

SAUL REMOVED BY DEATH

BIBLE TEXT : I Samuel 31:1-13; II Samuel 1:1-27; Psalm 52:1-9

LESSON 218 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out" (Proverbs 24:20).

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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Death of Saul

1 Israel was disastrously defeated in battle with the Philistines, I Samuel 31:1;

1 Chronicles 10:1

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 Saul's sons were slain in the battle, and he himself was mortally wounded, I Samuel 31:2, 3;

1 Chronicles 10:2-3

² And the Philistines followed hard after Saul, and after his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, the sons of Saul.

³ And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers.

3 Saul committed suicide to escape his enemies, and his armor-bearer did likewise, I Samuel 31:4-6;

2 Samuel 17:23

²³ And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled *his* ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

Psalm 52:1-9

¹ Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God *endureth* continually.

² Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

³ Thou lovest evil more than good; *and* lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.

⁴ Thou lovest all devouring words, O *thou* deceitful tongue.

⁵ God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of *thy* dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

⁶ The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him:

⁷ Lo, *this is* the man *that* made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, *and* strengthened himself in his wickedness.

⁸ But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.

⁹ I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done *it*: and I will wait on thy name; for *it is* good before thy saints.

Matthew 27:5

⁵ And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

1 Chronicles 10:4-6

⁴ Then said Saul to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

⁵ And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise on the sword, and died.

⁶ So Saul died, and his three sons, and all his house died together.

II Heathen Victory

1 The bodies of Saul and his sons were triumphantly displayed by the Philistines, I Samuel 31:7-10;

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.

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

Judges 16:23-24

²³ Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.

²⁴ And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

Micah 1:10

¹⁰ Declare ye *it* not at Gath, weep ye not at all: in the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust.

2 Samuel 1:20

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.

1 Chronicles 10:8-10

⁸ And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen in mount Gilboa.

⁹ And when they had stripped him, they took his head, and his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to carry tidings unto their idols, and to the people.

¹⁰ And they put his armour in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon.

2 The men of Jabesh-gilead recaptured the bodies of Saul and his sons, and gave them proper burial, I Samuel 31:11-13;

2 Samuel 2:5-8

⁵ And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabeshgilead, and said unto them, Blessed *be* ye of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, *even* unto Saul, and have buried him.

⁶ And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.

⁷ Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

⁸ But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim;

1 Chronicles 10:10-12

¹⁰ And they put his armour in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon.

¹¹ And when all Jabeshgilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul,

¹² They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

3 Many of the Israelites were forced to flee from their homes, I Samuel 31:7;

1 Chronicles 10:7

⁷ And when all the men of Israel that *were* in the valley saw that they fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, then they forsook their cities, and fled: and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

III David's Lamentation

1 News of Saul's death was brought to David by an Amalekite, II Samuel 1:1-4;

1 Samuel 4:12-18

¹² And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.

¹³ And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told *it*, all

said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul 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.

the city cried out.

¹⁴ And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What *meaneth* the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli.

¹⁵ Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.

¹⁶ And the man said unto Eli, I *am* he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son?

¹⁷ And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

¹⁸ And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

2 The Amalekite thought to win favor with David by bringing him news of his enemy's death, II Samuel 1:5-10;

2 Samuel 4:9-12

⁹ And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, As the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity,

¹⁰ When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who *thought* that I would have given him a reward for his tidings:

¹¹ How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?

¹² And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged *them* up over the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth, and buried *it* in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

3 The Amalekite was executed on the strength of his own testimony, II Samuel 1:11-16;

Genesis 9:6

⁶ Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

1 Kings 2:32-33

³² And the LORD shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing *thereof*, *to wit*, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah.

³³ Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed for ever: but upon David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the LORD.

Luke 19:22

²² And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

4 David lamented over the death of Saul and his sons, II Samuel 1:17-27;

Lamentations 1:12-17

¹² *Is it* nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted *me* in the day of his fierce anger.

¹³ From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaleth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate *and*

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

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!

Psalm 52:1-9

¹ Why boastest thou thyself in

faint all the day.

¹⁴ The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed, *and* come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fall, the Lord hath delivered me into *their* hands, *from whom* I am not able to rise up.

¹⁵ The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty *men* in the midst of me: he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men: the Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, *as* in a winepress.

¹⁶ For these *things* I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.

¹⁷ Zion spreadeth forth her hands, *and there is* none to comfort her: the LORD hath commanded concerning Jacob, *that* his adversaries *should be* round about him: Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them.

Lamentations 4:1-12

¹ How is the gold become dim! *how* is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.

² The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!

³ Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people *is become* cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.

⁴ The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread, *and* no man breaketh *it* unto them.

⁵ They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills.

⁶ For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.

⁷ Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing *was* of sapphire:

⁸ Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick.

⁹ *They that be* slain with the sword are better than *they that be* slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for *want of* the fruits of the field.

¹⁰ The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

¹¹ The LORD hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof.

¹² The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem.

Hosea 13:11

¹¹ I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took *him* away in my wrath.

1 Samuel 15:35

³⁵ And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

1 Samuel 16:1

¹ And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God *endureth* continually.

² Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

³ Thou lovest evil more than good; *and* lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.

⁴ Thou lovest all devouring words, O *thou* deceitful tongue.

⁵ God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of *thy* dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

⁶ The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him:

⁷ Lo, *this is* the man *that* made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, *and* strengthened himself in his wickedness.

⁸ But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.

⁹ I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done *it*: and I will wait on thy name; for *it is* good before thy saints.

NOTES:

Wages of Sin

The Word of God devotes many chapters to the life and death of King Saul, that all who read it may know that the end of a backslider and a rebel against God is a terrible thing.

From the standpoint of the natural, and his beautiful physique, Saul had much in his favor. There were many reasons for thinking that Saul's life could have been one of great usefulness and value to God's cause, but it did not end that way. Saul became exalted over the high position of king wherein God had placed him; and though God made every effort to reprove, guide, and sustain him in his problems, Saul became a terrible failure.

Saul's continual disobedience to the word of the Lord caused the Lord to wrest the kingdom of Israel from him, and give it to David. Saul became intensely jealous of David, and instead of repenting of his own transgressions that were causing him such trouble, he let his sins lead him into a suicide's lost eternity.

Saul became as the man of whom Jesus once spoke: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Luke 11:24-26).

Saul had been truly converted; God had given him a new heart; and when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him he prophesied (I Samuel 10: 9, 10). Despite all this, sin entered into Saul's heart; and when he refused to repent of his misdeeds, he became a willing tool of the devil, "for of whom a man *is* overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (II Peter 2:19).

Saul, as a backslider and a rebel against the government of God, became an evil man His good deeds, instead of becoming a habit of daily living, became rare; and his stubborn pride led him into deeds of ever- increasing wickedness. He became bold in his wickedness; and from a secret jealousy of David, his sins developed until he was in open pursuit of David, with the avowed intention of killing him at the first possible moment.

At one period of Saul's reign he flew into a murderous rage because David had eluded him, through the assistance of Ahimelech the priest. Saul had Ahimelech and his household and many of the priests and citizens of the city of Nob killed, and the city was burnt with fire. Saul did all this because of his evil heart (**1 Samuel 22:18-19** ¹⁸ And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. ¹⁹ And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.). Saul's wickedness knew no partiality. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay," is God's promise (Romans 12:19) ; and the rebellion of Saul, his savage pursuit of David, his uncontrolled wrath that caused him to attempt to kill his own son, and the actual murder of God's priests did not go unnoticed or unavenged by the Lord.

Kingdom's End

A battle between the Philistines and the Israelites was the immediate cause of Saul's death. The Philistines were the instruments of God's judgment, chosen by God to carry out His word against Saul.

Saul was mortally wounded by the archers of the Philistines; and to avoid falling into their hands Saul desired his armor-bearer to kill him. This he refused to do; and so Saul, using his armor-bearer's sword, fell upon it and died. His armor-bearer then did likewise, both dying at their own hands.

Tradition tells us with reasonably good authority that Doeg, the Edomite, who slew the priests at Nob, was Saul's armor-bearer. If such were the case, divine justice was meted out to them both in that they both probably died with the very sword with which they had slain the priests of God. It is God's word, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Genesis 9:6). "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; and inquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse" (I Chronicles 10:13, 14).

Philistine Triumph

Saul despised the Lord's way, and so suffered a dishonorable death. Shame upon shame was heaped upon him by his enemies. His body and the bodies of his sons were taken by the Philistines, and were carried away to the city of Bethshan where they were fastened to a wall, that all might see them. It was a great victory for the Philistines, and one of the most disastrous defeats Israel had received up to that time.

The cup of God's wrath was poured out against Saul, and he drank of its contents to its last bitter dregs. "For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them" (Psalm 75:8).

Heroic Action

Saul did do a few kind deeds in his life; and from one of these, even though he was dead, he received a return. The city of Jabesh-gilead had been invaded by the Ammonite in earlier years; and only Saul's timely intervention saved their lives and their homes (**1 Samuel 11:1-11** ¹ Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabeshgilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee. ² And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this *condition* will I make *a covenant* with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it *for* a reproach upon all Israel. ³ And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if *there be* no man to save us, we will come out to thee. ⁴ Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices, and wept. ⁵ And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What *aieth* the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh. ⁶ And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. ⁷ And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent *them* throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent. ⁸ And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty

thousand. ⁹ And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabeshgilead, To morrow, by *that time* the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed *it* to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad. ¹⁰ Therefore the men of Jabesh said, To morrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you. ¹¹ And it was *so* on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together). Hearing of the shameful way the Philistines had treated the bodies of Saul and his sons, these men went boldly in the night to the enemy's city and recovered their bodies. Thus Saul was given a decent burial for a past deed of kindness.

David's Displeasure

David's godly patience and forgiveness while suffering from Saul's terrible persecution is a beautiful example of the true spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and it was with sadness that David heard of Saul's untimely death. David's sorrow was real and unfeigned, and he mourned particularly over Jonathan, one of Saul's sons. Jonathan and David had been very close friends, and it was a great blow to David to hear of his friend's death.

God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, (**Ezekiel 33:11** ¹¹ Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?) and neither do God's people take pleasure in the thought of a soul's being lost forever. There are those who would say that David would have been justified in rejoicing that his enemy was dead, and that he could then possess the kingdom without any further opposition. But a spirit of vindictiveness has never had a part in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth" (Proverbs 24:17).

David waited on the Lord to deliver him from Saul's insane anger, and God did deliver him, without David striking a blow in self-defense.

The vast difference between David's state of mind and that which led the Amalekite to tell David he was the one who had disposed of Saul is vividly seen in David's response to such a message. The Amalekite thought he would be rewarded for being the executer of the rejected Saul as well as for being the harbinger of such tidings to David; but he was dealing with a man of God, and not a man whose heart was filled with wickedness, revenge, and violence. It was no good news to David that these men had died and that, with the exception of Jonathan, they had been rushed into a lost eternity. A Christian would rather suffer many things at the hands of wicked men than be the cause of anyone's being prematurely cut off in his sins.

God's Anointed

When the Amalekite told David he was the one who had taken Saul's life, instead of obtaining favor with David, he lost his own life. David questioned him, "How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD'S anointed?" and he commanded one of his men to fall upon him and slay him. David told him, "Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD'S anointed." So died the Amalekite for his prevarication. (**Psalms 105:14-15** ¹⁴ He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes; ¹⁵ Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm)

Song of the Bow

David's grief for the loss of his friend Jonathan, and for the untimely death of Saul, is left for us in a lamentation which David composed. This is often called the "Song of the Bow."

David realized the Philistines would rejoice a great deal because of their victory over Israel and because of the death of Saul. It was an evil day for Israel. Israel had asked for a king, and had received one, but he had been a terror and not a blessing to them. God had punished Israel for their rejection of Him. (1 Samuel 8:7 ⁷ And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them) God brought Saul to the hour of judgment for his own rebellion and sin.

Saul had given the heathen nations ample opportunity to bring reproach upon the name of Jehovah, Israel's God. This enables us to understand better David's song: "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." But in spite of David's intended precaution, at that very moment Saul's body was hanging in dishonor and disrepute in the streets of Bethshan.

Let all who hold God's Word in light esteem, and are little concerned with the respect they owe to God, consider the end of King Saul "Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling" (Psalm 49:14).

QUESTIONS

- 1 Who was the cause of Saul's death?
- 2 Why did Saul commit suicide?
- 3 Will a suicide enter Heaven?
- 4 Why did the men of Jabesh-gilead go to Beth-shan and regain the bodies of Saul and his sons?
- 5 How did David hear of Saul's death?
- 6 Why did not David rejoice because of his enemy's death?