

SAUL REMOVED BY DEATH

[BIBLE TEXT](#) : I Samuel 31:1-13; II Samuel 1:1-27;

LESSON 218 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Sin, when it s finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15).

[BIBLE TEXT in King James Version](#)

1 Samuel 31:1-13

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.

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.

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.

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

[BIBLE REFERENCES:](#)

[NOTES:](#)

A Sad End

How sad was the end of Saul's life! At one time he had been the called of the Lord, the king of God's chosen people, in favor with God and man. He died a backslider, forsaken by God and conquered by the heathen.

Saul had brought this shame upon himself. God had looked with favor upon him, and had chosen him from among the people to lead the Israelites. God had given him a new heart, and the Holy Spirit had rested upon him. But one disobedience had followed another until God could talk no more with Saul. The Spirit had departed from him, and he felt no more conviction for sin. Saul could not continue to win battles without God's help.

Saul's Last Battle

A great battle had raged between the Philistines and the Israelites. The armies of the Israelites were still looking to Saul as their king and commander; and the Philistines knew that if they could kill him, the Children of Israel would flee in despair.

There were no bombs, hand grenades, or flame throwers in those days. Wars were carried on with bows and arrows, sword's and spears, and sometimes with machines that threw stones.

When the Philistines found Saul, one of their archers drew his bow, and the arrow sped out to hit the king. Saul was mortally wounded, but did not die at once. He called for his armor-bearer to thrust him through with a sword so that the Philistines would not take the credit for ending his life and his reign over Israel. But the armor-bearer could not think of killing his master, although it was sure that he must die anyway.

Saul was determined that the Philistines' spear should not cause his death, so he fell upon a sword, thus passing into eternity a suicide. So died the man who had once been the anointed of the Lord, with a bright future before him. He could have had eternal life if he had been faithful to the call of God.

Saul's armor-bearer felt that Israel had been so greatly dishonored in the fall of their leader that he was not worthy to live longer. He fell on his sword, too, and died.

Trophy for Idol Temples

The Philistines added one insult upon another. It was the custom to search the bodies of fallen soldiers for any valuables that might be upon them. When the Philistines found Saul and his sons, they not only took their treasures, but they cut off the head of Saul and sent it, with his armor, to the heathen temples in their land.

Of course, the Philistines would rejoice that their enemy had been slain; and wherever they met to worship their idols, the head of Saul was displayed to prove their triumph. Think of the shame and grief that the Israelites suffered in having their leader so dishonored! All Israel suffered for the unfaithfulness of their king.

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.

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.

2 Samuel 1:1-27

¹ Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag;

² It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and *so* it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance.

³ And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped.

⁴ And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.

⁵ And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead?

⁶ And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul

A Victorious Death

How different was the death of another Saul, the man who became the Apostle Paul! He had denounced idol worship, and had fearlessly proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, although it meant that he would have to be a martyr for his faith. He had faithfully warned the sinners that they must repent if they wanted to escape eternal punishment. He loved the souls of men so much that he was willing to give his own life to help them prepare for Heaven.

Among the Apostle's last words were: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Timothy 4:7, 8). He met his God in peace. He had obeyed the call of God and had been faithful unto death. A reward was waiting for him such as every faithful soldier for Jesus will receive.

But for King Saul there was no hope. He had turned his back on God, and he could expect nothing more than that God would also turn His back.

When the Israelites heard that their leader had fallen in battle, they were as sheep without a shepherd. They fled in panic from their towns, and the Philistines moved into the homes they had vacated.

God's Plans for Us

During this time David made his headquarters at Ziklag, a city controlled by the Philistines. Achish, the king of Gath, had given David and his 600 men permission to live here to be safe from Saul.

When David returned from a victorious battle with the Amalekites God was with him, and he could triumph. These were the Amalekites that Saul was supposed to have destroyed; but because Saul had failed in his duty, David was sent to complete the job.

God has a work for us to do from the time He saves us. He can look ahead and *see* what we will be fit to do, and He makes plans for us accordingly. But what if we fail to do the task He has outlined? Someone else will have to do it, and he will get the reward. God's work must be done, and if one person refuses or neglects his responsibility, God will find someone else to do it.

The Sad Tidings

Word now came to David that Saul and Jonathan were dead. The man who brought the tidings came with his clothes torn and with dirt upon his head to show that he was the bearer of sad news. He bowed himself low before David, in mock humility. He had come to try to win favor for himself from David.

When David learned that the messenger had been in the battle when Saul had fought the Philistines, he asked who had won the victory. What heart-rending news he heard! "The people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also." How sad when God's people give up to the enemy and run to their tents!

The young man went on to explain that he had noticed that Saul and Jonathan, in the heat of the battle, were being chased by the Philistines on horses and chariots. The young man said Saul had called him to come and kill him. The young man had obeyed, he said, and then had taken Saul's bracelet and crown

leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him.

⁷ And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here *am* I.

⁸ And he said unto me, Who *art* thou? And I answered him, I *am* an Amalekite.

⁹ He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life *is* yet whole in me.

¹⁰ So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that *was* upon his head, and the bracelet that *was* on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.

¹¹ Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that *were* with him:

¹² And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.

¹³ And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence *art* thou? And he answered, I *am* the son of a stranger, an Amalekite.

¹⁴ And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD'S anointed?

¹⁵ And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, *and* fall upon him. And he smote him that he died.

¹⁶ And David said unto him, Thy blood *be* upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD'S anointed.

¹⁷ And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son:

and had now brought them to David. He no doubt thought that David would honor him for destroying the one who had so often tried to destroy David. But if David had wanted to be rid of Saul, he could often have done it himself.

David's Reply

David did not take the news as the young man had thought he would. Instead, he and his men mourned over the death of Saul and Jonathan. They fasted and wept because the king of Israel was dead.

David did not know but that the young man's story was true. He asked him, "How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD'S anointed?" David who was one of God's chosen people and had already been anointed to be king, had been afraid to touch the Lord's anointed; but this heathen said he had deliberately put the king to the sword. He got no thanks from David. Rather, David judged him by his own words — that he had killed the Lord's anointed — and condemned him to death.

David's Mourning

The love between David and Jonathan has been praised throughout the world. They had many of the same characteristics; Jonathan's soul was as the soul of David. Because Jonathan was modest, he loved David's modesty. He was brave, and he appreciated the courage of David. Both were born of God, and enjoyed the unity of the faith. Jesus said: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Jonathan had been willing to brave his father's displeasure to help David. And now David had lost his friend. Jonathan was dead. David said: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" Although David's greatest grief was for Jonathan, his beloved, he did not forget the bravery of the king, and the battles he had won for Israel. He mourned: "The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!" He asked the young women to remember the rich prizes that had been brought to them by Saul and his armies when they had returned as victors from the battle: "Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel." He extolled the bravery of Saul and Jonathan in battle, but added: "The shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil." In spite of his past glory, the anointing of the Lord and his honor as king of Israel, he had died a sinner, as though he had never been thus honored.

QUESTIONS

- 1 How had Saul begun his reign?
- 2 Who had made him king of Israel?
- 3 What else happened to him at that time?
- 4 What did Saul do with the commandments of God in later life?
- 5 What happened when he prayed to God for help in battle?
- 6 How did Saul die?
- 7 How did David feel about the death of Saul and Jonathan?
- 8 What were the final words of the Apostle Paul?

¹⁸ (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah *the use of* the bow: behold, *it is* written in the book of Jasher.)

¹⁹ The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

²⁰ Tell *it* not in Gath, publish *it* not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

²¹ Ye mountains of Gilboa, *let there be* no dew, neither *let there be* rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, *as though he had not been* anointed with oil.

²² From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

²³ Saul and Jonathan *were* lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

²⁴ Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with *other* delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

²⁵ How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, *thou wast* slain in thine high places.

²⁶ I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

²⁷ How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!