

I SAMUEL 29-31

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Samuel chapter 29 as we continue our study through the Word of God, and we will finish up the book of I Samuel.

Last week we concluded with Saul fearful of the Philistines gathering their forces to fight against the children of Israel. And as we saw, David was picked by Achish to join them in this battle against Israel since he was living in Philistine country, and it looked like he broke his ties with his people and joined with the Philistines.

In desperation, Saul tried to inquire of the Lord, but the Lord was silent and thus, he goes to a medium in En Dor to bring up the dead for guidance in what he should do.

And up comes Samuel, I believe it was a demon and Saul never saw him, only this medium did. And this demon tells Saul that the kingdom was torn away from him and that within 24 hours he and his children will die in battle.

This devastated Saul and he refused to eat but this medium or witch gets him to focus his attention away from his sin and on eating and drinking and in a sense, being merry just as Satan loves to do with us.

That is where we will pick up our study this evening, in I Samuel chapter 29, starting in verse 1 as Saul and his men return from seeking guidance from this medium and now the focus is going to shift to this ensuing battle between the Philistines and the children of Israel.

I SAMUEL 29**VERSES 1-3**

The Philistines wanted to push into Israel and deliver a deathblow to them.

Thus, both sides are preparing for war.

The Philistines are gathered at Aphek, which means, *“the place of restraint”* and the children of Israel are gathered at Jezreel, which means, *“seed of God”*, in the northern part of the land, at the foothills of Mount Gilboa.

This Valley of Jezreel, (Joshua 17:16, Judges 6:33, Hosea 1:5) is also known as the Valley of Esdraelon in the Greek and we know it as the Valley of Megiddo where the battle of Armageddon will take place just prior to the Lord’s return to set-up His Kingdom on this earth, (Revelation 16:12-16, Revelation 19:11-21).

Before the battle begins the Philistines are gathered together and these troops, thousands of them, are passing before the leaders of the Philistines.

When I read that I pictured in my mind what they do in China or in North Korea as they put on display their troops and their military weapons to show off to the world how powerful they are, be it true or not. That is what was going on here.

One group of soldiers after another and then, at the end, here comes David and his men.

As these leaders look on, they are shocked to see David mixed in with their men, their soldiers! They can’t believe what they are seeing!

They are basically saying, *“What in the world is David doing with us? He was the one who killed our giant, Goliath! Remember the song, Saul has killed his thousands and David his ten thousands! How can he be in battle with us?”*

What is interesting here is the person who stands up for David and his men, Achish, a Philistine!

And notice what he tells these Philistine leaders! He tells these leaders that David is with us, he is no longer the giant killer and enemy of the Philistines. David's lies brought him to this situation!

Think about what is going on here. The enemy is exposing the sin of David and that is truly tragic when the world has to expose our sin. That is what we see here with David.

David was blinded to what he was doing and yet, these Philistine leaders saw what David could not see.

It is as Meyer wrote, applying this to our lives as Christians today, ***“It is very terrible when the children of the world have a higher sense of Christian propriety and fitness than Christians themselves, and say to one another, ‘What [are] these Hebrews [doing] here?’”***

Not only that but Achish is defending David, and to make it applicable to us, it would be like saying, ***“No, David is not a Christian, he is one of us!”***

That is not something you want to hear from an ungodly coworker and yet, are we listening to what people are saying about us?

Are we doing things that will make others think we are not Christians?

God will use the unsaved to awaken us, but we have to be willing to listen and see and then obey.

And keep in mind that Achish was not making this up, David lied to him making him think that he had forsaken his people and joined forces with the Philistines.

In I Samuel 28:1-2 we see this played out for us. We are told, **“Now it happened in those days that the Philistines gathered their armies together for war, to fight with Israel. And Achish said to David, ‘You assuredly know that you will go out with me to battle, you and your men.’ So David said to Achish, ‘Surely you know what your servant can do.’ And Achish said to David, ‘Therefore I will make you one of my chief guardians forever.’”**

Another important lesson for us to learn. Don’t try to fit in with the enemy, you are salt and light unless you lose your flavor and hide your light!

Not only that, but who are the Philistines preparing to fight against?

The children of Israel!

That would mean that David was going to have to fight against his own brethren, the ones that he was to be King over one day!

Yes, our sins do have consequences in our lives, and they can be very serious as we see here.

VERSES 4-5

I find it interesting who remembers this top ten song, ***“Saul has killed his thousands and David his ten thousands! How can he be in battle with us?”***

For David, this victory against Goliath was a distant memory and now he is trying to live by his own ability instead of trusting that God would take care of him.

But the people that do remember this song are the Philistine leaders and they are wondering how in the world can we trust this guy! They did not buy this idea that David was now on their side as Achish did!

You see, as I have said, the name Aphek means ***“the place of restraint.”***

David found himself in a difficult situation. He was about to fight with the Philistines against his own brethren, the children of Israel. But God interceded and caused the leaders of the Philistine army to refuse to allow David to fight with them. God restrained David from fighting against his own people, the children of Israel!

Now in saying that, please understand that this does not mean that God approved of what David was doing or just because David put himself in this situation God had to intervene and deliver him.

It was all about God's grace and mercy that He extended to David so that he would not have to fight against his own family.

The key is this. Don't put yourself in situations that can hurt you or others, because God does not have to intervene but may allow you to go through it.

And David is going to find out that there are consequences to his actions as we move into the next chapter of I Samuel, chapter 30.

VERSES 6-7

Notice how Achish is completely fooled by David's actions.

He sees David as an honorable man who is willing to assist in the fight against Israel, when all along David has been living a lie!

Even Godly people can do the wrong thing and that is what we see here with David.

What was the problem with David?

Yes, he was not walking with the Lord like he should have but I think there is even more here.

What do I mean by that?

I mean that David had too much of the world in him and he was not at peace with the Lord because of that.

Also, David had too much of the Lord in him to be at peace in the world.

He was in the worst place possible, sitting on the fence instead of walking in faith and guess what, the fence is pointed!

Where are you this evening?

Are you in this condition like David?

The only solution is to turn back to the Lord, get off the fence and serve Him, follow after Him!

Now as we read on, I want you to notice what David's response is regarding that these Philistines leaders don't want him to fight against the children of Israel!

VERSES 8-10

Are you kidding me?

What in the world is David doing here?

God spared him in fighting against his own people and now he is arguing with Achish, wanting to go and fight.

How confused David is.

Some felt that David was going to fight against the Philistines, which was possible.

But I see this as just more of his lies, trying to make himself look good before Achish!

No matter what, it is still not a good thing to do and there is no reason for him to act like this. God gave him a way out and David is fighting to get back in!

Obviously, David's heart is in a bad place and yet, how often do we do as David did instead of thanking God for delivering us out of a sin, but wanting to go back and sin?

That is just foolish, and God is going to teach David an important lesson regarding this.

And Achish tells David that when the sun comes up they were to return to their home in Philistine territory, Ziklag.

VERSE 11

So the Philistines gather for war against Israel and David returns home to Ziklag, in the land of the Philistines, instead of heading home to the Promise Land, the land of Israel!

Now the Philistines head to the Valley of Jezreel – otherwise known as Armageddon – the most famous battlefield in the world, to do battle against Israel.

This piece of land has been the place of many of history's battles. But there is coming one more and it will be a battle between Jesus Christ and the Antichrist – the Battle of Armageddon!

This is the same location.

So the Philistines march northeast to battle and David returns south - to Ziklag.

Now before we move on, let me say this. God loves David too much to leave him in this condition and He will do whatever it takes to draw him back.

That is what we will see as we move on into I Samuel chapter 30.

I SAMUEL 30**VERSES 1-2**

David and his men make this three-day journey from Aphek to Ziklag, traveling about 25 miles per day.

And as they return home, tired and hungry, ready to just kick back and relax and they find their town destroyed and their family's taken captive.

The Amalekites were very smart. While the Philistines moved their army northward to fight against Israel; they attacked the south with ease, taking the city of Ziklag also.

But make no mistake about this, this was not an accident, God had a purpose, He had a plan and the destruction of the city of Ziklag, the capture of David's family and friends were going to teach David some lessons he needed to learn.

It was not that God hated David, but He loved him so much that he was not going to leave him where he was!

And imagine coming home, ready to rest and be refreshed and this is what you find.

What is David going to do?

Let's read on and see.

VERSES 3-6

Can you imagine what they saw as they got closer to Ziklag, smoke rising from their city and what was to be a time of joy and refreshing broke their hearts.

I am sure their pace picked up when they saw the smoke and when they arrived in Ziklag it was even worse than they thought; everyone was gone, taken captive.

For David, at least he had his men, or so he thought.

Things are changing and as they lamented over this they began to turn against David, they wanted to kill David!

All had forsaken David now, well, not exactly!

We are told that, “**David strengthened himself in the LORD, his God.**”

Think about it. He had no one else to go to and that is exactly what David needed at this time, as Spurgeon tells us, “*God was beginning to cure his servant by a bitter dose of distress, and the evidence of the cure was that he did not encourage himself by his new friends, or by the hope of others coming; but he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.*”

I believe this is one of those turning points in the life of David as he turns back to the Lord. He is falling into the arms of God for safety, for rest, for comfort and many times it takes a crushing blow to our lives for us to turn back to God.

But why does God allow this?

God will allow it because it is what is best for our lives!

It is as one pastor wrote,

In times past - when David was down - God sent people to encourage him. Gad, Jonathan, and Abigail . . . ***but no one comes to encourage David at Ziklag*** . . . There are times when God cuts us off from the support of friends and family. He forces us to depend on Him wholly and solely.

Through the discipline of loneliness God teaches us that ***He*** alone is faithful to meet our needs.

Read the Bible for yourself – develop a prayer life – practice God’s presence on a daily basis – personalize God’s promises . . . so when the day comes when you’re abandoned and all alone, you too can ***“strengthen yourself in the Lord.”***

- Sandy Adams, I Samuel 30

We have gone over this, but it is good to review it and I think there are a few more points to make.

How did David strengthen himself in the Lord?

I think there are several ways, and it is what we need to do also.

David remembered God’s unconditional love for him.

Yes, all had forsaken him but the Lord, and that strengthened him.

David strengthened himself in the Lord by remembering God’s promises to him and that God’s promises will never fail even though we fail many times.

David remembered his past deliverances by God’s strength and that strengthened him for what he was facing at this present time.

How important that is for us to remember as we face difficult situations in our lives!

And, like Sandy Adams said, “Read the Bible for yourself – develop a prayer life – practice God’s presence on a daily basis – personalize God’s promises . . . so when the day comes when you’re abandoned and all alone, you too can ***‘strengthen yourself in the Lord.’***”

David put it like this in Psalm 25, where he wrote, **“To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in You; Let me not be ashamed; Let not my enemies triumph over me. Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed; Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause. Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day . . . My eyes are ever toward the Lord, For He shall pluck my feet out of the net. Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me, For I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have enlarged; Bring me out of my distresses! Look on my affliction and my pain, And forgive all my sins.”** (Psalm 25:1-5, 15-18)

That is our Lord; He just wants us to come to Him and to look to Him to be the strength of our lives!

There are times, as here with David, that God will burn away our plans, our ideas, our hopes so that He might draw us close to Him and get rid of those things that are hampering our walk.

And yes, Ziklag was hampering David’s walk in that it was in enemy territory, he made a deal with the enemy to live there, he was lying to the Philistine Lord and so on.

It is as Spurgeon wrote, ***“May you see your self-righteousness burned like Ziklag, and all your carnal hopes carried away captive, and may you then encourage yourselves in Christ, for he will recover all for you, and give you spoil besides, and there shall be joy and rejoicing.”***

VERSES 7-8

David found out that when he tried to do things on his own, when he did not seek the Lord, it left his life in a mess.

And you have to give David credit here, because the first thing I would want to do is destroy the enemy, but not David.

What does he do first?

He first seeks the Lord to see if he should go and attack the enemy.

How does David do this?

David does this by seeking the priest, Abiathar and he uses, I believe, the Urim and Thummim to inquire of the Lord.

How do we seek direction from the Lord today without the Urim and the Thummim?

By the Holy Spirit indwelling us and guiding us as we read through the Word of God. He will direct your steps, but you have to be looking to Him so you know where to go!

And I love this because the Lord tells David not only to attack the enemy, but that God would give him and his men the victory!

Remember the song we sing, part of it goes like this, ***“Oh what peace we often forfeit. Oh what needless pain we bare. All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer.”***

So simple and yet so true, if we would only learn the lesson and do it!

As we have seen.

David strengthened himself in the LORD!

David sought direction from the LORD!

What is next?

Now it is time to move as God has told them!

They needed to put their faith into action and that is what we will see as we read on!

VERSES 9-10

You can't call Him Lord if you don't obey what He has said, and David did obey!

Now, why did David's men, who just wanted to stone him for the situation he put their families in, now follow him?

I believe that it was because David was now following the Lord, and these men saw that David was walking with the Lord. Therefore, they were willing to follow!

And think about this. David and his men just completed a three day, 25 miles a day, journey from Apehik home to Ziklag, and now they were on the move again, after the Amalekites. In other words, they must have been tired, some exhausted!

Now this Brook Besor was not always filled with water, but it was very difficult to travel through.

Thus, 200 of David's men had to stay back, they did not have the strength to continue on the journey, let alone fight against the Amalekites.

I thought the Lord told David that they would win this battle and now they lose one-third of his men!

What is up with that?

I like what Spurgeon had to say regarding this, *“But mark this, he was not delivered without further trial . . . Many a leader would have given up the chase with one out of three of his troop in hospital, but David pursued with his reduced force. When God means to bless us, he often takes away a part of the little strength we thought we had. We did not think our strength equal to the task, and the Lord takes away a portion even of the little power we had. Our God does not fill till he has emptied. Two hundred men must be rent away from David’s side before God could give him victory . . . Expect then, O troubled one, that you will be delivered, but know that your sorrow may yet deepen, that you may have all the greater joy by-and-by.”*

Again, may we remember that as we are walking with the Lord, that He has given us the victory, but it is not always easy, and it is not always the way we think!

VERSES 11-15

As David and his men are in pursuit of this army that took their families and burned their city, they come across a man who is sick, dying and they come to his aid!

Why did they do that?

They could have justified their refusal to help, *“He is going to die anyway”* or *“We have to rescue our families, we will come back later to attend to him”* or whatever.

But they didn’t, which shows me that the love of God was flowing through David at this time, and he comes to the aid of this dying man, looking out for others first, just as we are to do!

And look at how God blessed their efforts.

As this man was strengthened, he answered their questions and said that he was an Egyptian slave who was with these raiding Amalekites who invaded the southern area of Judah and Ziklag, which was now Philistine territory!

I wonder what would have happened if David did not stop to help this man?

He now has the information he needs and the help of this Egyptian slave to find these Amalekites and get their families back!

VERSES 16-20

David and his men make a surprise attack on the Amalekites, and it is better translated from dawn until evening of the next day.

Remember that these Amalekites were celebrating their victory and thus, in the morning they were dealing with a hangover and were not ready to battle against David. God's perfect timing!

And what a victory this was as only 400 of the Amalekites were able to flee from this slaughter.

David was able to not only get everyone's family back, including his own, but there was a great spoil taken from this victory.

Now why was David allowed to take this spoil and earlier on Saul was not?

Because the Lord told Saul not to and he disobeyed the Lord!

Also, David was taking back what the Amalekites had taken from him and his men. God will bless our obedience but not our rebellion!

What I want you to see here is that God did not rain fire and brimstone on the Amalekites, but David and his men had to go down and fight against them.

Why is that?

It is where our faith grows, trusting in the promise of God even though the enemy has you outnumbered.

If God rained down hail upon them and wiped them out, then there is no walking by faith.

I think God calls us to do something and it may seem overwhelming, but He desires us to walk and see the salvation that He will bring to the situation!

VERSES 21-25

Not all of David's men were godly men. Well, when they joined with David, they all were not great men, they were wicked.

But as they lived with David, some of them changed their ways, they followed the Lord, but some remained wicked.

When those that fought in this battle came back, the wicked ones refused to give to those who did not fight in the battle any of the spoils of victory. They only gave back to them their wife and children.

I find this interesting because David was a man of God, not perfect and some of his men were godly men and some were not, like I have said.

What happened?

Folk's, each person had a choice to make and even with the godly influence of David, some rejected the Lord and served their own interests, served the flesh, that was their god.

But David rightly recognized that those who stay back to watch the stuff should share equally with those who fought in battle.

The reason the Amalekites were able to come in and plunder Ziklag was because David and his men all went off to war, leaving no one to watch the stuff or the city.

Ziklag was a walled city, and David felt no one needed to watch over the stuff. But now David recognized that there are those who need to go to war and those that need to remain behind to watch the stuff!

And in this battle against the Amalekites, it was not David and his men that gave them the victory, but God gave them the victory, and David is saying because of that, we should share it with the others.

And this became **“a statue and an ordinance for Israel.”** (I Samuel 30:25)

How does this relate to us, or does it even relate to us?

I think it does. I think this is a very important principle that we need to not only understand, but also apply to our lives.

For instance. When my children were young, I worked outside the home and also here at the church.

Because of that my time at home was short. My wife, you might say she was guarding the stuff. She was taking care of our children, our home and so on.

We also see this in the church.

There are those that are in teaching positions, Ministry positions. They are in there fighting the battles on the front lines you might say.

But there are those that are copying CD's, folding bulletins, cleaning the church, ushering and more.

And they too are just as important and they share in the spoils of the victories as they are, in a sense, guarding the stuff.

Both roles are important, and we see here David recognized that.

However God blesses in the ministry, we all share in it equally. Both are important, like I have said.

We also see this played out with missions. Some can go to the mission fields while others can support them financially and prayerfully.

And both will share in the reward.

Jesus said in Matthew chapter 10, **“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.”** Matthew 10:40-42.

Did you see that?

What we see here in I Samuel chapter 30 is also given to us by Jesus in the New Testament!

VERSES 26-31

David spread the blessings of God to those around him. He shared what God had given to him.

David gave to over 13 cities in Judah the spoils of this victory and David got more in return than what he had lost in the first place.

As Jesus said in Luke 6:38, **“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”**

Yes, David was in a backslidden condition but now he has returned to the Lord and look at how he did it. He did it the same way we must return to the Lord and continue to walk by faith.

- David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.
- David inquired of the LORD.
- David believed in the promises of God
- David obeyed what the Lord told him to do.
- David showed unexpected kindness and care to others.
- David saw that this victory was of the LORD and not what he was able to do.
- David shared the spoils of the victory, the blessings with others.
- David tried to mend relationships.

It all comes down to this, ***“David’s genius was his spiritual resilience. He expected to find the resources he needed in the Lord his God, and he was not disappointed.”***
(Baldwin).

May we do the same and I will guarantee you this, you will not be disappointed either!

And folk’s, Jesus is our victor and when he triumphed on the cross of Calvary, He won a far greater battle for us, and He shared the spoil you might say with us!

Paul, in Ephesians 4:7-8 makes this point as he wrote, **“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.’”**

The Amplified Bible puts these verses like this, **“Yet grace (God's unmerited favor) was given to each of us individually [not indiscriminately, but in different ways] in proportion to the measure of Christ’s [rich and bounteous] gift. Therefore it is said, When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive [He led a train of vanquished foes] and He bestowed gifts on men. [Ps 68:18.]”**

And The Living Bible tells us, **“However, Christ has given each of us special abilities - whatever he wants us to have out of his rich storehouse of gifts. The psalmist tells about this, for he says that when Christ returned triumphantly to heaven after his resurrection and victory over Satan, he gave generous gifts to men.”**

Look at the spoil that Jesus has for each of us from his victory on Calvary! Never forget that!

As we read on, we will now be focusing on the battle between Israel and the Philistines! And we will see King Saul die in battle as well as his sons.

In Hosea 13:11 we are told of what God thought about King Saul, **“I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath.”**

And we will see that played out as we move on and finish this chapter.

I SAMEUL 31

VERSE 1

The Philistines pushed deep into Israeli territory and Saul and his men assembled together on Mount Gilboa, but Saul was fearful, he was not ready for this battle at all.

And neither were his men as there is going to be a great slaughter!

Saul's problem was that he did not seek the Lord but instead sought answers to his problems from a medium, someone who speaks to the dead.

And the Philistines killed many of the Israelites and the rest fled in retreat.

You will never be victorious outside the Lord and in the end, things will be a mess as we see here!

VERSE 2

Here we see the tragic death of Saul's three sons, including Jonathan.

Why did Jonathan have to die, he was not a threat to David, in fact, he said that he would serve David?

Jonathan recognized and acknowledged the fact that David would be the King in Israel and Jonathan was not.

So again, why did he have to die?

I like what Poole had to say regarding this, and I believe he is right.

He wrote, ***“There was also a special providence of God in taking away Jonathan, (who of all Saul's sons seems to have been the fairest for the crown,) for the preventing divisions, which have happened amongst the people concerning the successor; David's way to the crown being by this means made the more clear.”***

You see, David will have to deal with another son of Saul who was not killed in battle, Ishbosheth, and we will see that as we get into our study in II Samuel.

Remember, the death of Jonathan was not a punishment upon him, but the Lord was calling him home, which is far different than the death of his brothers and his father Saul, who I don't believe knew the Lord!

VERSES 3-6

As the battle continued on and many of Saul's men died and the others fled, the Philistines focused on this man who towered above the rest, Saul, the King of Israel and they shot Saul with several arrows and he was mortally wounded, but life still remained in him.

But, instead of repenting and getting right with God, he asks his armorbearer to kill him, but he refuses and thus, Saul falls on his sword so that he might die!

When his armorbearer sees this, he kills himself!

Imagine, some 20 years or so since judgment was pronounced on Saul for disobeying the Lord and his heart is still so hard that he refuses to repent.

There are many people out there who refuse to get right with God and keep hardening their heart to Him and at the end of their life, they refuse to repent.

It is as Saul said, "**I have sinned. . . . I have played the fool.**" I Samuel 26:21.

And many do the same today!

Now did Saul die here or is there a contradiction in the Bible because in II Samuel 1:4-10 we are told that an Amalekite came upon Saul and killed him?

I don't believe Saul died here but he appeared to be dead and with his life still in him, he was killed by an Amalekite. He did die the same day that his sons died, but not yet.

You see, the Amalekites would come in after another army destroyed the enemy and they were still in pursuit of the rest of the enemy. In doing that they would come in and gather the spoils of victory before the real victors came back.

That is what we will see in II Samuel, and we will deal with it more next time, but keep in mind that the Philistines are still going after the remaining Israelites to destroy them at this time.

I do realize that many feel that Saul is dead here and that the Amalekite just lied to David when he said that he killed Saul, but again, I don't believe that is what we see here.

Like I have said, Saul did die this day, but it was not at this time.

VERSE 7

Look at how devastating this victory by the Philistines was. It was so bad that those on the other side of the Jordan even fled for their lives, all because their King refused to get right with God, and it lead the nation into captivity!

And what the Philistines did was cut the nation in half, drawing a line from east to west, and thus, making the rest of the nation ripe for them to come in and wipe them out!

In this battle, we will find out in II Samuel 4:4, that Jonathan had a five-year-old son named Mephibosheth that was injured as they fled, and he was left lame.

VERSES 8-10

The battle is over, and the Philistines come back to gather what they could from the soldiers, and they come upon King Saul lying there dead.

I believe this takes place after the Amalekite came upon Saul and Saul asked this Amalekite to kill him.

I don't think Saul died when he fell upon his sword.

But now the next day they see this defeated, dead King and they cut off Saul's head; maybe remembering what David did to their hero Goliath, and hung his body on a wall in Beth Shan, as well as the bodies of his sons. (I Samuel 31:12)

You can go to this city and see the area where his body was hung in disgrace for all to see with the bodies of his sons.

Not only that but they now place his armor in the temple of Ashtoreth to show that their god was stronger than the God of the Israelites.

How often our sin gives the enemies of God a chance to reproach our God, may we keep that in mind before we do something foolish!

VERSES 11-13

Praise the Lord there are always valiant men around and here they came from Jabesh Gilead.

These men, upon hearing what happened to Saul and his sons traveled all night, took their bodies off the wall and returned to Jabesh Gilead with them, cremating them.

Now this was not a common practice in Israel, but it was done if there was severe mutilation and that was the case here!

Why did the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead do this?

Because many years earlier Saul delivered them from the hands of the Ammonites and we see that in I Samuel 11:1-11, and they are repaying the kindness of Saul.

Now let me deal with this subject of cremation.

The reason being is that some people are unsure if it is proper to cremate a body, they feel that it should be buried in the ground or placed in a building. And some are just overwhelmed by what they should do.

There are those who believe that if you do that, if you are cremated, you won't have a body when the Lord returns for your spirit and soul to dwell in.

First of all, there is nothing in the Bible that says it is wrong to cremate a body.

Secondly, the cremation process only speeds up what nature is going to do anyway.

You see, it takes a few hours or so to cremate a body, bring it to ashes.

And it takes about 10 years for the skin and tissues to decompose and another 30 years or so for a body to decay and return to ashes, naturally.

Thirdly, the Lord is making a new body for our spirit and soul to dwell in so He will take care of this issue. I don't worry about that.

You see, the most important thing here is that you need to do what you feel the most comfortable in doing. Don't let anyone talk you into doing something you don't feel comfortable in doing.

For me, cremation is the way to go, and my wife is aware of that. This body is just a tent that is housing my spirit and soul. Once my tent is worn out, my spirit and soul go to be with the Lord.

Now I'm not giving my body to science because I'm afraid they might reject it. I did want to donate my long bones, but they said I don't have any long bones, only short ones!

But seriously, do what you feel is right with your loved one and for you. You don't want to do something that you will always regret.

As we close out this book, we have seen that Saul's life and career ended tragically. It is over now, and this man of great potential fell far short of what God had planned for him.

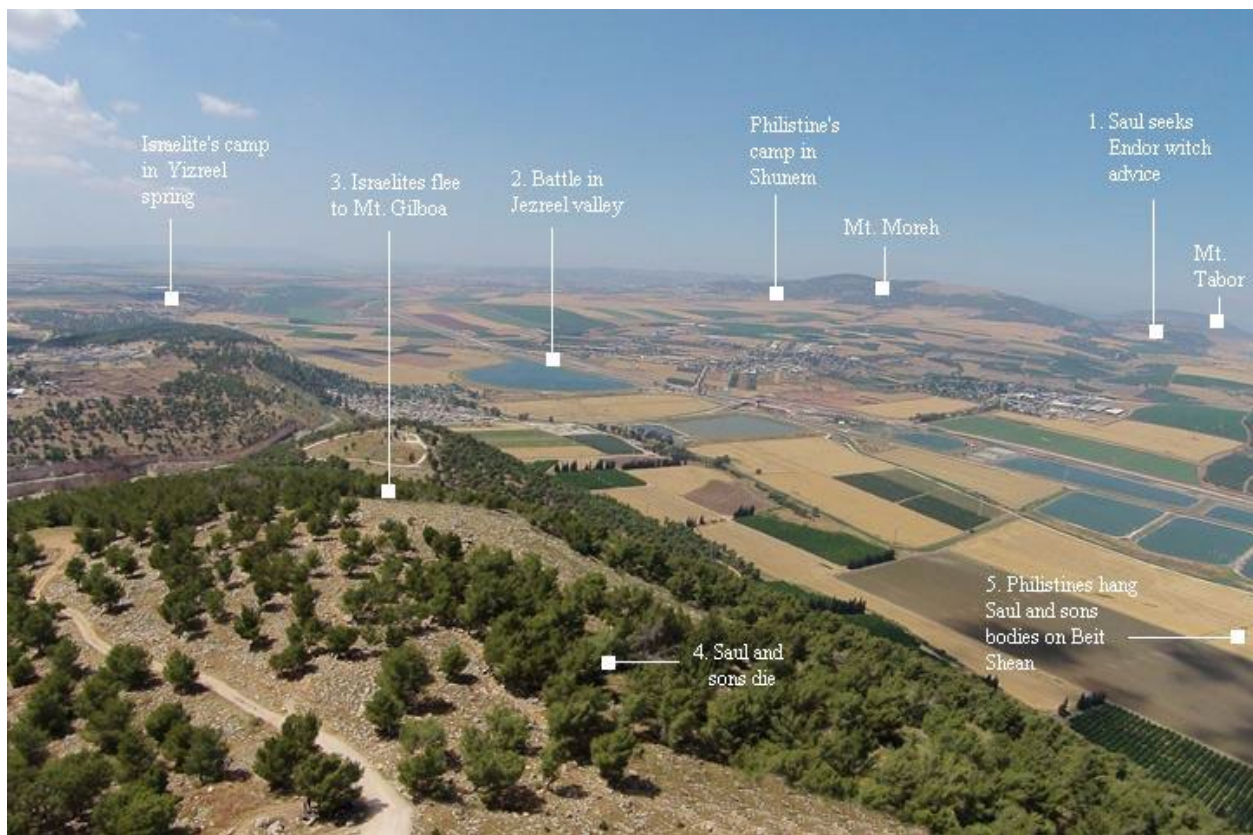
And the reason he fell was because of his disobedience to God, and we will see next week that the thing he did not completely do, which God told him to do, will be the thing that kills him, an Amalekite!

As we begin II Samuel next time, we will be focusing on the life of David, who will become King in Israel.

But all those years in the wilderness for David, why all that time?

Don't negate the years in the wilderness, don't fret over difficult times, but learn to praise the Lord, and as I have said, see the salvation that He will bring to your life!

David was learning lessons of faith and so must we!



Philistines and Saul Assemble for Battle at Mt. Gilboa 1 Samuel 28-29

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