

1 Samuel Chapter 31 Commentary

1Sa 31:1 ¶ "Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. 2 And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons."

The Philistines begin their war on Israel, and they are victorious as predicted by Samuel in: **1Sa 28:19** *"Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines."* A reminder to us: if God says something, he will fulfill his word.

Why is Israel losing this battle? It is because of Israel's sin in desiring a man king in the place of their God king. It is because their man king, Saul, rejected God, and disobeyed his specific commandment to utterly destroy the Amalekites as God told him to do.

Thus, we see; personal sins have far reaching circumstances and involve the hurt of others. See how Saul's sin is bringing the death of his sons and many Israelites. When you are making a choice to disobey God, remember that you may be destroying the life of your natural family, and/or your spiritual family.

What lesson can we draw from this scene? Israel is looking to Saul, not God, and God has left them to the strength of Saul. We see that Saul's strength is not able to lift its hand against the Philistines. If a church looks to, and worships, the preacher instead of God, they are in for a fall, just as Israel is now falling. They will find that they are left to the strength of a man, and a man's strength cannot save them from the devil's incursions into the church.

It does not matter who you are in nature, disobedience to God's commandments is sin against God, and it will surely have the consequence of a judicial judgment of God attached to it. This teaches us; it is not as the world teaches today in the me society, which says it is all about me and the world is to give me all I desire: but rather, every person is to live as a subject and slave to God. You are not your own if you have been born again. You have been bought with a price, which is the death of Christ on the cross. God, please help us to be filled with a humble, and willing, spirit to serve thee in faithfulness, we ask in the name of Jesus, Amen!

3 And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. 4 Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore, Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. 5 And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him. 6 So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together."

Saul was hit by an arrow, which did not kill him immediately; but he knows he is mortally wounded. He doesn't want to be killed or abused by a Philistine, so he asks his armorbearer to finish him off. The armourbearer was afraid to lift his hand against the Lord's anointed; so, Saul commits suicide by falling upon "**a sword**." Scripture does not say his own sword. His armourbearer does fall upon his own sword. Thus, we see: God fulfilled his word, through Samuel, concerning Saul and his sons in **1Sa 28:19**, on the specified day.

Some will argue: Saul didn't commit suicide, because he was already mortally wounded and would have died very soon anyway. However, if we believe that the bible is the truth; we must believe that Saul took his own life, for that is what scripture tells us. It does not matter that he was mortally wounded, the truth is the truth. Saul's death by his own hand is proof to us that if a person commits suicide, it does not mean they are going to hell, because scripture testifies to us that Saul was saved. **1Sa 28:19** *"Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me:"* Saul is not buried for several days so he could not be in the grave with Samuel, and if that is what Samule meant by his prophesy Saul would have been buried the day he was slain. What happens when a person dies? If they are not a child of God, their spirit and soul goes immediately to hell. If they are a child of God: the soul and spirit go immediately to the heaven where Christ is. This is the only way that Saul could be with Samule on the day he was killed. Thus, we understand, if a person commits suicide, and they are a Child of God, they will go to heaven.

What a sad time and thought. If we get so far from God, that in the end of our life, we are left to ourselves, without the Holy Spirit presence to comfort us, and give us dying grace. Dear God in heaven, please do not leave us comfortless in our end of mortal life, we ask in the name of Jesus, Amen!

7 "And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them."

When Israel saw that Saul and his sons were dead, and the rest of the Israelites engaged with the Philistines fleeing; they all fled, and the war is ended. With Israel fled away, and no one to fight with, the Philistines move into the abandoned cities and dwell in them.

Such a sad thought and a lesson for us today. If the church body turns from God to worshipping, or trusting, a man, God will allow that church body to be destroyed and occupied by our enemy the devil. The same is true of the individual Christian life. Precious Father in heaven, please help us to love you above all things, and to love one another as we love you, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen!

8 ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. 9 And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people. 10 And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan."

The next day, as the Philistines are collecting the plunder of the fallen Israelites, they find Saul's and his son's bodies. They cut off Saul's head and send it through the land of the Philistines to tell the story of their victory over Israel, and Saul, and to publish that Saul was dead. They are urging the Philistines to tell the story to their gods and give them thanks for the victory over Israel, never realizing that this was a judicial judgment from God against Saul and Israel for their sins against God.

They put Saul's armour in the temple of Ashtaroth, which was set up there to give glory and thanks to their god Ashtaroth. They also fastened his body to a wall in the city of Bethshan.

When we fail in our walk as a Christian in life, as an individual or a church body, we are giving ourselves to be put on display to the false gods of the world, which proclaim that the Children of God and the Church of God are nothing.

This should serve as an admonishment to us, that we do nothing to bring darkness upon the name of the Church of Jesus Christ, or our names as individual Christians. This should urge us to cling the more closely to God, and to humble us to be willing to do his bidding.

11 And when the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead heard of that which 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 Bethshan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. 13 And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days."

When the men of Jabeshgilead hear what the Philistines have done to the bodies of Saul and his sons; the valiant men go in the night and recover the bodies. They take them down from the wall where they were displayed to shame Israel, and they burned the bodies, and buried the bones under a tree in Jabesh.

As one commentator pointed out: it was not normal for Israelites to burn the bodies of their dead. However, given the circumstances of Israel having just fallen to the Philistines, these men did not have the time to go through the normal burial process of preparing the bodies to be buried. Also, the bodies would already be well into the process of decaying for it has been at least two days since they were killed. Thus, they burned the bodies and buried the bones.

After completing their task, they observed the law ordinance of seven days uncleanness, because they have handled dead bodies, seen in: ***Nu 19:11 ¶ "He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days."*** They were supposed to cleanse themselves with the "***water of separation***," to which they probably did not have any access at this time. Therefore, they fasted for seven days instead.

To further substantiate our affirmation that Saul was a saved child of God: we point out that in: ***1Sa 28:19 "and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me."*** This battle took place the next day and Saul and his sons

were slain. However, their bodies were not buried until a few days later. They were not buried the next day, so they could not be in the grave as Samuel; therefore, we believe that Samuel was telling Saul that the souls of him, and his sons, would be with him in heaven the next day, which is where the souls of God's people go when they die. The souls of God's people are not in the earthly graves.

With this chapter we come to the end of Saul and his reign as king over Israel. Though he was a man anointed by God to be king, and saved eternally by God, yet we must say that he was not a good king. Most of his reign as king was spent in disobedience to God and his commandments and forsaken of God because of his disobedience. Most of this reign as king was spent without the presence of God in his life. Israel wanted to be like other nations and God told them in what manner, this king they desired, would reign over them. God also told them they would be his, the king's servants, implying that God would no longer acknowledge them to be the servants of God.

What a sad day; when we turn our backs upon God and return to living like the world, indulging in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Since God is holy, and pure, and cannot abide sin: He must exact judicial judgments upon us as a consequence of bringing shame upon the name of God and Jesus Christ.

However, there is one bright prospect in this, which is our eternal salvation, which is secure in Jesus Christ. Though we stumble and fall in our walk as a Christian in life, our eternal salvation (Christ in us) is still secure; just as is demonstrated in the death of Saul. Thank you, King Jesus, for your eternal remission of our sins, and giving to us eternal life in the new birth. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!