

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Samuel: God's Shift Of Israel From Apostasy Under The Judges To David's Reign

I. 1 Samuel: From Samuel To The Death Of Saul

EE. Saul's Death: A Lesson In Our Need To Rely On The Holy Spirit

(1 Samuel 31:1-13)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Wherever we turn, we note how vulnerable we often are to defeat and destruction in our lives:

(1) We see it on the national plane: veteran national and foreign political correspondent Andrew Malcolm in his op-ed, "Will GOP seize its opportunity?" in the Republican-American, January 13, 2017, p. 6A, claimed, "(T)he Democratic party is in disputatious disarray, still stunned from losing another gimme" in the recent national elections.

However, in "looking back at history, never underestimate the proclivity of Republicans to slide into distracting and self-destructive squabbling, especially when enduring success."

(2) We see it locally even among believers: recently, (a) a believer told me of his dread of the multiple trials he faces in life and (c) another reported how friends in a Gospel-preaching church in our area have faced much pain over the loss of its pastor and the arrival of his replacement.

Need: *So, we ask, "In view of our vulnerability to defeat and destruction, what does God want us to do about it?!"*

- I. Saul's tragic death in 1 Samuel 31:1-10 climaxed a life that had been lived mostly independent of God:**
 - A. 1 Chronicles 10:13-14 claims that Saul died for disobeying God's Word and for seeking counsel from a witch.
 - B. In examining those sinful actions of his, we note that Saul had functioned independently of God in each case:
 1. First, Saul had failed to heed God's command to wait for Samuel to perform a sacrifice, hastily performing it himself since the Philistines were gathering to attack his shrinking, fearful army, 1 Samuel 10:8; 13:8-9.
 2. Second, Saul had failed to obey God's call to slay all of the Amalekites and their animals, rationalizing that he could placate the Lord by sacrificing to Him some of the salvaged livestock, 1 Sam. 15:3, 9 with 13-23.
 3. Third, even though Saul knew better as seen in his former effort to remove all witches from Israel, when God no longer spoke to him by the usual means because of his past disobedience to the Lord, Saul had asked counsel from a witch who trafficked in demons to call up Samuel for a message of God through him, 1 Sam. 28:3, 6-7, 11. However, Deuteronomy 18:9-12 called such action an offense deserving of death!
 - C. Finally, Saul's men and his sons with him died fighting the Philistines, Saul was wounded and then committed suicide, his final deed done independent of God to avoid being tortured, Israel abandoned her towns in the area to the Philistines and the latter mutilated and desecrated the bodies of Saul and his sons, 1 Samuel 31:1-10.
- II. However, when the Hebrews of Jabesh-Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to the bodies, all their valiant men trekked 14 miles by night, crossing the Jordan into Philistine territory to bring the bodies back to Jabesh-Gilead for a decent burial, 1 Sam. 31:7, 11-13. (The MacMillan Bib. Atlas, 1968, map 97)**
- III. This bright spot in Saul's death recalled the one time in his reign when he functioned by the Holy Spirit:**
 - A. Early in Saul's reign, the Ammonites had besieged the city of Jabesh-Gilead with such an overwhelming force that the men of Jabesh-Gilead asked the enemy for terms of peace, 1 Samuel 11:1.
 - B. The Ammonites had offered them peace only if that they might mutilate the Hebrews, putting out the right eye of each of the men of Jabesh-Gilead to disgrace the whole nation of Israel, 1 Samuel 11:2.
 - C. The men of the city got the Ammonites to agree to wait for seven days until they could acquire help from the rest of Israel before they heeded the Ammonite demand (1 Samuel 11:3), and when Saul heard of the situation, the Holy Spirit came upon him, causing him to lead Israel to crush the Ammonites in battle, 1 Samuel 11:4-11.
 - D. Thus, when the men of Jabesh-Gilead who had been saved from mutilation by Saul later heard of the Philistine mutilation of the bodies of Saul and his sons, they returned the favor, retrieving their bodies for decent burial!
- IV. Yet, this one bright spot in Saul's reign by the Holy Spirit's power was very healing for Israel's history:**
 - A. A long chain of cause-effect abuses had occurred in Israel leading up to Saul's deliverance of Jabesh-Gilead:
 1. Back in the era of the judges, some vile men of the tribe of Benjamin had abused a Levite's mistress to death, what led eleven of Israel's tribes to conduct a civil war against Benjamin, Judges 19-20:44.
 2. The eleven tribes in fury had then killed all the women and children of Benjamin, leaving 600 men (Jud. 20:45-48), but the tribes then realized they had gone too far, almost annihilating Benjamin, Judges 21:1-4.
 3. To preserve Benjamin, the other tribes killed all the people of Jabesh-Gilead for not sending their men to fight against Benjamin, but they kept alive 400 of the city's virgins as wives for Benjamin, Judges 20:7-14.

4. Since there was no one left alive in Jabesh-Gilead, its revival by the era of Saul meant the Hebrews of the area of Gilead likely repopulated the city in bitterness over the needless slaughter the eleven tribes had committed against its women and children and their giving 400 of their virgins to what likely included some of the vile Benjamites who had abused the Levites' mistress!
- B. When Saul then heard of the Ammonite threat to abuse the men of Jabesh-Gilead, the Holy Spirit's equipping him to lead Israel to rescue the city ended a long chain of cause-effect abuses in Israel that had begun with the abuse of the Levite's mistress early in the Judges. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Judges 20:27-28)
- C. In the end, the men of Jabesh-Gilead returned Saul's favor: they bravely retrieved the bodies of Saul and his sons for proper burial, signifying healing in the generations-long series of cause-effect abuses that had marked Israel's history for hundreds of years! (Ibid., p. 2023-2025) Fitting their having waited 7 days for Saul to rescue them in 1 Samuel 11:3, the men of Jabesh-Gilead fasted 7 days in mourning for him, 1 Samuel 31:13!

Lesson: *For much of His life, Saul lived independent of God, what climaxed in his tragic death, but the one bright spot of his reign, his ministry under the Holy Spirit's power, bore dividends both in his burial and in the healing of a long series of cause-effect abuses in Israel that had dated hundreds of years back to the early era of the Judges.*

Application: *If we sense our vulnerability to defeat and destruction in any realm, (1) may we trust in Christ to be saved and become indwelt by the Holy Spirit, John 3:16; Romans 8:9b. (2) Then, (a) may we rely by faith on the Holy Spirit for the will and power to live an upright life (Galatians 5:16-23; Romans 8:3-4; Philippians 2:12-13), (b) heeding God's Word (2 Timothy 3:15-17) to enjoy all the stability and security we need to accomplish the will of God for every realm of our lives! (c) We will even see the Lord heal long-term, multi-generational dysfunctions!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In our introduction, we noted how an area Gospel-preaching church has faced painful trials with the loss of its pastor and the arrival of his replacement, and in case there is any concern in this regards as to our ministry here at Nepaug Church, allow me to report on the Holy Spirit's latest edifying signals regarding my ministry (as follows):

Last Monday's weather reports had warned us of freezing rain for Tuesday morning, what would threaten my wife's planned trip then to our daughter in Manchester. Thus, we had driven to Manchester Monday evening to take items our daughter needed and then returned home that night, planning that I would work on my sermon at home on Tuesday though there I lacked a lot of my study books. So, on Tuesday, I had put on regular stay-at-home clothes.

However, when we then received the weather reports Tuesday morning at breakfast, the weathermen had changed their forecasts, claiming the bad weather would arrive that afternoon. Since our daughter needed my wife to come to help her Tuesday morning to handle an important 11 a.m. appointment, and the weather permitted it, my wife and I quickly decided that she should take me to the Church office for my regular study while she continued on to Manchester to help our daughter.

In all of this, the Lord signaled a couple of important things to my wife and me regarding my ministry:

(1) First, He values my time in the Church office to do expository work with all my tools, so He arranged for me to get there that I might not miss doing that task even if it meant that I needed to wear regular clothes to Church!

(2) Second, when my wife and I had been driving to Manchester Monday evening, she had expressed her appreciation for my insight on election and predestination versus the oppressive error she had recently heard a nationally known teacher present on a Christian radio station as she was traveling on the same route at an earlier date. She recalled how I had struggled to overcome error in that realm when we were newlyweds at seminary, and she told of her appreciation for the work I had done since then to discern the truth and to post it on our Church web site.

I thus saw the Lord encouraging us through the rearranging of our plans to emphasize His approval and support (a) for my theological beliefs and (b) for my exposition of His Word at Nepaug Church! Also, (c) since errant views on election and predestination play a key role in Bible prophecy for our Laodicean Church era of Revelation 3:14-22, the Lord was encouraging me through my wife's Monday testimonial that He is surely going to fulfill that passage and give us His promised influence! (d) Also, these events signal the Lord's leading and encouragement in several other significant issues too involved or sensitive to detail here, but I report this to testify how our Lord has been offering wonderful insight and encouragement to keep me functioning in His will in this ministry!

Living in reliance on the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit makes a huge difference in the pastorate! I'd never succeed without Him! I share this report with you for your edification relative to my ministry!

May we trust in Christ for salvation, and then rely on the Holy Spirit of God for rich blessing in life!