could have viewed as their enemy. And this is tearing David up in his heart. Instead of celebrating the death of his rival, his reaction was one of genuine sorrow.

And as goes the king, so goes his kingdom. All his people, his men with him, share his heart for the Lord's people. Verse 13, Then David said to the young man who told him, Where are you from?

And he answered, I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite. This is the same question and answer that Saul used with this young man. Who are you?

Where are you from? I'm an Amalekite. And now, the new king asked that same question and answer. So Saul's interaction with the Amalekite is set up as a contrast with David's interaction with the Amalekite.

[20:14] The downfaling king and the uprising king set in contrast one to the other. Saul represents the way of the world, a king like all the other nations.

And David represents the kingdom of God. In verse 14, David said to him, How was it you were not afraid to stretch forth your hand and destroy the Lord's Messiah?

That's the word he uses. You have attacked the one that God anointed. This is not just a crime against man. It's an assault upon God himself.

Here the Amalekite came bringing to the king what he thought the king would want to receive as a gift. The crown. The thing that David's been very patiently waiting for in God's timing.

Here it is in your hands. And instead, David's heart has been reserved by the spirit for God's timing. For God's way of doing it. Giving the king what we think he wants is not enough.

[21 : 20] we can fall into that same temptation of the Middle Ages. I'm going to drop some coins into the offering box and God will use that to overlook a portion of my sins.

Or I'm going to sacrifice and give in all these other ways. But yet, my heart isn't the Lord's. My heart's not for his people, for his coming kingdom, what he's made very clear. We need to repent of that and instead of trying to bring a gift we think the Lord may want from me, we need to give him ourselves.

We need to surrender our whole lives to the Lord. That's what he's after with God's people all along. It's our heart. Well, the fourth observation is the last one.

It's still no solution. But to sum it all up, it's this. There is nothing we can do or bring or know to secure a place for ourselves in the kingdom that is coming.

There's nothing we can know, do, or bring that will ever be enough. Verse 15 says, Then David called one of the young men and said to him, Go near and execute him.

[22 : 32] And he struck him so that he died. In a military or royal context, this term, young man, that's been used of the Amalekite, it refers to a servant or an armor bearer close to someone important.

And that's how the Amalekite had portrayed himself. I'm Saul's helper. I'm this young man associated with Israel and Saul. The irony is that David uses his own young man, his own armor bearer to execute this man who bore a false witness and who killed the Lord's anointed.

It creates a measure for measure parallel. This servant is now killed for being an assassin.

In verse 9, the Amalekite claims that Saul had said that he was in anguish and pain. And in verse 16, David said to him, Your blood is on your own head for your own mouth.

You testified against you saying, I have killed the Lord's anointed. Saul's not letting him off the hook even if his story was true.

[23 : 46] Even if King Saul had asked you to do that, your blood, his blood is on your hands. You're guilty. David's acting as a king. The king in a monarchy judges.

He makes decisions. He rules in hard cases like King Solomon had to judge, be the supreme court. And David has now declared this man guilty.

He says, Your mouth has answered against you. You have said I killed the king. We know more than David.

We also know that this man is bearing false witness. He's lying. Someone commented, Anytime that the witness of an Amalekite disagrees with the witness of the narrative, never listen to the Amalekite.

The narrator is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Of course, the cynics and critics will point to this. Oh, see, the Bible contradicts itself. The Bible has even errors, some have said.

[24 : 44] No, the Amalekite bore false witness and under Torah law, a malicious witness who seeks the death of another through lies deserves the same punishment.

So the irony, even though David didn't know as much as we know, is that he had lied about killing Saul to get this reward and that lie was now the legal basis furthermore for his execution.

Luke 18, 14, Jesus said, all those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted. Saul had exalted himself over and over and over again and he has been brought low.

And in the kingdom of God, this pattern will stop. the first person trying to creep into David's kingdom is an Amalekite trying to pretend like he's not an enemy of God's kingdom and God's people, trying to exalt himself and he ends with execution.

This will not happen in the kingdom of God's anointed where the Lord truly rules over his people. It's those who humble themselves low before the anointed one of God who kiss the son lest he be angry and you will perish.

[26 : 03] Those are the ones he is pleased to exalt. There is nothing we can do or know or bring that will ever be enough. Think of what other stories this reminds you of.

Probably a lot. God's word is so rich and there are really only so many themes in all of scripture but they're rich and beautiful and they all work together. The Amalekite wanted to trade these pieces of gold and silver for a place in the kingdom of God under David.

He was self-promoting, manipulating, leveraging to get a reward for himself. The Amalekite viewed the death of the Lord's anointed as an opportunity for gain in this life.

He was like a shadow of Judas. Aren't you picturing him? Both men viewed the Messiah as a commodity to be traded for personal advancement and financial gain. They saw the true king but they completely missed out on his kingdom. Brothers and sisters, my last question for us today, we've come to the end of our passage but I've only given you depressing news so far.

[27 : 20] Here's the last question. What is enough to have a place in the Lord's kingdom? What is enough to have a place with King Jesus?

David, the man after God's heart which is better translated this way, the man upon whom God had set his divine heart elected by God not because he deserved anything but because God chose to show David grace.

He refused the crown this way because the Holy Spirit caused him to. He would receive the crown from God alone in God's timeline and in God's way.

To David, the crown wasn't something to be snatched for himself. The Lord had already taught him this lesson several times to wait upon the Lord. David has been anointed but his whole life so far has been misery, suffering, wilderness.

He's in exile. He's a sojourner. A man without a home. The home he temporarily had just got burnt to ashes. But he has received from the Lord a promise.

[28 : 37] And all things have not yet been put under his feet. And he's trusting by faith that God will be true to his promise. And God will do what he said.

You see how David foreshadows the great king, the great anointed one. Think of Matthew 4, 9 and 10. Jesus says, all these things I will give you.

I'm sorry. In Matthew 4, the enemy tempts Jesus. Satan says to Jesus, I will give you all these things. I will give you the kingdoms of this whole world, Jesus.

But you must fall down and worship me. And our Lord Jesus quotes back to the enemy. You shall worship the Lord your God. Jesus is the king ruled by God's word, ruled by God's law, fearing God alone.

Luke 9, 58. The son of man, Jesus Christ, has nowhere to lay his head. He traveled this earth like David, like an exile. A man that was poor.

[29 : 41] No one recognized him as the true king. Philippians 2, 8 and 9. Jesus Christ humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death. He is the one who reversed the pattern that Saul could never keep.

Instead of exalting himself, Jesus made himself as low as could possibly be and then much lower still and cursed. And therefore, because of his obedience, his act of obedience to the Father, God has highly exalted him.

In Hebrews 2, 8, God has put all things in subjection under the feet of King Jesus. Already spiritually, he rules. And one day, he will rule physically and consummately.

His kingdom will cover the earth. We do not yet see all things put under his feet, Hebrews tells us, but we know he is the king.

Luke 18, as we read earlier, Jesus is teaching those who came into the house of God a place that's meant to be a house of prayer. And he said, a Pharisee stood and prayed with himself, God, I thank you I'm not like other men sinners.

[30 : 55] A man trying to manipulate God, trying to self-promote within the kingdom of God, just like the Amalekite. And telling God, here's a list of reasons why you should show me your favor.

And Jesus said, there is another man standing far off who would not so much raise his eyes to heaven, but he pounded his chest saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

I tell you, Jesus said, to all those listening then and now, this man went down to his house justified, the one that said, have mercy on me, Lord, the one that bowed low before God, that humbled himself before the true king.

The other man did not go home forgiven or justified. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

The Amalekite tried to get the anointed king to remember him based on what he brought and what he had claimed to do. He tried to secure a place in the kingdom of God based on his own merits.

[32 : 01] Lord Jesus, remember me who did all of this for you. Brethren and sister, if that's your prayer or your attitude toward the Lord, there is no place.

We need to humble ourselves, put all those things aside. It's the sinner just like the thief on the cross who had nothing to bring, nothing to offer the true king.

I think the reason we're so encouraged by the criminal on the cross is because his faith in that moment as he's dying, it's what we all cry out and we do have some things we can look to in our lives and that man in that moment had nothing and he cried out, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

That's the same prayer that the Amalekites asking David in other words and that's our prayer in this life and as we think about the life to come, Lord, will you remember me when you come in your kingdom?

Is there more I can do to have that place secured with you? But be encouraged, brothers and sisters. Like, this is Jesus' own words, the sinner who said, beating his chest, have mercy, I'm a sinner.

[33 : 22] That's all I have to bring to you. Or the criminal on the cross. There's nothing, no basis for Christ to remember him. When Christ is going to remember that criminal, all he'll be able to think of is there's nothing he did good, he was found guilty of crimes deserving a torturous!

death on the cross. What can that man point to to be remembered for? Based on what? And you know what our Lord Jesus said to that man and he says this to you and me, today, you will be with me in paradise.

I will remember you in my kingdom. Not because you have brought me anything of your own merit, but because I purchased you with my very own blood.

It's based on faith that Jesus Christ welcomes sinners like you and me into his kingdom. It's based on us simply trusting he is who he says he is.

And we are saved on the basis of what he has promised. That God is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness to sinners like you and me.

[34 : 42] Do you receive that promise again today? Do you trust this? Then you can pray with confidence knowing the answer, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom and you know your place is secure with Christ.

Let's pray and thank our great Lord. Lord, Lord, we confess our faith is weak, but we confess in the same breath that our Savior is great.

Lord, oh Lord, it's our flesh in us that always makes us think we need to do more to please you, more to make ourselves saved, secure in you forever.

Help us to receive again today the simple, glorious gospel truth that God so loved us that he sent his only begotten son, Jesus Christ, to save sinners like us that whosoever will believe what he has promised shall have eternal life.

Help us to know this today, Lord. Be stirred up to love you more because you first loved us and gave your son for us. May you be glorified, Father, in this church.

[36 : 03] Amen.