

Introductory Notes to the Historical Books

I. Theme

Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are books of history that record the establishment of the kingdom, its years of victory and defeat, and the end of a divided kingdom. One lesson is obvious as you read these books: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). Whenever the nation exalted God, God exalted the nation; but when the rulers, prophets, and people turned from the Law, God removed His blessing.

This truth is seen not only in the history of the nation collectively, but also in the lives of the leaders personally. Both David and Solomon disobeyed God and paid dearly in their own homes and personal lives.

II. The Prophets

In a period of spiritual decline, God sent His prophets to awaken the people. There are several "unnamed prophets" in these books, as well as famous servants of God such as Elijah and Elisha, Isaiah, Joel, Amos, Jonah, and Micah. Be sure to check your Bible dictionary or Bible handbook for the parallels between the lives of the prophets and the history of the nation.

III. The Books of Samuel

These books record the transition from the period of judges to the time when the kingdom was established. Samuel was the last of the judges and the first of the national prophets. It was he who anointed Saul the first king, and then David his successor. You may outline the books together as follows:

- A. Samuel (1 Sam. 1–7)
 - 1. Birth and childhood (1–3)
 - 2. Early ministry (4–7)
- B. Saul (1 Sam. 8–15)
 - 1. Made King (8–10)
 - 2. Early victories (11–12)
 - 3. Sins and rejection (13–15)
- C. David (1 Sam. 16–2 Sam. 24)
 - 1. The shepherd
(1 Sam. 16–17)
 - 2. The servant (1 Sam. 18–19)
 - 3. The exile (1 Sam. 20–31)
 - 4. The King (2 Sam. 1–24)
 - a. His triumphs (2 Sam. 1–12)
 - b. His trials (2 Sam. 13–24)
 - i. Personal sin (11–12)
 - ii. Amnon's sin (13)

- iii. Absalom's sin (14–18)
- iv. National unrest (19–24)

IV. The Books of Kings

These books, as the title indicates, deal with the kings of the nation, beginning with the glorious reign of Solomon and ending with the tragic captivity of Judah by Babylon. We may outline the books as follows:

- A. The Kingdom United (1 Kings 1–11)
 - 1. Solomon's wealth and wisdom (1–4)
 - 2. Solomon's temple (5–9)
 - 3. Solomon's sins (10–11)
- B. The Kingdom Divided (1 Kings 12–22)
 - 1. Rehoboam and Jeroboam (12–14)
 - 2. A series of good and bad kings (15–16)
 - 3. Elijah and King Ahab (17–22)
- C. The Kingdom Taken Captive (2 Kings 1–25)
 - 1. Israel's captivity (1–17)
 - 2. Judah's captivity (18–25)

V. The Books of Chronicles

First and Second Kings were written before the captivity of Judah and seem to emphasize a prophet's point of view, while 1 and 2 Chronicles were written after the captivity (1 Chron. 6:15) and seem to have a priest's point of view. These books remind us that "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34, nkjv). Sin was a special reproach to the Jews because they were God's people and were graciously called by God to a life of holiness (Ex. 19–20). God would have destroyed the nation much sooner except for His covenant with David and His promise to keep a descendant of David on the throne in Jerusalem. The ultimate fulfillment of that promise is in Jesus Christ, the "Son of David" (Matt. 1:1), who will one day establish the throne of David (Luke 1:26–33) and rule from Jerusalem.

We have covered much of the history of Saul, David, Solomon, and the important kings in our outlines on 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings. Here, we will focus on the material that is found exclusively in 1 and 2 Chronicles. The new events in these two books parallel and supplement what is given in Samuel and Kings. For this reason we will focus on material found exclusively in 1 and 2 Chronicles.

I. Genealogies from Adam to King Saul (1 Chron. 1–9)

II. The reign of King David (1 Chron. 10–29)

- A. The death of King Saul (10)
- B. David solidifies his kingdom (11–16)
- C. God's covenant with David (17)

- D. David expands the kingdom (18–20)
- E. David numbers the people (21)
- F. David prepares for the building of the temple (22–29)
(The death of David).

III. The reign of King Solomon (2 Chron. 1–9)

- A. Solomon receives God's blessing (1)
- B. Solomon builds and dedicates the temple (2–7)
- C. Solomon's fame and splendor (8–9)

IV. The divided kingdom (The kings of Judah) (10–36)

- A. The reign of Rehoboam (10–12)
- B. From Abijah to Asa (13–16)
- C. The reign of Jehoshaphat (17–20)
- D. From Jehoram to Amaziah (21–25)
- E. The reign of Uzziah (26)
- F. The reigns of Jotham and Ahaz (27–28)
- G. The reign of Hezekiah (29–32)
- H. The reigns of Manasseh and Amon (33)
- I. The reign of Josiah (34–35)
- J. The last kings and the downfall of Judah (36)

1 Samuel 1–3

The events in these opening chapters of the book center around three persons.

I. Hannah—A Godly Mother (1:1–2:11)

A. Her sorrow (1:1–10).

While God's perfect pattern for the family from the very beginning had been one husband and one wife, "because of the hardness of men's hearts" (Matt. 19:8), God permitted polygamy. See Deut. 21:15–17. Elkanah was a godly man but he had a divided home, and his favorite wife, Hannah ("grace"), carried a constant burden of sorrow because of her barrenness and because of the persecution of the other wife.

B. Her supplication (1:11–19).

Hannah was a woman of prayer, so it is no surprise to find her son Samuel a great man of prayer. So burdened was her heart that Hannah left the feast without eating and went to the tabernacle to pray. (The word "temple" in 1:9 simply means "a large public

building" and does not refer to Solomon's temple which had not yet been built.) Hannah did not "bargain" with the Lord; rather, she proved her spirituality by willingly offering God her best—her firstborn son. Verse 21 suggests that her husband agreed with the vow; see also Num. 30:6–16. The Nazarite regulations are found in Num. 6. Eli, the High Priest, certainly judged Hannah severely (Matt. 7:1–5), especially considering that his own sons were "sons of Belial [Satan]" (see 2:12).

C. Her surrender (1:20–28).

God answered Hannah's prayers and sent a son, so she named him Samuel, "asked of the Lord." Jewish women weaned their children at about the age of three; at that time Hannah took Samuel to Eli and fulfilled her vow to the Lord. The three bullocks were probably for the sin offering, burnt offering, and special offering for the Nazarite vow; see Num. 15:8. "For this child I prayed." What a testimony from a godly mother! See 2 Tim. 1:5. If we had more parents like Elkanah and Hannah, we would have more godly people like Samuel. "Lent" means "given"; Samuel belonged to the Lord for the rest of his life.

D. Her son (2:1–11).

While Elkanah was worshiping (1:28), his wife was praying and praising God. Compare this passage with Mary's song in Luke 1:46–55. In both cases, the women praise God for His victory and for honoring the prayers of the humble. Note the two names of Christ in 2:10—"His King" and "His Anointed" (Messiah, Christ)—for Hannah's burden was for the glory of the Lord among His people. Hannah certainly exemplifies a godly mother, for she put God first, she believed in prayer, she kept her vows, and she gave God all the glory.

II. Eli-A Careless Father (2:12–36)

A. His sinful sons (vv. 12–21).

How tragic when a servant of the Lord (and a high priest at that) fails to win his own sons to the Lord! These sons of Eli were selfish, for they put their own desires ahead of the Word of God and the needs of the people; they were overbearing; and they were lustful (2:22). Philippians 3:17–19 is a perfect description of these ungodly priests. Note the repetition of the word *flesh*. Note too the contrast between Eli's sons and young Samuel in v. 18: "But Samuel ..." No doubt Eli's sons laughed at young Samuel and ridiculed him for his faithful ministry; but God was going to step in and settle accounts before long.

B. His selfish disobedience (vv. 22–26).

Eli refused to face facts honestly and obey the Word of God; see Deut. 21:18–21 and 17:12. In 3:13 God states clearly that Eli refused to restrain his sons; instead, he

pampered them. His weak warning in 2:23–25 was certainly no substitute for definite discipline. Compare 2:26 with Luke 2:52.

C. His severe judgment (vv. 27–36).

God in His grace sent a severe message to Eli by the mouth of an unknown man of God, warning him that his family would suffer because of the sins of his sons and because of his own carelessness. He honored his sons above the Lord (v. 29); this was idolatry. Eli had not been jealous for the glory of the Lord, so God had to remove him. In later years, Saul killed many of Eli's descendants (1 Sam. 22:17–20); and later Solomon replaced Eli's family with the family of Zadok (1 Kings 2:26–27, 35). Of course, the "faithful priest" of v. 35 refers immediately to Samuel, but ultimately to Christ. Verse 34 predicts the death of Eli's two sons; see 4:17–18 for the fulfillment.

III. Samuel—A Devoted Son (3)

A. His call from the Lord (vv. 1–10).

Tradition states that Samuel was about twelve years old at this time. He had grown up in the presence of the Lord and learned to serve in His tabernacle, yet he did not have a personal experience with the Lord (v. 7). How important it is for those who are raised in Christian homes to make their own personal decisions for Christ. Samuel had filled the lampstand with oil; it was close to daybreak and the lamp was about to go out. Samuel was sleeping and the Lord called him. He first thought was that blind Eli needed his help, so he ran to him. (See how quick this boy was to obey when called.) Verse 10 (nkjv) records Samuel's conversation: "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears." Later on, God would say to Samuel, "Speak servant, for your Lord hears!" For Samuel became a great man of prayer.

B. His message from the Lord (vv. 11–14).

The person who surrenders to the Lord and is willing to listen will always learn God's will. Eli had disobeyed the Lord and put his family first, so God could not speak directly to him. It was a message of judgment on Eli's house, and it must have weighed heavily upon Samuel's heart. Samuel loved Eli and had learned much from him, but Samuel knew he must be true to the Lord in spite of his personal desires.

C. His message to Eli (vv. 15–21).

This tremendous spiritual experience did not keep Samuel from doing his daily tasks the next morning. He did not "parade" himself before the people; no, he walked in great humility, carrying within his heart the burden of the Lord. Just as he had said "Here am I" to the Lord, so he replied "Here am I" when Eli called him. Those who honor the Lord will also honor their elders. Samuel would rather keep the sad message in his own heart, but Eli asked him to tell him all; so he did. While we do not admire Eli's failure with his own family, we do admire his resignation to God's will even though it meant

death to him and his sons. This event was a turning point in history. Up to now, God had not spoken to the people in frequent or wide-spread ("open") visions (v. 1); but now everyone knew that Samuel was God's prophet and that the Lord was with him. The Lord was now able to appear once again because there was a servant whom He could trust. Certainly God would do more for His people even today if He could find devoted believers willing to be His servants.

Several practical lessons are found in these chapters:

1. Never underestimate the power of sin in a family. Eli's sons needed discipline, but he pampered them instead. This cost him his life, and eventually cost the family the priesthood.
2. Never underestimate the power of prayer in a home. Hannah and Elkanah were people of prayer, and God answered their prayers. We are blessed today because of the dedication of Hannah, for through her, God gave the world Samuel, the last of the judges and the first of the national prophets.
3. God speaks to children and young people, and adults should make it easy for them to hear God's voice and respond in faith. How wise Eli was to know that God was calling young Samuel. The training of children in spiritual things is a great responsibility that we must not neglect.

1 Samuel 4–7

These chapters relate three great events in the history of Israel.

I. God's Glory Is Departed (4)

A. A great sin (vv. 1–5).

Israel lost 4,000 men in the first battle, and this should have been evidence to them that God was displeased. Did they repent and turn to God in prayer and confession? No! Instead they resorted to superstition and took the ark of the covenant to the battlefield. They could not take the ark out in faith because God had not commanded them by His Word. They were acting by chance and not by faith. Because the ark had gone before the nation in the wilderness and had marched in victory around Jericho, they thought its presence would assure them victory over the Philistines. Instead of revering the ark as the symbol of God's presence, they turned it into a religious relic! See Num. 10:35ff.

B. A great slaughter (vv. 6–10).

The Philistines were first afraid, then determined; even if the God of Israel were in the camp, they were going to behave like brave soldiers! Since God had forsaken His people, the Philistines had an easy victory. Psalm 78:56ff is a vivid description of this tragedy. Israel should have known that God's presence with them depended upon their

obedience to His Word. Hophni and Phinehas were ungodly priests; their presence brought judgment, not blessing.

C. A great sorrow (vv. 11–22).

Eli, the ninety-eight-year-old blind priest, was sitting by the wayside when the messenger arrived at Shiloh with the sad news; but the messenger ran right past him and announced his message to the city. The uproar in the city aroused Eli's curiosity, for no doubt he was expecting the fulfillment of Samuel's prophecy (3:11–14; 2:34–35). Note how the messenger gives the four pieces of bad news in order of their importance: Israel is fled; many have been slaughtered; Eli's two sons are dead; and the ark has been captured by the enemy. Verse 13 tells us that the safety of the ark had been Eli's greatest concern. Now we see sorrow upon sorrow: Eli falls down in a state of shock, breaks his neck, and dies; and his daughter-in-law likewise loses her life as she delivers a son. The name "Ichabod" means "no glory" or "Where is the glory?" See Ex. 40:34ff. The word "departed" may be translated "gone into exile." Israel's history is a story of receiving and then losing the glory of God.

II. God's Name Is Defended (5–6)

A. Before the heathen (chap. 5).

God will not reveal His power on behalf of His sinning people, but He will not allow His glory to be mocked or His Name to be defiled by a smirking enemy. The lords of the Philistines added the ark to their other religious relics in their heathen temple and put Jehovah on the same level as their fish-god Dagon. Of course, God stands high above all other gods! No wonder the heathen idol fell on its face before the ark! See Isa. 19:1. The men put Dagon back on his feet because he was powerless to help himself; but the next day they found their beloved idol without hands and head! Jehovah had proved Dagon to be a false god; He had vindicated His Name. Dagon lost his hands, but the hand of the Lord was heavy in judgment upon Ashdod (v. 6); God sent boils ("emerods," swellings) and mice (6:4) to plague the people. The mice ruined the crops and carried disease germs to the people. The ark was then moved from Ashdod to Ekron, but the citizens there begged to have it removed! Once again, God defended His name.

B. Before the Israelites (chap. 6).

The Philistines decided to return the ark to Israel, but nobody had the courage to undertake the task. They finally decided to put the ark on a new cart and allow the cows to walk down the road unassisted. It would be natural for the cows to seek out their calves (v. 10); but if they headed instead for Bethshemesh, it would be evidence that God was directing them and therefore that He had sent the plagues. The Philistines added a trespass offering too: five images of the boils, and five images of the mice. God directed the cows and they brought the cart to the field of Joshua, an inhabitant of Bethshemesh. The Israelites in the harvest field rejoiced to see the ark returned. However, they became curious and looked into the ark (vv. 19–20), and God had to

judge them. The numbers in v. 19 have created a problem, for there were not 50,000 people in that little village. In Hebrew, letters are used for numbers, and it is easy for a scribe to miscopy or misread a letter. It is likely that seventy men were judged instantly, certainly a "great slaughter" for such a small village. The problem does not affect anything crucial. It is important that we know God did judge their sin. How many were slain is not a vital matter.

Hophni and Phinehas thought they could win victories by trusting the ark when their lives were wicked, and God killed them. Eli died because he had not disciplined his own sons who were dishonoring the Lord. The Philistines died because they treated Jehovah like one of their own gods. The men of Bethshemesh died because they presumptuously looked into the ark. It does not pay to trifle with God.

III. God's People Are Delivered (7)

The ark was not returned to Shiloh; it remained at the house of Abinadab for twenty years. What was God doing during this time? He was preparing His servant Samuel to defeat the enemy and establish the kingdom. No doubt Samuel was ministering to the people from place to place, giving them the Word of God. Verse 3 indicates that Samuel called the people to repent and return to the Lord. This meant putting away the gods of the heathen, and then preparing their hearts to serve the Lord. How tragic that the great nation of Israel had fallen into defeat and disrepute because of their sins! Had Eli been a faithful father and his sons faithful priests, this defeat would never have occurred. Baalim and Ashtaroth represented male and female deities. Their worship was celebrated with ceremonies of abominable filth.

Samuel summoned the nation to Mizpeh for a prayer meeting! Samuel must always be associated with prayer; see 12:23. He was born in answer to his mother's prayers (chap. 1); he prayed for his nation and defeated the enemy (7:13); he prayed when Israel defied the Lord and asked for a king (8:6); and he prayed for King Saul (15:11) even after God had rejected him. Someone has called Samuel "God's Emergency Man," and the name surely fits. Samuel stepped on the scene when the priesthood was decayed, when the nation was defeated, and when God's glory had departed. Certainly Hannah must have realized how wonderfully God would use her son; see her song (and prediction) in 2:9–10.

The events at Mizpeh were these: (1) Samuel poured out water before the Lord as a symbol of the nation's repentance, their hearts poured out in sorrow for their sins; (2) He offered a burnt offering to indicate Israel's complete dedication to God; (3) He prayed for the nation while they were fearing the arrival of the Philistines; God gave the army of Israel a great victory. What a day that was! Samuel accomplished with one prayer a victory that Samson could not win during the entire twenty years of his leadership! From that day on (until David's great victory over the Philistines), the enemy kept their distance. Such is the power of a dedicated life, the power of prayer (James 5:16).

Samuel had a ministry as prophet and judge, traveling from city to city to minister to the people and settle their disputes. He was the last of the judges and the first of the national prophets. (Moses' prophetic office was of a different nature.) It is sad to see that Samuel's sons did not follow in their father's godly walk (8:5). Perhaps he was too busy with the affairs of the nation to train them. Eli had made a similar mistake.

These events show us the importance of a godly home. The nation fell into sin and defeat because Eli had neglected his home; but God saved the nation because of the prayers of a godly mother (Hannah) and her God-given son. As go the homes, so goes the nation.

1 Samuel 8–15

These chapters cover the early life of Saul and record the sins that led up to his rejection by the Lord.

I. The Request for a King (8–10)

Jehovah God had been King of Israel and had cared for the nation since its beginning; but now the elders of the nation wanted a king to lead them. Their request was motivated by several factors: (1) Samuel's sons were not godly and the elders feared that they would lead the nation astray when Samuel died; (2) the nation had been through a series of temporary leaders during the period of the Judges, and the elders wanted a more permanent ruler; and (3) Israel wanted to be like the other nations and have a king to honor. The powerful nations around Israel were a constant threat, and the elders felt that a king would give greater security. Samuel's reaction to their request shows that he fully understood their unbelief and rebellion: they were rejecting Jehovah. In choosing Saul, the nation rejected the Father; much later in choosing Barabbas, they rejected the Son; and when they chose their own leaders instead of the witness of the Apostles, they rejected the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51).

Here is an illustration of God's permissive will: He granted them their request, but He warned them of the cost. See Deut. 17:14–20 for Moses' prophecy of this event. The nation listened to Samuel and then asked for a king just the same! They wanted to be like the other nations, even though God had called them to be separate from the nations. Chapter 9 explains how Saul was brought to Samuel and privately anointed for the kingship. Note his humility in 9:21, and also in 10:22 when he hesitated to stand before the people. God gave Saul three special signs to assure him (10:1–7). Samuel also instructed Saul to tarry at Gilgal and wait for him to come (10:8). Verse 8 should be translated, "When you go before me to Gilgal"—that is, at some future date when King Saul would have the army ready for battle. This event took place some years later; see chap. 13.

Saul had everything in his favor: (1) a strong body, 10:23; (2) a humble mind, 9:21; (3) a new heart, 10:9; (4) spiritual power, 10:10; (5) loyal friends, 10:26; and most of all, (6) the guidance and prayers of Samuel. Yet in spite of these advantages, he failed miserably. Why? Because he would not allow God to be the Lord of his life.

II. The Renewal of the Kingdom (11–12)

Saul returned home and was actually hesitant to talk about his great experience. Keep in mind that this was at the beginning of the kingdom when everything was new. Samuel was still the spiritual ruler of the land, and he and Saul were waiting for God's leading concerning the future of the nation. Without modern means of transportation or communication, it would take months for Saul and Samuel to rally the people. Saul's first opportunity came when Nahash threatened the nation. Certainly this national victory put Saul before the people and established his authority. Some of his associates wanted Saul to kill those Israelites who had opposed his reign (10:27), but Saul showed humility and restraint by giving the glory to the Lord and refusing to take vengeance on others.

This victory was the occasion for a renewal of the kingdom and a rededication of the nation. Samuel reviewed his own ministry and reminded the people that he had been faithful to them and to the Lord. He then reviewed the history of the nation and led the people to see that they had greatly sinned against the Lord by asking for a king. He called for rain to show the people his own faith and the power of God, and the sudden storm in harvest (an unusual event at that time of the year) brought fear to the people. They admitted their sin and Samuel reassured them of God's grace. They needed to know that their king was not going to save them; it would be their own faithfulness and obedience to the Lord that would assure them of God's blessings. They had made a mistake, but God would overrule if they would obey.

III. The Rejection of the King (13–15)

These three chapters record three sins of King Saul, sins that ultimately cost him the kingdom.

A. Impatience (chap. 13).

The time had now come for Israel to gather at Gilgal as Samuel and Saul had agreed months before (10:8). Note how Saul took the credit for his son's victory at Gibeah in order to impress the people and get them to follow him. The vast host of the Philistines began to assemble, and the longer Saul waited, the more dangerous his position became. If he were to strike immediately, he could defeat the enemy, but his delay only gave them opportunity to become stronger. Saul's impatience (and unbelief) led him to go ahead without Samuel, and while Saul was completing the offering, the prophet appeared. Verses 11–12 record Saul's excuses as he tried to put the blame on Samuel and the people. "I forced myself!" he told Samuel, but the prophet knew the truth. This was the beginning of the end: if God could not trust him in this little matter, how could He trust him with the kingdom? Saul's impatience cost him the kingdom.

B. Pride (chap. 14).

Jonathan, Saul's son, was evidently a godly man; for the Lord gave him and his armor bearer a victory over the Philistines. Saul was only a spectator (vv. 16–18), but he then mustered his troops and shared in the victory. Unfortunately, however, Saul had uttered a foolish vow that day forbidding his soldiers to eat any food. How foolish to think that a sacrificial vow would give him victory when his heart was not right with God! He was

later to learn, “To obey is better than to sacrifice.” Jonathan knew nothing about this curse, so he went ahead and ate some honey and was strengthened (v. 27), and his example of practical wisdom encouraged the army to go ahead and eat after their victory (vv. 31–32). Alas, the Jews were so hungry they ate the meat with the blood (Lev. 17:10–14), which was far worse than breaking the vow. Saul tried to amend this by offering the spoils as a sacrifice to God. When the army went to their next engagement, they sought the guidance of God but failed to get an answer. This led to Saul’s discovery of Jonathan’s disobedience, and the foolish king was going to kill his own son! How easy it is to be convicted about somebody else’s sins! The people rescued Jonathan, but Saul’s actions revealed the darkness of his heart. Trouble was soon to come. His pride would bring him low.

C. Disobedience (chap. 15).

God would give Saul one more chance to prove himself, this time by utterly destroying Israel’s old enemies, the Amalekites (Deut. 25:17–19; Ex. 17:16). But Saul did not obey the Lord: he kept the best of the spoils for himself and failed to kill Agag, the king. God told Samuel what Saul had done, and the burdened prophet prayed all night. When Samuel approached Saul, the king lied to him and told him he had obeyed God’s Word. Just about that time Saul’s sins found him out, for the animals began to make noise. Once more, Saul resorted to excuses: “They” (the people) saved the animals, but “we” (himself and the leaders) have utterly destroyed the rest. Then Samuel delivered God’s message to the rejected king: Saul had lost his early humility (9:21) and became proud and disobedient; he had rebelled against the Word of the Lord and had tried to make up for his disobedience by sacrifices (vv. 21–23). Saul had substituted saying for doing (15:13); excuses for confessions (15:15 and 21); and sacrifice for obedience (v. 22). He was too quick to criticize and blame others; he was unwilling to face and judge his own sins.

When Samuel was about to leave Saul, the king confessed his sins, but his confession did not impress the prophet (vv. 24–27). True confession involves more than saying “I have sinned”; it means repentance and true sorrow for sin. As Samuel turned away, Saul held to his robe and ripped it, and Samuel took this as a prophecy that the kingdom would be torn from Saul and given to another (David). Verse 30 reveals that Saul was more concerned about what the people thought than what God thought; he wanted a good reputation, but he did not want true character. Samuel worshiped with Saul, and then killed Agag as the Lord had commanded, but this was the last time Samuel walked with Saul. Saul had lost his best friend; he had lost the Lord’s blessing; he had lost the kingdom. From now on, he would be on a dark, winding road that would end with him becoming a castaway and being slain by one of the very Amalekites he had refused to destroy (2 Sam. 1:13).

1 Samuel 16–17

We enter now into a study of the life of David, “the man after God’s own heart.” As Saul is a picture of the carnal life, so David is a picture of the spiritual life of the believer who walks by faith in the Lord. It is true that David sinned. Unlike Saul, however, David confessed his sins and sought to restore his fellowship with God. We see in these chapters three scenes in David’s early life.

I. The Obedient Son (16:1–13)

What a solemn statement: “I have rejected Saul!” This rejection was not yet known to the people, and Saul was still “putting on a front” as the king of the land. A person may be rejected by God and still be accepted by men, but ultimately God’s judgment will fall. So dangerous was Saul that Samuel had to devise a plan to escape his wrath when visiting Bethlehem. See 22:17–19 for a sample of Saul’s jealous rage.

When, at God’s direction, Samuel arrived at the house of Jesse to invite them to the feast, David was not even there! He was in the fields caring for the sheep. We cannot help but be impressed with David’s obedience and humility. As the “baby of the family” he had very little status, but he was faithful to his father and to the Lord. David’s life illustrates Matt. 25:21—he began as a servant and became a ruler; he was faithful with a few sheep and then inherited the whole nation; he knew how to work, so God gave him joy. Compare this to the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, who began as a leader and ended as a servant; began owning many things and ended up poor; and started with pleasure but finished in slavery. Matthew 25:21 outlines God’s method of success, and we see it proved in the life of David.

Samuel was about to make the mistake of evaluating the men by their physical gifts (see 10:24) when God reminded him that the heart was the important thing. Read Prov. 4:23. When David appeared, summoned from the field, God told Samuel, “This is he!” David was fair of skin, and he had red hair. His handsome appearance and his surrendered heart were a wonderful combination. He was the eighth son, and eight is the number of new beginning. His anointing with oil brought him a special unction from the Spirit of God, and from that hour he was God’s man. It is not likely that David or his family understood the significance of the anointing that day. Samuel would certainly explain it to David at an opportune time.

II. The Humble Servant (16:14–23)

What a tragic contrast: the Spirit came upon David, but departed from Saul! An evil spirit was permitted by God to afflict Saul and he became, at times, like a madman. See 18:10 and 19:9. His strange behavior prompted his servants to suggest that he call a skilled musician to soothe him. How sad that Saul’s servants dealt with the symptoms and not with the causes, for music could never change Saul’s sinful heart. True, the king might “feel better” afterward, but it would be a false peace. The servants should have prayed for Saul to get right with God! David was just the man Saul needed, and one of the servants suggested him. Already we can see David’s abilities being recognized, yet

David was not promoting himself: God was doing it. Read carefully Prov. 22:29; also 1 Peter 5:6. Too many young people today try to push themselves into prominent places without first proving themselves at home in the small matters. David came to court and immediately became a favorite. Of course, had Saul known that God had chosen David to be king, he would have immediately tried to kill the lad. When he did discover this, Saul began to persecute David and hunt him in the wilderness of Israel.

David did not remain permanently at court; 17:15 should read, "But David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep." He would visit the court when needed, but he did not neglect his responsibilities at home. What humility! Here is a gifted lad, chosen to be king, anointed of God, yet he still cares for the sheep and works as a servant! No wonder God was able to use David.

III. The Victorious Soldier (17)

The story of David and Goliath is familiar and carries with it many practical lessons for the Christian life. All of us face giants of one kind or another, but we may overcome them through the power of God. Goliath was probably ten feet tall, with armor weighing over 150 pounds. He was "the Philistine" (17:8), their great champion, and so terrifying was he that he threw the Jewish army into panic (v. 11). Had Saul been a godly leader, he would have claimed Deut. 20 and led his army to victory; but when people are out of fellowship with God, they can only lead others into defeat.

David arrived with provisions for his brothers, and immediately he was interested in the challenge of the giant. Note that his own brethren accused him and tried to discourage him; Satan always has somebody to tell us "it can't be done." Even Saul tried to dissuade him: "You are not able" (v. 33, nkjv). Well, in himself, David was not able, but in the power of the Lord he could overcome any enemy. (See Phil. 4:13; Eph. 3:20–21.) Saul tried to give David some armor, but since he had not proved it, David refused the armor. Imagine Saul telling somebody else how to have victory! David had proved the power of God privately in the fields caring for his sheep; now he would demonstrate this power publicly to the glory of God. Note how throughout this entire episode, David gives glory to the Lord. The practical lesson here is that God gives victory in response to our faith. God had tested David privately with a lion and a bear; now he was to test him openly with a giant. If we are faithful in the private battles, God will see us through the public testings. Too often God's people faint at the smallest test that comes their way, little realizing that the "little tests" are but preparation for the bigger battles that are sure to come (Jer. 12:5). David used simple, humble weapons: a sling and five stones (see 1 Cor. 1:27–28 and 2 Cor. 10:3–5). David knew how Gideon was given victory with weak weapons, and he knew that Gideon's God was not dead. Neither his brothers' criticism nor Saul's unbelief kept David from trusting God for victory. The stone hit its mark; the giant fell down, and David used the giant's own sword to cut off his head! This one victory opened the way for Israel to attack the Philistines and spoil their camp. "And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 John 5:4, nkjv). We are "more than conquerors"!

There is also a typical lesson here, for David is a picture of Jesus Christ. David's name means "beloved," and Christ is God's beloved Son. Both were born in Bethlehem. Both were rejected by their brethren. (Of course, when David became king, his brethren

received him, just as the Jews will receive Christ when He returns to reign.) David was anointed king years before he was permitted to reign, just as Christ is King now but will not reign on earth until Satan is banished. King Saul typifies Satan in this present age; for Saul was rejected and defeated, yet permitted to reign until David came to the throne. Satan is permitted to persecute God's people, yet one day he will be defeated.

Just as David was sent by his father to the battlefield, so Christ was sent by the Father to this world. Goliath illustrates Satan in his pride and power. Read carefully Luke 11:14–23. Satan is the strong man guarding his goods (people under his control), and Christ is the Stronger Man who overcomes him. Christ invaded Satan's kingdom, overcame his power, took his armor, and now is dividing his spoils by saving lost souls and making them children of God. This is what David did that day: he overcame the strong man and allowed Israel to divide the spoils (vv. 52–54). We Christians do not simply fight *for* victory, we fight *from* victory, the victory won at the cross (Col. 2:15). "Be of good cheer," said Jesus, "I have overcome (John 16:33)."

Why Saul did not recognize David, his own armor bearer, is not made clear. It is likely that he saw David when under the influence of the evil spirit. Another factor is that David would be but one of several servants at the court, and it would not be unusual for Saul to confuse them. Since Saul had promised his daughter to the victor, he would certainly ask about the boy's family.

1 Samuel 18–21

These chapters form the transition between David's service in Saul's court and his exile as a fugitive. They explain how David was moved from being Saul's favorite to being Saul's foe. The main issue is David's faith, and we can see in these chapters how this man of God all but lost his confidence in God because of the trials that came to his life.

I. David Trusts the Lord (18)

David's greatest test of faith was not when he faced Goliath; it was when he had to serve daily in Saul's court. Note the different ways his faith was tested:

A. By popularity (vv. 18:1–11).

David was beloved by Jonathan, Saul's son, and this in itself was an opportunity for testing. David would be the next king, but, by rights, Jonathan should inherit the crown. The friendship between these two men of God is a great example for us. Certainly there was no jealousy on Jonathan's part because of the honor bestowed upon David. However, with Saul it was another matter, for David was popular with the people. The fact that the women praised David and not David's God is significant. David was wise enough not to put too much stock in their words. But Saul's heart filled with envy when he heard that David had more praise than he did. "As the refining pot for silver, and the

furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise" (Prov. 27:21). Praise is like a hot furnace: it reveals what a person is really made of. The praise that made David humble only brought the dross to the top in Saul's heart and revealed his pride and desire for glory.

B. By demotion (vv. 18:12–16).

Verse 5 suggests that David was the head of Saul's personal body-guard, but now he is demoted to being merely the captain over one thousand men. Did this change David? No! His faith was in the Lord, and he continued to serve and honor his king. This made Saul all the more afraid! The king knew that God had departed from him and had given blessings to David. It takes real faith to experience a demotion before the eyes of the people and still maintain your humility and service.

C. By disappointment (vv. 17–30).

Saul had promised one of his daughters to the man who defeated Goliath (17:25), and now he was going to fulfill his promise. Note David's humility before the king in v. 18. But, did Saul keep his word? No! The woman was given to another man. Then Saul tried to use his daughter Michal as a tool to slay David; for the king demanded an impossible dowry, hoping that David would be killed in trying to obtain it. But the Lord was with David, and he completed the mission successfully. It is unfortunate that he did marry Michal, for the union was never a happy one. While in exile, David lost Michal to another man (25:44), but he gained her back when he started to reign at Hebron (2 Sam. 3:13–16). Her attitude toward David led to a complete separation later (2 Sam. 6:20–23).

II. David Trusts Men (19)

Saul's plan to murder David was no longer a secret, for now the king's servants were commanded to slay him. But Saul had been unable to kill David in previous attempts (18:11, 25), and now it appeared that his anger was spent and David could return to the court. Here we see David's faith wavering, for instead of trusting God and seeking His will, he trusts in human beings.

A. He trusts Jonathan (vv. 1–10).

Certainly the king's son could intercede for David. Saul even swore that he would protect David, but these promises were never fulfilled. No sooner did David win a great victory on the battlefield than Saul's old envy returned, and he threw the spear again. David made a mistake trusting Jonathan to "patch things up" for him. Saul's heart needed to be changed before his words would be trustworthy.

B. He trusts Michal (vv. 11–17).

Though his wife loved David, there was never a strong spiritual tie between the two, as her later actions proved. She warned David that Saul was watching him, so together

they concocted a lie. This was the beginning of serious trouble for David, for it is never right to do evil that good may come of it (Rom. 3:8). Note that Michal used an idol to give the impression that David was sick in bed! She was now deceiving her own father and only making matters worse. Read Ps. 59 for additional insight into this situation.

C. He trusts Samuel (vv. 18–24).

This perhaps was the wisest move David made, for this man of God would be able to pray for him and counsel him. Note that Samuel defeated Saul, not with lies or weapons, but with the Spirit of God. By using spiritual weapons, Samuel delayed Saul and gave David opportunity to get away.

III. David Trusts Himself (20–21)

These chapters do not record a very beautiful picture, for in them we see the man of faith faltering and failing in his faith. Instead of waiting to seek the Lord's will, David flees in fear and tries to "scheme" his way out of his problems. Note the lies he tells.

A. He lied to Saul (chap. 20).

David's speech to Jonathan in 20:1 suggests self-centeredness and impatience. How much better it would have been had these two friends prayed together instead of hatching their scheme. Jonathan lied to his father about David's whereabouts (vv. 6, 28), but he had to wait a few days to see how the matter would end. Meanwhile, he and David made a covenant together that David would protect Jonathan's family when he became king, a promise that David fulfilled (2 Sam. 9). Saul did not believe Jonathan's story (vv. 24–33), and his reaction almost cost Jonathan his life! When God abandons a person and the devil takes over, there is no end to the wickedness that results. Jonathan left the table and met David the next morning; they wept together and said farewell.

B. He lied to Ahimelech (21:1–9).

David fled again, this time to Nob, where the tabernacle was established. David always had a great love for the house of God, so perhaps he wanted to visit the tabernacle again before going into hiding. But he lied to the priest by claiming to be on business for Saul (v. 2). The priest gave David and his men the holy bread to eat and also the sword of Goliath for David's protection. The whole plan seemed to be successful, except that one of Saul's spies, Doeg, was there to witness the events; and this ultimately led to treachery and bloodshed (22:9ff; see Ps. 52 and note the title).

C. He lied to Achish (21:10–15).

Matters were going from bad to worse, just as they always do when we trust ourselves instead of the wisdom of God. David now fled into the hands of the enemy! "The fear of man brings a snare," and David almost snared himself right in enemy territory! Certainly

the king would not tolerate a Jewish hero in his land, and David had to pretend to be out of his mind before he could escape. "O what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive." This might have been the end of David's life, but the Lord intervened and turned the heart of the king toward getting rid of David. He then fled to the cave of Adullam and organized his "outlaw band." See Ps. 34 and Ps. 56.

It is amazing how men and women of faith can gradually become men and women of fear and unbelief. If we get in a hurry, trust people, and trust our own plans, before long everything falls to pieces and we find ourselves out of the place of God's blessing and protection. We shall see in later chapters that David learned to wait on the Lord and seek His will.

The friendship between David and Jonathan was something rare, for actually neither of them had anything to gain. Jonathan had lost the crown, and David could lose his life. Their unselfishness and constancy in spite of trials is a beautiful example of Christian love.

1 Samuel 22–24

David is now completely separated from Saul's court and is considered an outlaw and a rebel. Psalm 34 grew out of his narrow escape from Achish (1 Sam. 21:10–15) and perhaps best expresses David's trials and triumphs during his exile period. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all" (Ps. 34:19, nkjv). God was with David and helped him.

I. God Guided David's Steps (22)

David assembled a loyal band of followers at the cave of Adullam, a crowd of 400 men that eventually grew to 600 (23:13). His experiences in the cave are found in Ps 54 and 142. David would want to protect his brethren since Saul might want to slay them as well as David. Certainly this "motley crew" illustrates the kind of people who flee to Christ for refuge: people in distress or in debt (because of our sins); people discontented with life. David's band was small and despised, *but to them belonged the kingdom!* David was able to get protection for his parents at Moab since his family (through Ruth) came from there. How thoughtful of David to care for his loved ones; see John 19:26–27.

This period of persecution in David's life was a part of the preparation for the throne. He was already a great soldier; now he needed to suffer in the wilderness to learn *not* to trust men but to trust the Lord. All of us need "wilderness testings" to bring us closer to the Lord and to make us better equipped to serve Him. Saul's persecution of David is an illustration of the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. It also pictures Satan's persecution of the church today: Saul was not the king, yet he was reigning; David was the king, but he was not yet on the throne. Satan seems to be "reigning" today, but Christ is King and one day He will take His rightful throne.

Saul's murder of the innocent priests at Nob shows to what extent people will go once they have rejected the Lord. Saul was a liar and a murderer, just like Satan (John 8:44). Doeg was an Edomite, a descendant of Esau (Gen. 25:30), so his hatred for David and the priests is but another stage in the battle between Esau and Jacob. David's presence at Nob brought death to these people, so his deception only resulted in tragedy. Saul was unwilling to slay the Amalekites (chap. 15), yet he had no problem slaying innocent priests. This slaughter was a fulfillment of God's prophecy to Eli that his house would be judged; see 2:30–36. Saul was able to slay the priests, but he was not able to prevent Abiathar from fleeing to David with the ephod, the instrument for determining the will of God. What use had Saul for the ephod? He was determined to do his own will! Abiathar later became a help to David; see 23:9; 30:7.

II. God Guarded David's Life (23)

It was important that David live, for it was he who would deliver Israel, establish the kingdom in glory, and become the father of Christ in the flesh (Rom. 1:3). Satan used Saul to seek to kill David, but God was too strong for the enemy. As long as David sought the mind of the Lord, God gave him protection and victory.

A. Victory at Keilah (vv. 1–13).

The Philistines were David's enemy and the enemy of Israel, so it was right for him to fight them. When the child of God is in the will of God, he may expect the help of God. So intense was Saul's hatred that he did not thank God for David's victory, but instead came to fight the victor himself. And the men of Keilah did not protect their deliverer; rather, they tried to turn him over to Saul! How wicked is the human heart untouched by the grace of God!

B. Victory in the wilderness (vv. 14–18).

What patience David had, to be able to endure daily danger and persecution! He was a master strategist and could have tricked Saul into defeat, but he preferred to wait for God to give the victory. How moving it was when Jonathan met him in the wilderness (at the risk of his own life) to reassure him and encourage him. Sad to say, Jonathan was never allowed to reign with David, for he was slain in battle with his father. The righteous often suffer because of the sins of others.

C. Victory over the Ziphites (vv. 19–29).

Ziph was in Judah and its inhabitants should have been loyal to David; but instead they betrayed their rightful king to Saul. Read Ps. 54 for David's prayer to God for deliverance. The rock stood between David and Saul (23:26), just as the cloud stood between Israel and the Egyptians. It seemed that Saul would finally capture his man, but an invasion from the Philistines forced Saul to return home. Certainly God is in control of circumstances and delivers His own at the right time.

III. God Gave David Grace (24)

"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Prov. 16:32). God gave David the grace needed to show kindness to his enemy, and this is even greater than defeating the giant Goliath. Saul's men had been lying about David and telling Saul that David was trying to slay him (24:9). If Psalm 7 fits into this event, as many students believe, then Cush the Benjamite was chief of the liars. This experience gave David opportunity to prove to Saul and the leaders that he was not trying to slay Saul, but that he honored the king even though the king was out of the will of God.

A. *The temptation (vv. 1–7).*

Saul came into the cave to rest and relieve himself, probably laying his outer garment down as he entered. The cave was large and very dark, so he did not see David and his men hiding in the rocks. David was able to cut Saul's garment and not be detected. Certainly this would have been the time to kill his enemy! In fact, some of David's men insisted that God had arranged the circumstances so that David might so act (v. 4). It is important that we always test circumstances by the Word of God. So tender was David's heart that he repented openly of his rash deed of cutting Saul's robe; for he had not shown proper respect for the Lord's anointed. David, "a man after God's own heart," was willing for God to take care of Saul (Rom. 12:19–21).

B. *The explanation (vv. 8–15).*

David and his men were safe in the cave, and Saul's men would not dare to attack them; so David boldly stepped out to speak to Saul once the king had gone some distance away. How shocked Saul must have been to hear the voice of his son-in-law! David explained that Saul was listening to lies (v. 9) and that he could have lost his life in the cave but for David's kindness (vv. 10–11). The piece of the robe was evidence enough that David was telling the truth. "I am but a flea, a dead dog!" said David. "To what advantage is it for you to chase me? But I am not going to kill you or trick you, for the Lord will fight my battles and plead my cause." What a gracious spirit God gave to David. Oh, that we might have this same attitude toward our enemies today.

C. *The supplication (vv. 16–22).*

Picture the pitiful Saul as he stands before one who is his better. Saul's weeping and his admission of guilt were but shallow, passing emotions; they did not really come from his heart. He was only too glad to acknowledge David's kindness. After all, David had spared his life! And Saul was concerned primarily for his own family, that, when David did become king, he would not slay them. Verse 20 indicates the perversity of Saul's heart: he admitted that David was the rightful king, yet he persisted in opposing him! David kept his promises to Saul and even vindicated Saul's honor after Saul's death. This beautifully illustrates Christ's words in Matt. 5:10–12. For David to show kindness to Saul, and to pray for him, was a greater victory than to overcome the Philistines. We

can be sure, if we obey the Lord, that He will take care of our enemies for us in His good time.

1 Samuel 26–31

We come now to the tragic end of Saul's life. The man who "stood higher than any of the people" (10:23) now falls to the earth in a witch's house (28:20) and then falls dead on the battlefield (see 2 Sam. 1:19). Perhaps the best way to study these sad events is to notice the obvious contrasts between David and Saul.

I. Love and Hatred (26)

Why David returned to the wilderness of Ziph when he had experienced trouble there before, is difficult to understand (23:19ff). Perhaps it's just an illustration that he, like all men of clay, made mistakes. It has been suggested that David's polygamous marriage (25:42–44) hindered his close fellowship with the Lord, since such a marriage was not in God's will. Of course, Saul pursued David! Saul's tearful confession in 24:17–21 did not last, for it was not from his heart.

Abishai was David's nephew (1 Chron. 2:15–16) and was a courageous warrior (2 Sam. 10:10). Later, Abishai was to save David's life from the giant (2 Sam. 21:17). However, Abishai was involved in the murder of Abner (2 Sam. 3:30), a crime that grieved David. God put a deep sleep upon the camp (v. 12) so David and his nephew were not in danger. The word "trench" in v. 7 indicates a barricade of baggage and wagons. Once again, Satan used others to tempt David to slay Saul (v. 8, and see 24:4), but David resisted the temptation. Vengeance was in the hands of the Lord.

David's message to Saul was actually a plea for him to return to the Lord. "If God has led you to pursue me because of some sin in my life, then I will offer a sacrifice with you and get the matter settled," he said. "But if men are cursing me, then you can be sure God will settle the matter for me." Listen to Saul's empty confession in v. 21: "I have sinned! I have played the fool!" Yes, he had—but he still did not repent! We play the fool when we run ahead of the Lord (13:8ff); when we fail to obey completely (chap. 15); when we turn our back on our godly friends (David and Samuel); when we seek guidance from the devil (chap. 28); and when we refuse to repent even when we know we are wrong. "Be sure your sins will find you out!"

II. Light and Darkness (27–30)

Chapters 27 and 29–30 deal with David's victories as he sought the mind of the Lord, while chapter 28 pictures Saul's terrible defeat as he sought aid in a witch's house. Of course, David was not always walking in the will of the Lord, for it seems that his faith failed him when he went back to Gath to live under the protection of the enemy (chap. 27). He had gotten into trouble there before (21:10–15), but now he was the leader of a strong band of 600 men and his reception was much better. Still, David's sojourn in

enemy territory forced him to lie to the king (27:10–12), and when the Philistines did gather (29:1), David was almost forced to fight against his own people! When we lean on the wisdom of the flesh, we always end up in trouble. It was only the grace of God that kept David from having to slay his own people.

The contrast between chapters 28 and 30 is striking: Saul had departed from the Lord and therefore had no divine guidance (28:6), while David looked to the Lord for courage and direction (30:6–9). “Seek the Lord while He may be found” (Isa. 55:6, NIV) was a warning Saul did not heed. God enabled David not only to recover all his possessions and people, but also to gather the loot collected by the enemy. We appreciate his gracious spirit in sharing the spoils with those who tarried by the supplies, and also his kindness in sending gifts to the elders of Judah. The latter action probably had some political meaning as well.

It is quite another picture when we look at Saul’s midnight visit to the witch’s house (chap. 28). Samuel was dead, but even when he was alive, his ministry was not really appreciated by Saul. How sad when people discover their real friends too late. Saul’s only recourse was to visit a witch, and this was prohibited by the Law (Lev. 20:6). It is alarming to what ends people will go when they have turned their back on the Lord. There have been endless debates over the matter of Samuel’s appearance at the call of the witch. It seems likely that: (1) Samuel’s coming was of the Lord and not because of the witch’s art; (2) the witch was surprised when Samuel appeared; and (3) Samuel came because he had a special message for the king from the Lord. The witch could not have impersonated Samuel (in league with someone else) since she did not know Saul was coming. Nor is it possible that Satan could have accomplished this feat, since God would not allow Satan to deliver such a weighty message, nor would the Lord put His approval on a practice His Word condemned. The witch becomes a mere spectator once Samuel is on the scene. It is likely that Saul heard Samuel’s words (v. 20) but did not see Samuel’s form (vv. 12–14). Back in 15:35 and 16:1, Samuel’s separation from Saul had been accomplished and the king would see him no more.

It is unbelievable that King Saul, a man chosen by God, could ever participate in so wicked a deed; yet the record is there—“let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). Saul walked in darkness, not in light; he disguised himself (yet was actually revealing his true character); he allowed a woman to break the law; he brought shame and defeat upon his nation, his army, his family, and himself.

III. Life and Death (31)

While David was sending gifts to his friends, Saul and his family were being stripped on the battlefield! “To be carnally minded is death” (Rom. 8:6). Gilboa had been the scene of some great victories in the days of Deborah (Jud. 4–5) and Gideon (Jud. 7); but this day it would be the scene of a tragic defeat. God had abandoned Saul, and the only thing left for the rebellious king was death. How sad that his innocent son, Jonathan, had to suffer because of the father’s sins.

Read 2 Sam. 1:1–10 for another account of the death of Saul. It is not difficult to harmonize the two accounts. Saul saw that he was defeated; he did not want to fall into the hands of the enemy alive, because they would only humiliate him. Therefore, he tried to take his own life by falling on his sword. This, however, did not kill him; and he

was yet alive, leaning upon his spear (2 Sam. 1:6), when the Amalekite came along and finished the work. (However, it must be noted that there are those who believe the Amalekite in 2 Sam. 1 was not telling the truth, but only giving this story to David to explain why he possessed Saul's royal crown and bracelet. Perhaps he thought that David would reward him because he "did Saul a favor" by killing him.) There is an important lesson in Saul's death: because Saul refused to slay all of the Amalekites (15), one of them ended up killing him. The sin that we fail to deal with, eventually causes our downfall. Saul lost his crown: "Behold, I come quickly! Hold fast what you have that no one take your crown" (Rev. 3:11).

How the enemy rejoiced at the death of Saul. What triumph it brought to the temples of their false gods. Saul did not glorify his God either in life or death (Phil. 1:20–21). It was commendable that the heroic men of Jabesh-gilead rescued the desecrated bodies of the royal family and gave them decent burial. They burned them, probably to prevent any future insults. Saul had once rescued these people (chap. 11), and this was one way they could repay him. David later put the bones in a tomb (2 Sam. 21:12–14). When he became king at Hebron, David showed his appreciation to these brave men for honoring their late king (2 Sam. 2:5–7).

Saul's tragic life and death can teach us many practical lessons: (1) great sins often begin as "little matters"—impatience, incomplete obedience, excuse-making; (2) once sin gets hold of people, they go from bad to worse; (3) if we are not right with God, we will not get along with God's people; (4) excuses are no substitute for confessions; (5) natural gifts and abilities mean nothing without the power of God; and (6) there is no substitute for obedience.