

Abiding Fruit

Informing the Mind & Inflaming the Heart

Vol. 2 No. 51

September 9, 2007

The Lord Put Him To Death 1 Chronicles 10:14

You just cannot read the life of King Saul and come away from that reading without a sense of sorrow. He seemed most reluctant to accept the privileges given him by God. He did not comprehend the transcendent majesty and holiness of God. He was willing to intrude into the priestly role simply because he grew impatient. He feared the people and desperately sought to please them. He was self-centered and concerned with himself. He did not obey clear instructions from Samuel, and pleaded that the people made him disobey. He was willing to lay the blame on others and unable to accept his own share of failure.

When we are first introduced to Saul in 1 Samuel 9, these character flaws do not seem apparent at all. We must remember that Saul was not merely the people's choice, but God placed him into the highest position in the land. This was because God was preparing the way for David who would follow Saul. All events in a person's life are significant and have ramifications far beyond our own times. This is because God is above and is working His will according to His holy purpose. Nothing can thwart this glorious purpose of God.

Saul brought about his own downfall through his wretched disobedience and blame transferal in the case of the Amalekites. God told him through Samuel to completely annihilate the Amalekites, and Saul failed to do it (1 Sam. 15). He seemed to think that God valued sacrifices as worship before God accepted obedience. True obedience is true worship and true sacrifices can only be offered when there is true worship.

Samuel's dire words to Saul echo throughout the life of Saul, that because he had rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord had rejected him as king. I suppose this would be a great shock to Saul since it was God who had placed him there, despite Saul's reluctance and lack of faith. More than this, his tearing of Samuel's robe indicated that God had torn the kingdom from Saul and had given it to another (1 Sam. 15: 28). For the rest of his life, it was this other person who Saul sought to kill. I doubt that he ever forgot those words of Samuel that God had given the kingdom to a neighbor who was better than he was.

Once Saul became aware that David was this man, he would stop at nothing to destroy this nemesis of his. His hatred for David consumed him. His jealousy of David ate away at him night and day. The affairs of the kingdom were nothing in comparison to hunting David and destroying him.

Saul's minimal spiritual understanding is demonstrated by the fact that he does not seek the forgiveness of God and the will of God. He remains content to drift through his life enjoying his status. His attitude reminds us of Cain who just didn't care about God. Saul is similar to Esau who despised the things of God. They just did not matter to him. Standing against Cain and Esau are Abel and Jacob. It is a matter of unbelief versus faith. This is the life of Saul and David. One is against God or couldn't care about God, whereas the other hungered and thirsted for God.

This speaks volumes to us. Are our attitudes concerning God right and good? Are we careless about God and the things of God? If we are, then we are like Saul. It is not so much the life of Saul that is a disappointment, but it is the end of that life. Mount Gilboa was a disaster for Israel. Saul died and three of

his sons with him. The Philistines disdained Saul, cutting off his head and nailing his body to a wall. Saul's desire to commit suicide was foreign to the way he should have died.

It was Samuel who pointed out to Saul early on in his career as king that if he had not intruded into the priestly function and ministry, that God would have secured his kingdom forever if Saul had been obedient. This should have been a red flag to Saul. This offer of extending Saul's kingdom would in no way have impeded the Davidic kingship or Messianic line since we have Scripture to instruct us regarding this future. This is not the point though of Samuel's remonstrance with Saul. God requires personal obedience, not just a kind of corporate obedience. Saul did not seem willing or desirous of doing that, nor did he exhibit repentance as he should have when rebuked.

It is no wonder then that God is grieved that he has made Saul king. In order to understand the grief or regret of God we must see it from our perspective. It is couched in language that Samuel or we would understand. This is the correct way to understand the anthropomorphisms of God. God is described in human language to convey to our minds what He is doing, so that we understand. Samuel certainly understood this because the Bible says he was angry – that is with Saul (1 Sam. 15:11).

The death of Saul and his sons sets the scene for the establishment of David's kingship and kingdom. It would not be an easy task for David to secure the kingdom. 1 Chronicles lays this groundwork beginning with Mount Gilboa's disaster. Saul dead, three sons' dead, including Jonathan who was faithful to God and David. How exemplary was Jonathan's comprehension of God's will and plan for both David and himself (1 Sam. 20:12 – 17).

1 Samuel 18:12 tells us that Saul was afraid of David because he knew that the Lord was with David and not with him. How insightful this is, yet how sad that Saul turns from this remarkable comprehension of what God was doing to do what he wanted. Thus his hatred grew, nursed by the knowledge that it was God who was promoting David and demoting Saul.

The end for Saul is an end of ignominy and shame. 1 Chronicles 10:13 puts it this way, *"so Saul died for his breach of faith..."* It is by faith that we please God (Heb. 11:6) therefore, Saul did not please God. He broke faith with God (vs. 13). He did not keep the command of the Lord. Saul's seeking out the Medium of Endor (1 Sam. 28) was held against him by God since God had forbidden this in His law (Lev. 19:31; 20:6; see also Isa. 8:19). This sin of Saul was committed the very night before he died which tells us that life until the very last breath has consequences before God.

Saul did not seek guidance from God (vs. 14). The result of this leads us to these words, *"therefore, the Lord put him to death, and turned the kingdom over to David, the son of Jesse."* The lives of all men and women, rest in the sovereign hands of God. He gives life, and he takes away life. A life not well lived can be cut off by God. Saul's life was taken from him by God. The instrument of this was Saul's own hand. It was not David who killed Saul, though he had a number of opportunities to do so. David understood that he could not kill Saul, because Saul was the Lord's anointed. David makes this glorious prophetic-like statement concerning Saul in 1 Sam. 26:10, *"as the Lord lives, the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish."*

It would not have mattered whether Saul died by natural causes in his own bed or on the battle field. The Bible leads us to believe that God struck Saul down because he was unfaithful to God. God desires obedience from his people. He delights in displays of faith and trust. Faith is simple child-like dependence and reliance on God. This was how David was. Saul, on the other hand, was independent, not needing God, not trusting God, not relying on God, and thus he brought about the downfall of both himself and his house. Let us entrust all of life to God and all will be well at the end.