



22: The Fall of Saul (1 Sam 31-2 Sam 1)

The fall of King Saul reveals the devastating cost of disobedience and the weight of living as though eternity doesn't matter—but David's response points us to a King who was a faithful friend, a sincere servant, and who died in shame - not for His own wickedness, but for ours.

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teachingnotes

* All Scripture is from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) unless otherwise noted.

1 Samuel 31:1-6

The Philistines fought against Israel, and **Israel's men fled** from them and were **killed** on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines pursued Saul and his sons and **killed his sons**, Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua. When the battle intensified against Saul, the archers found him and severely wounded him. Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through with it, or these uncircumcised men will come and run me through and torture me!" But his armor-bearer would not do it because he was terrified. Then **Saul took his sword and fell on it**. When his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his own sword and died with him. So on that day, **Saul died together with his three sons, his armor-bearer, and all his men**.

Once more, here is Israel being defeated by the Philistines, the enemies God had planned for Saul to save them from (1 Sam 9:16). And due to Saul's disobedience, the Israelites are pursued & killed on **Mount Gilboa**. The prophecy given by Samuel was coming true.

1 Samuel 28:19 The LORD will also hand Israel over to the Philistines along with you. Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me, and the LORD will hand Israel's army over to the Philistines."

1 Samuel 31:7

When the men of Israel on the other side of the valley and on the other side of the Jordan saw that Israel's men had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned the cities and fled. So the Philistines came and settled in them.

Can you imagine? One day you are sending your sons off to battle your enemies and the next you are fleeing for your life as you run away from your home, only to have it taken over by your enemies.

🔥 **Bill Arnold:** "In one fatal battle [Saul] loses his kingdom, his life, his sons, and...his dignity."¹

- There is ONE son of Saul still alive - *Ish-bosheth* - who will be installed briefly as the King of Israel (2 Sam 2:10).

1 Samuel 31:8-10

The next day when the Philistines came to strip the slain, **they found Saul and his three sons dead** on Mount Gilboa. They cut off Saul's head, stripped off his armor, and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to spread the good news in the temples of their idols and among the people. Then they put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and **hung his body on the wall of Beth-shan**.

Beth-shan means "house of rest" or "house of security", but now it has become anything but that! The Philistines sent messengers to proclaim the news in the temples of their idols and among the people that they and their gods had decapitated Saul's kingdom & family dynasty, and gained control of the most strategic portion in Palestine. Impaling a body on the wall was a disgusting public image of horror & victory over a rival.

1 Samuel 31:11-13

When the residents of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, all their brave men set out, journeyed all night, and retrieved the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan. When they arrived at Jabesh, they burned the bodies there. Afterward, they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh and fasted seven days.

Remember **Jabesh-gilead**; the people whom Saul had saved from the Ammonites in 1 Samuel 11? These people feel responsible to protect Saul's body as he had protected them, and bury he and his sons just outside of their town, **under the tamarisk tree** (the same type of tree that he had judged others under according to 1 Sam 22:6). King Saul is dead around 70 years old, having served as King of Israel for 40 years (Acts 13:21).

¹ Bill T. Arnold, 1 & 2 Samuel, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 403.

That's how 1 Samuel ENDS...sort of. Remember that this writing was originally 1 text - **SAMUEL**, 1 & 2 Samuel.

The author now shifts the spotlight onto David. While the Israelites were being killed & running away, David and his small army were about 100 miles south killing Amalekites who had taken kidnapped his people from Jezreel (1 Sam 30).

2 Samuel 1:1-8

After the death of Saul, David returned from defeating the Amalekites and stayed at Ziklag two days. On the third day a man with torn clothes and dust on his head came from Saul's camp. When he came to David, he fell to the ground and paid homage. David asked him, "Where have you come from?" He replied to him, "I've escaped from the Israelite camp."

"What was the outcome? Tell me," David asked him. "The troops fled from the battle," he answered. "Many of the troops have fallen and are dead. Also, **Saul and his son Jonathan are dead.**"

David asked the young man who had brought him the report, "How do you know Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?"

"I happened to be on Mount Gilboa," he replied, "and there was Saul, leaning on his spear. At that very moment the chariots and the cavalry were closing in on him. When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, so I answered: I'm at your service. He asked me, 'Who are you?' I told him: I'm **an Amalekite**."

This man is an **Amalekite**, (the same group of people that David and his men had their town burned and their people kidnapped).

Years before, it was Saul's disobedience in not killing the Amalekite, King Agag, that cost Saul his kingdom (1 Sam 15:23-28).

2 Samuel 1:9-12

Then he begged me, 'Stand over me and kill me, for I'm mortally wounded, but my life still lingers.' So I stood over him and killed him because I knew that after he had fallen he couldn't survive. I took the **crown** that was on his head and the **armband** that was on his arm, and I've brought them here to my lord." Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and all the men with him did the same. They **mourned, wept, and fasted** until the evening **for those who died** by the sword—for **Saul**, his son **Jonathan**, **the LORD's people**, and the house of Israel.

The **crown** and **armband** were evidence was proof that Saul was really dead. But rather than respond with excitement and honor this Amalekite, **David mourned, wept, and fasted until the evening**.

- Despite Saul's pursuit of David, **David still honored Saul as Yahweh's anointed king**, never taking the opportunities to kill him.
- **David loved Jonathan as his own brother**. His best friend's fate hurts David's heart.
- David mourns for **the soldiers who died and the people of Israel** who are on the run and in distress.

2 Samuel 1:13-16

David inquired of the young man who had brought him the report, "Where are you from?" "I'm the son of a resident alien," he said. "I'm an Amalekite." David questioned him, "How is it that **you were not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?**" Then David summoned one of his servants and said, "Come here and **kill him!**" The servant struck him, and he died. For David had said to the Amalekite, "**Your blood is on your own head** because your own mouth testified against you by saying, '**I killed the LORD's anointed.**'"

All this time, David - an Israelite who had been mistreated over and over again by King Saul, WAS **afraid to lift his hand to destroy Yahweh's anointed king**. But now this **Amalekite** somehow had the right to do this?

2 Samuel 1:17-18 **David sang the following lament for Saul and his son Jonathan**, and he ordered that the Judahites be taught The Song of the Bow. It is written in the Book of Jashar:

David leads his people in a song of lament, a song that he has written. Remember that David was a gifted musician who had many times comforted King Saul with his songs. David is credited with 72 Psalms to his name.² And now he has written a song in honor of Saul & Jonathan.

The Book of Jashar was a long-lost writing of heroic poems, laments, and songs that preserved Israel's memory of righteousness and honor—especially in moments of victory and profound loss. While David could have taken shots at Saul's disobedience & evil actions, he DOESN'T. Instead he points to Saul & Jonathan as men worthy of mourning.

2 Samuel 1:19-21 **The splendor of Israel lies slain** on your heights. **How the mighty have fallen!** Do not tell it in Gath, don't announce it in the marketplaces of Ashkelon, or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice, and the daughters of the uncircumcised will celebrate. Mountains of Gilboa, let no dew or rain be on you, or fields of offerings, for there the shield of the mighty was defiled—the shield of Saul, no longer anointed with oil.

The shield of Saul had no doubt been splattered with blood, including his own. And sadly, there was no need to clean it and anoint it with **oil** because it was no longer needed. So too, the anointed king, was gone and never to be anointed again.

2 Samuel 1:22-27

Jonathan's bow never retreated, Saul's sword never returned unstained, from the blood of the slain, from the flesh of the mighty. Saul and Jonathan, loved and delightful, they were not parted in life or in death. They were swifter than eagles, stronger than lions. Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with luxurious things, who decked your garments with gold ornaments. **How the mighty have fallen** in the thick of battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights. I grieve for you, Jonathan, my brother. You were such a friend to me. Your love for me was more wondrous than the love of women. **How the mighty have fallen** and the weapons of war have perished!

² Bill T. Arnold, 1 & 2 Samuel, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 411-412.



▶ BEHAVE LIKE ETERNITY AWAITS.

Death awaits us all, when “we leave behind everything we have and take with us everything we are.” It’s one thing to KNOW that is true. It’s another thing to BEHAVE like that is true.

▶ BE A FAITHFUL FRIEND & SINCERE SERVANT.

David had been a FAITHFUL FRIEND and a SINCERE SERVANT, even to Saul who mistreated him and didn’t deserve it. So too, Jesus was and IS a faithful friend and sincere servant to those who don’t deserve it. When you and I are faithful friends & sincere servants who even show sincere care for our enemies - it SHOWS people Who Jesus is.

▶ THANK JESUS WHO WAS SHAMED FOR MY WICKEDNESS

While Saul died and was shamed due to *his wickedness*, Jesus died and was shamed for *my wickedness*.

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Noel & Patricia Barnes** (813-767-2881), **Derek & Emily Beaty** (813-763-4421), or **Chris & Caitlin Day** (850-673-7920), **Glen & Margie Peacock** (850-464-1484).

Discussion questions

These discussion questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your Family, Friends, or Small Group.

🔍 OBSERVATION — WHAT DO WE SEE?

1. According to **Judges 21:25**, what problem existed in Israel before the monarchy began?
2. In **1 Samuel 31**, list the consequences of Saul’s disobedience that affected not only him, but the nation.
3. What details in **1 Samuel 31:8-10** show how publicly Saul’s defeat was displayed?
4. What actions did the people of Jabesh-gilead take in **1 Samuel 31:11-13**, and why are those actions significant in light of Saul’s earlier rescue of them (1 Sam 11)?

🧠 INTERPRETATION — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1. Why do you think Saul continued to disobey God even after repeated warnings from Samuel?
2. Why is it important that David mourned Saul instead of celebrating his death (2 Sam 1:11-12)?
3. What does David’s response to the Amalekite in 2 Samuel 1:13-16 reveal about how seriously David viewed God’s anointed leadership?

❤️ APPLICATION — WHAT ABOUT US?

1. Where are you most tempted to obey God partially rather than fully?
2. Saul knew God’s commands but lived as if consequences were optional. In what ways do people today (including believers) do the same?
3. David honored Saul even when Saul mistreated him. What does this teach us about how to treat people who have authority over us but misuse it?
4. How does David model what it looks like to be a faithful friend and sincere servant, even when it costs him personally?

🎵 LAMENT & CHARACTER — DAVID’S SONG

1. Why do you think David chose to write and teach a lament instead of quickly moving on to becoming king?
2. Why is lament (grief brought honestly before God) an important part of spiritual health?

✝️ GOSPEL CONNECTION — HOW DOES THIS POINT TO JESUS?

1. Compare Saul and Jesus: Saul disobeyed and died in shame; Jesus obeyed and died in shame. What makes these two deaths fundamentally different?
2. Saul’s death marked the end of his reign. Jesus’ death marked the beginning of salvation. Why does the resurrection change everything?
3. How does this story challenge the idea that being “religious” is enough to save us?

🎯 FEET2FAITH — LIVING IT OUT

1. What does it practically look like to “behave like eternity awaits” in everyday decisions?
2. Who is someone you need to treat with grace—even if they don’t deserve it—as a reflection of Jesus?
3. Where might God be calling you to move from knowledge to obedience?