

Bible Study May 8, 2024

1 SAMUEL 31 (ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION)

Recap:

Chapter 29 David about to fight in war and Philistine sends him home.

Chapter 30:

- 30:4 Family was taken and the people wept, until no more strength to weep
- 30:8 David encouraged himself in the Lord, David inquired of the Lord.
- 30:18 David recovered all and nothing was missing.

Now we are back to the battle. That David was rejected from fighting in.

Chapter 31

¹ Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. ² And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons, and the Philistines struck down Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua, the sons of Saul.

We see David not losing anything and we See Saul losing everything.

³ The battle pressed hard against Saul, and the archers found him, and he was badly wounded by the archers. ⁴ Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and mistreat me." But his armor-bearer would not, for he feared greatly. Therefore Saul took his own sword and fell upon it.

In Saul's last moments, he is still worrying about what people will think of Him. This was a big issue that Saul had.

Proverbs 29:25 (ESV) - The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.

The Philistines had a well-earned reputation for torturing their captives. Saul likely knew about Samson's fate (Judges 16:18-31) and did not want to risk physical mutilation or other abuse.

Saul was tall, handsome, strong, rich, and powerful, but all this was not enough to make him someone we should emulate. He was large physically, but he was small in God's eyes. He was handsome, but his sin made him ugly. He was strong, but his lack of faith made him weak. He was rich, but he was spiritually bankrupt. He could give orders to many, but he couldn't command their respect or allegiance. Saul looked good on the outside, but he was decaying on the inside. A right relationship with God and strong character are much more valuable than a good-looking exterior.

Saul's armor bearer faced a moral dilemma—should he carry out a sinful order from a man he was supposed to obey? He knew he should obey his master, the king, but he also knew murder was wrong; particularly, he knew that it was wrong to kill the Lord's anointed king. He decided not to kill Saul.

Saul faced death the same way he faced life. He took matters into his own hands without thinking of God or asking for his guidance. If our lives aren't the way we would like them to be now, we can't assume that change will come more easily later. When nearing death, we will respond to God the same way we have been responding all along. Coming face-to-face with death only shows us what we are really like. How do you want to face death? Start facing life that way right now.

⁵ And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him. ⁶ Thus Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, on the same day together.

⁷ And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley and those beyond the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their cities and fled. And the Philistines came and lived in them.

⁸ The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. ⁹ So they cut off his head and stripped off his armor and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines, to carry the good news to the house of their idols and to the people.

¹⁰ They put his armor in the temple of Ashtaroath, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

- To put Saul's armor in the Philistine temple gave credit to a pagan goddess for victory over Saul. Ashtoreth was an ancient Middle Eastern goddess of war, fertility, and sex.

¹¹ But when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, ¹² all the valiant men arose and went all night and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. ¹³ And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh and fasted seven days.

Why did the men of Jabesh-Gilead risk their lives for the body of Saul. Remember 1 Sam 11. Nahash the Ammonite, told the men of Jabash they would kill them or they should surrender and have one eye plucked out. Saul is the one that gathered the people and they said I will be there and tomorrow by the time the Sun is hot they will have salvation. They never forgot that.

The Bible gives a synopsis at the end of the Story of Saul.

1 Chronicles 10:13-14 (ESV) ¹³ So Saul died for his breach of faith. He broke faith with the LORD in that he did not keep the command of the LORD, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance. ¹⁴ He did not seek guidance from the LORD. Therefore the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.

Saul didn't seek guidance from the Lord.

Here is what he should do.

- Be humble

1 Peter 5:5 (ESV) ⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,

- We should place more emphasis on character than reputation. Reputation is what people see when they look at you, character is who you are when no one is watching.

James 3:16-17 (ESV) ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Although Saul had been chosen by God and had a mission in life, he struggled constantly with jealousy, insecurity, arrogance, impulsiveness, and deceit. He did not decide to be wholeheartedly committed to God. Because Saul would not trust God to lead him fully, he never became the leader God wanted him to be.

Saul's death was also the death of an ideal—the people of Israel could no longer believe that having a king like the other nations would solve all their troubles. The real problem was not the form of government but the sinful king. Saul tried to please God by spurts of religiosity, but real faithfulness takes a lifetime of consistent obedience.

Heroic spiritual lives are built by stacking days of obedience one on top of the other. Like a brick, each obedient act is small in itself, but in time the acts will pile up, and a huge wall of godly character will be built—a great defense against temptation. We should strive for consistent obedience each day.