

Here we are, we come to the closing chapter of 1 Samuel and it is a sobering account of the death of King Saul. This is certainly not a triumphant chapter, it is a brutally honest chapter. It's one of the things I appreciate about the Scriptures, the Bible never sugarcoats the lives of its heroes. When it was bad it was bad and because the Bible is truth it gives us truth and And sometimes we get to see our heroes, guys like Saul who aren't necessarily our heroes, but boy they sure were close at one time, and the failures in their lives, and God just gives that to us as it is, so that we understand, first of all, that this is a book filled with human beings doing God things.

This is a book filled with human beings doing sinful things, and we're supposed be able to read all of it, understand it, and then learn from the right parts in the right ways. And I think there's a lot to learn tonight. Tonight's truth would be the tragic consequences of a man who began with a whole lot of possibility, a whole lot of promise, but then very quickly became disobedient to the Lord. And unfortunately that remained with Saul until this final battle in chapter 31.

There are quite a few key themes that you can find in this chapter, a lot of good spiritual lessons that you can learn. First of all, as alluded to, the consequences of disobedience. Saul is just this constant reminder that partial disobedience or partial obedience, depending on whether you're glass half full or glass half empty. Partial obedience or partial disobedience is still disobedience.

And unfortunately disobedience is eventually going to bear some rotten fruit in your life. And then there's the reality of sin's end that on the surface upfront sin seems fun, seems like it offers freedom, it seems like it offers fulfillment. But it always ends in despair, in domination over you, bondage, and then eventually destruction. Saul's final act is a picture of the destructiveness of sin.

And then we have the lesson of the faithfulness of God, because in the midst of all of this, we do see the faithfulness of God, certainly not on behalf of Saul, but we do see the faithfulness of God on behalf of David, because God's plan is to make David, this man after his own heart, the king of Israel. And to do that, God has to come through on his end, and so he'll do that tonight. He's moving, he's closing one door, he's opening another, he's giving the possibility David becoming the actual king here in chapter 31. And then we have the lesson of honor in the midst of tragedy.

We'll get a in closing very gracious act of honor toward a man that if we're being honest did not deserve it. So it's a good reminder to us about like just the bare bones definition of what grace is. By definition. It's unmerited.

It's unearned. It's undeserved. We're going to see that tonight as well. So let's open our Bibles if you're not already there to 1 Samuel chapter 31 and begin reading in verse 1.

It says, Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel and the men, the fighting men, the soldiers. The men of Israel fled before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. And though it's just summarized in one verse, it's unmistakable to miss the kind of slaughter that we were dealing with here. The men of Israel were just slaughtered by the Philistines.

Many Israelite men died in that battle, but if you were very fortunate, you escaped. You ran for your life. So there are some people that do escape this, some soldiers that escape. And this is only happening because Saul has turned his face against the Lord.

And as a result, the Lord is no longer fighting for the nation of Israel. He's no longer fighting for Saul. And unfortunately, that does have a big impact on all of the people. It impacts the entire nation of Israel they're kind of like stuck in the middle of this like a child going through the pains of their parents divorce.

They're just kind of caught in the middle of this rift between God and Saul. So we just saw what it looks like when Israel fights without God's blessing, without God's help, without God's intervention, and it turns out that when God's not on their side, they're not a very formidable force. They're not very good fighters. They're not very good soldiers.

This isn't a very good army without the Lord. Well, they're easily defeated by the Philistine army. Under Joshua, the nation of Israel was formidable because Joshua and the Lord they weren't going through a divorce. You can go through the list of the judges one judge after another.

The armies of Israel during the different time periods of the judges they were formidable. They could beat anyone and the reason was those judges they weren't going through a divorce with the Lord. Instead in all of those cases you had men that were fighting with the Lord and for the Lord, men, Deborah as well, a woman who were being faithful to the Lord, obeying the Lord, and as a result the Lord did, well I would put it like this, the Lord pulled the majority of the weight. Just read through those stories of Israel's victories.

The majority of the time it's very obvious that the nation of Israel really did nothing to affect their own victories. Usually it was one just incredible thing from the Lord after another, but here's the nation without that, without the miracle help of the Lord, and it's pretty painful to see. Reading on verse 2, and the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons, so they caught up with him, or them I should say, Saul's sons are with him. And the Philistines struck down, they killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul.

Now, Saul did have six sons total, Jonathan, Abinadab, Malkah Shua, those just mentioned, but also Ishbosheth, Armani, and Mephibosheth, they were all still alive at this time. Ishbosheth will actually soon try to take his father Saul's place on the throne, so we'll get to read about that in 2 Samuel. Armani, he's going to keep himself busy developing his clothing line, so we won't read too much about him. I think you knew that was coming.

And Mephibosheth's story is actually a very inspiring story. One of the great, great stories of the Scriptures without a doubt. After Saul's death, David is going to ask the question very early on in 2 Samuel. Is there any one of Saul's sons that are still alive?

Because I want to bless them. And Mephibosheth is the guy. He gets the call. He's going to be brought to King David.

So of course he's panicked, he's fearful, because he knew the way that things normally went in other nations. When a former king was moved out and a new king came in, the first thing that new king did was track down all of the sons of the former king and then kill those sons. Because as I've shared with you before, they didn't want there to be any potential future challenges or competitions for the throne. That would be what Mephibosheth was expecting, but that is indeed not what happened.

He gets Mephibosheth over there to David, and David is able to just pour blessing upon Mephibosheth. He grants him land. He basically says, you always have a spot at my table, you're always welcome. And so it would appear that he did for the rest of his life eat at the table of King David there in Jerusalem.

When you read the story you come to find out that really Mephibosheth ends up essentially being adopted as one of the sons of David. David treated this Mephibosheth as his own son and his condition makes the story all the sweeter. But I'm going to hold off on that because we're going to talk about that a little at verse 7. But verse 2, yeah, I heard the collective groan, we are all saddened to read of the death of Jonathan.

I mean, we wouldn't rejoice certainly in any of these deaths, as big of a problem as Saul has been. None of us are doing any happy dances to read that Saul's going to die in this chapter. His sons were not excited here to see them struck down and killed. We don't know the other sons.

We only know Jonathan. We feel bad for all of them, but certainly Jonathan is the one that really gets our sympathy because we've come to like this man quite a bit and respect him as a true man of God, like with incredible character, just wonderful attributes, a very godly man, and not to mention the fact that he was David's best friend, like his closest friend in the world. I want to give you some opposing viewpoints to think through here and you can do with them what you will. Viewpoint number one would be that Jonathan, if he would have just abandoned his demonic dad and followed David, he probably would not be dying in this battle.

In fact, I would be pretty sure of it and you know So this is just humanly speaking, he would have lived a much longer life and he would have had the opportunity to support David and perhaps even work in David's administration out if you remember the conversation between David and Jonathan back in chapter 23 verse 17, where Jonathan told him, I can't support you openly. I mean, you have my support, but the way this is gonna look in public, it's gonna look like I am supporting my dad. It's gotta be that way, but I know you're gonna be king. You have my secret support, and when you do become king, I'm ready to be right there by your side.

Well, Jonathan would never get a chance to do that. he'd never get a chance to see David in his reign. Proverbs chapter 13 verse 20 says, the companion of fools will suffer harm. The companion of fools will suffer harm.

And what that means is that if you're hanging out with the wrong people, trusting the wrong people and supporting the wrong people, then you're gonna get roped into a lot of bad stuff that happens to the bad people. You just become collateral damage in the bad choices that they're making. That is the case for Jonathan as he supports his father. And so that's one way to look at it is that he's put himself in a situation where he has endangered himself because of his father's insanity, because of his father's demonic possession.

But here would be viewpoint number two. It's that Jonathan's dad was a screwball, yes, but he was still Jonathan's dad. And Jonathan was a moral enough guy to honor family loyalty. He was a biblical enough guy to honor the fifth commandment, love your father and mother.

So there's good that you can see there in Jonathan's choice. But let's, above all, let nothing ruin our opinion of Jonathan. I think he's one of the most underrated and underappreciated heroes of the Bible. You don't hear about him enough.

I know his story is relatively small, and that's probably why. But if you could pick a guide to pattern your life after, this would be a really good choice, Jonathan. So whether it was a bad choice on Jonathan's part, whether he was doing something that would please the Lord and just supporting his insane dad, I'll let you make that decision for yourself. But let's read on, verse 3, the battle pressed hard against Saul.

And that just means that the filthy Philistines were closing in, they were catching up. And the archers found him, and he was badly wounded by the archers. Notice that's archers' plural, which means that at this point, King Saul probably has a handful of arrows sticking into him. Now the word found here comes from the Hebrew word matzah, and I'm bringing this up because I think it's important enough to state to you.

This word does mean to find or found. That's what it means. That's a very good definition and translation for it. The King James Version and the new King James Version here use the word hit, that the archers hit him.

And I don't know why they made that choice. If you look in the Strong's Concordance, if that's what you use to look up your Hebrew and Greek words, you'll see the word hit it as a potential definition, but I do firmly believe that that definition was added because of the way that the King James Version translated this word. It really should mean to find or found as is used here.

So we're going to go with this as a very good translation. And the reason I think that that's important is because we read that they found him. That tells us something. It tells us that if they found him, that means they were looking for him.

They were looking specifically for King Saul, and that makes complete sense that they would do that. That's exactly what you would do if you were the Philistines, because Saul was enemy of the Philistine state number one. So you knew if you got to Saul and you took Saul down that there was a potential that the Israel problem would go away, you know, it's like cutting the head off the snake, you stop the snake. So that's what they have done, they've feverishly looked for Saul, they've caught up with him, they've found him, the archers have flung a couple arrows at him, there's now a couple arrows sticking out of him, and we read in verse 4, then Saul said to his armor bearer, which I just find interesting that, you know, this used to be David.

David used to be Saul's armor bearer, so I think right about now David was very grateful that he got relieved from his duties there. Very grateful that he got fired as Saul's armor bearer, but Saul said to his armor bearer, draw your sword and thrust it, thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised, these pagans that don't have a covenant with God come and thrust me through and mistreat me." So Saul knew how this worked. When the Philistines and really any ancient culture at the time would kill a high-profile enemy like this, a king, a general, a leader, anytime they would kill a high-profile target like this, they would mutilate and humiliate the corpse of that person. They would celebrate by doing so and then eventually use the body or what's left of the bodies of their high-profile enemies as trophies of war.

And you'll see that in verses 9 and 10, Saul's concerns are not a bit unfounded. He knew what he was talking about here because that's precisely what will take place. They will abuse and mutilate the body of Saul. Reading on in verse 4, but his armor-bearer would not.

He would not do it. He would not finish the job. He would not put Saul down. Probably he had heard David one too many times say, no, no, no, you don't touch the anointed of the Lord.

You don't kill the anointed of the Lord. No matter how good your opportunity is, you let the Lord handle that. But here he is, the armor bear says, there's no way I'm doing that. And it says, for he feared greatly.

And I would say, well, yeah, because if you did that, if you killed King Saul, then probably you're going to have to go back home and tell everyone that you killed the king. And I don't think that would go over well, even if you said, but he begged me to. He wanted me to. He begged me to.

Yeah. Yeah. Uh-huh. Sure.

Tell you what. How about putting your neck right here on this log for a second as you finish telling your story. Yeah. I don't think that would fly.

I don't think that would fly a bit. He can't kill the king. He'd get in trouble if he killed the king. Reading on it says, therefore Saul took his own sword and fell upon it.

We'll find out in 2 Samuel that Saul didn't actually successfully kill himself here. His death was not immediate. I know when you read the next verse right away, it seems like his death was immediate. It

wasn't because we get an account in 2 Samuel that tells us otherwise.

Yes, he ran himself through with the sword in verse 4, but he survived long enough to seek help from others. We can only guess that Saul was probably too weak and too wounded at this point to finish the job after falling on his own sword. He's incapable of doing it. He wants someone else to do it.

He's tried to get his armor bearer to do it, you know, a mercy killing so that his enemies don't get the quote-unquote honor of killing him. His armor bearer wouldn't do it. And we are told in 2 Samuel chapter 1 verse 16 that as Saul is laying there dying but not dead, an Amalekite shows up on the scene and Saul begs that Amalekite, because it wasn't a Philistine, you know, it's all about honor in battle. The Philistines beat him and he didn't want a Philistine to kill him.

And the Amalekite, okay fine, you're not a Philistine, please, dude, kill me. Put me out of my misery. And according to that Amalekite, he did just that. He put the king, excuse me, he put the king down.

He put him out of his misery. a mercy killing. That's verses four and five. But between verses four and five here, I should say, and Saul begs him, he does it.

At least that's what he says. That's what the Amalekite says in 2 Samuel. There are many people that think that maybe Saul did successfully kill himself after all, that between verse four and verse five here he does die, and that the Amalekite was lying, perhaps for the purpose of getting on David's good side, getting in David's good graces and saying, yes, I'm the one that killed the guy that's been causing you so much trouble. I did it.

What kind of position are you going to give me? What kind of gifts are you going to give me? What kind of payoff are you going to give me? But do you know what happened with the Amalekite in that story?

David was so angry that that Amalekite put Saul out of his misery, even though Saul was already clearly dying, that David ordered for that Amalekite to be put to death, and he was. And we studied the first Samuel chapter 15 early battle of King Saul. We read there that God commanded King Saul to kill every Amalekite. You remember that story?

He ordered King Saul to kill every single Amalekite. He didn't give a reason why. He didn't say, if you don't put every single Amalekite down, they're going to come back to be a major problem in your life, a thorn in the flesh. So when we factor in what this Amalekite says, what we see here is a pretty deep irony, don't you think?

Because Saul was commanded to kill every Amalekite, and what he decided to do was What we often decide to do, take the majority of what God said, look at the good stuff, the easy stuff, the stuff that sort of fits our agenda and say, yeah, that's a good plan, Lord, and then amend it a little bit with some of our wishes and our desires and our thoughts. You know, we put our touches on the will of God. Don't put your touches on the will of God. Just take the will of God and do the will of God.

be obedient. King Saul did not put down every single Amalekite as the Lord had commanded. And in the end, if his story is true, who is the one that ends up killing King Saul? It's an Amalekite.

This guy should not even be alive. Now I know he saw begged for it. I understand that. I understand he wanted this Amalekite to kill him, but I think the point still stands, the irony is still pretty deep there.

When we study this in 1 Samuel 15, we cover that the application teaches something pretty important to us Christians, that Amalek is a type of sin and we get a lot of warnings about this in the Bible. You know Paul would give us statements like this, and mortify therefore the deeds of the body or how about this one, make no provision to fulfill the desires of the flesh. You remember that study now? That is

being certain that we do not leave sin alive, that we do not leave our flesh in the dominant position, but that we are daily mortifying it.

That means to cold-blooded murder it. Spiritually that's what we're supposed to do with our flesh daily and when we don't do that, you know, that Amalekite flesh is always going to try to come back in the end and stick you and even take you out if it's possible. So the importance of dealing with sin as totally and completely as we can. I know it's frustrating that it's a daily process.

be great if you could do it, you know, like you get the shot and it's good for a year, right? You beat the flesh, you mortify the flesh today and you're good until 2026, you just go back and get your inspection sticker the next year once you defeat it again in 2026. Well, it's not like that, folks. This is a daily battle.

This is a daily mortification of the flesh so that at the end of the day it's not the flesh standing over our dying bodies, our dying spirits having just made a mess of our day and failing the Lord. Verse 5, And when his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him. So it happened exactly as Samuel had prophesied, Samuel the ghost actually, in a previous chapter here recently, Saul's dead, Samuel predicted that, his sons are dead, three of his sons, Samuel predicted that, his armor bearer is dead, Samuel did not predict that, but many many of Israel's soldiers are dead. Samuel predicted that as well.

He predicted a major loss for the nation of Israel. Saul's here was a failed suicide attempt, but I guess you would say his armor bearer's suicide attempt was successful. It's a terrible statement to make, but I literally cannot think of a different way to put that. He was successful in committing suicide.

There's actually nothing successful about suicide. There's not a single good thing about it. We would classify suicide as a sin without a doubt. I won't sugarcoat that.

The Sixth Commandment says, you shall not murder, and suicide would be considered self-murder. still murder and you know you can't try that well it's different because my body my choice you can't you can't do that with the Lord you can't take your life and say that wasn't transgressing the sixth commandment and murdering because it's me it's my body it's my choice I decided to end this you can't do that it is still transgressing the sixth commandment It is unlawful. The essence of that law would be, I, God, give life, and I do not permit humankind to take life unless I have already given a lawful reason for them to do so, and that's it. That would be God's position on that.

With that said, I always try to keep my nose out of making judgments about people who have committed suicide. You get that question a lot from folks who have lost loved ones, do you think they made it to heaven? Do you think they could have had enough time to make things right, all those kind of questions? I don't even like to touch those because how could I know?

How could you know? How could we know? There are levels of doctrines potentially at play in a situation like this. You have a violation of the sixth commandment, but you also have the doctrine of salvation by grace and not works.

You also have a biblical truth that says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. So if a person takes their life and then calls on the name of the Lord for forgiveness, will he forgive? I'd be hard-pressed to say that he wouldn't. I'd be actually going against everything that the Bible teaches.

You can see why these things are very tricky, right? Saul was unsuccessful at his attempt at suicide, which means he had plenty of time to call upon the name of the Lord for salvation. Did he do that? No one knows.

Even if he did, could we be certain that the Lord saved him and forgave him? I don't know. I think we're best just to stay out of judgment calls like that and leave them to the Lord. I think we can safely say that generally when a person's mind gets so dark that it results in suicide, it is an outward proof of the absence of regeneration.

And I do believe firmly that the Bible teaches us that when he regenerates us, when And He saves us. It's more than just words and a pact that we make with God. It's an experience. The Holy Spirit comes in and He transforms.

He transforms without a doubt to some degree. There's a regeneration of the Spirit that takes place. And one of the things that the Bible promises us, or at least states that we should have as Christians, is a sound mind. And the sound mind doesn't commit suicide.

So a lot of factors here. It's an ugly topic. I hate to ever talk about it because I know so many of us have been impacted by it. We've lost close loved ones due to suicide.

It is a sensitive topic. I'm just thankful even in that situation for the grace of God, that even in the worst of situations, it's never wrong to have hope in what the Lord can do, right? We read on in verse 6, thus Saul died. So finally, I think the order of this would be verse 4, Saul is stuck with arrows and he wants his armor bearer to kill him, his armor bearer refuses.

Verse 5, Saul takes matters into his own hands, he falls on his own sword. Between verse 5 and verse 6, pardon me, between verse 4 and verse 5, the Amalekite comes along, Saul begs him to put him down, and he does so. And then we read in verse 6, thus Saul died. I think that's the order there.

Saul died and his three sons, so three of the six, Jonathan included, and his armor-bearer, and all his men. Sounds like all the soldiers died, they didn't. We already read some of the soldiers escaped. That just simply means all of the soldiers that did not escape, did not survive and flee for their lives.

All of the soldiers that remained there with Saul were put to death. were killed in this battle. Reading on in verse 6, so they all died on the same day together, verse 7, and when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley, and folks, this would actually be the valley of Jezreel, the valley of Megiddo. I told you before it's already at this point in scriptural history.

It has already been the battlefield location of many battles. It would go on to host many battles after this battle. And of course, there's going to be a vastly greater number of body counts put to death in the Valley of Megeto on this battlefield after the conclusion of the Battle of Armageddon. That's where it's going to be fought, right here, where Saul died, where Jonathan, his son, died, whereas two other sons died, his armor bearer, and many of his soldiers.

And those beyond the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their cities and fled, and the Philistines came and lived in them. That brings us back to the very tragic story of Mephibosheth. You can read about this in 2 Samuel chapter 4, verse 4. It tells the story of how Mephibosheth became permanently lame.

It happened on this very day, right after this verse, before verse 8. This is when it happened, when you read in 2 Samuel chapter 4, verse 4. It tells us that news of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan and the two other sons came back to Saul's home. And when they heard the news, this was one of the cities that as we just read fled.

They vacated. They abandoned their city because they knew the Philistines would be coming. So they abandoned their cities. They fled.

They left as quick as they could. And at this time, one of the sons of Saul, named Mephibosheth, was five years old, first chapter 4 verse 4 of 2 Samuel tells us, and the nurse, the nanny, in her haste to get away, to flee outside of the city to run for her life, she dropped five-year-old Mephibosheth. he was injured so bad that it crippled him for life. I hope they at least fired the nanny after that.

Pretty bad thing crippled for life. But anyway that factors into the story of David's grace toward Mephibosheth and makes that story even more beautiful. I can't wait to get there and it won't take us too long before we're studying that but pretty sad story on all accounts here. lot of bad news tonight.

I hope you didn't come to church to be cheered up. Sorry, I can't help you. This is bad news tonight. It's funny, I sent a cheery verse, a sweet verse to my wife earlier, and she said, oh, thank you so much.

And then a couple of minutes later she'd come back and she said, I'm sorry, did you mean that for me or did you want that on the overhead for tonight? And I said, oh no, nothing sweet's happening in our study tonight. It's all warfare and battle in death and suicide and murder. No, no, nothing good is happening in this chapter.

Verse 8, the next day when the Philistines came to strip the slain, obviously they're going to rob the dead bodies and take spoils of war. When they came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons fallen dead on Mount Gilboa, verse nine. So they cut off his head. They cut off his head.

And this is exactly what Saul was concerned about a handful of verses ago. When he asked his armor bearer, please don't let the philistines get to me. just kill me hide me throw some rocks on top of me don't let the Philistines get me he knew they were gonna do stuff like this right here I guess it was sort of like payback for Goliath I know it wasn't Saul that killed Goliath it was David but Goliath was the Philistine primo warrior he was the The biggest guy obviously and Saul was Israel's Goliath. He was the guy that was head and shoulders above everyone else before Saul's disobedience and the selection of David, Saul was the mighty warrior.

He was the Goliath of the nation of Israel and just as Goliath said was chopped off by David. So the head of Saul is chopped off. They have returned the favor, I guess, paybacks. So they cut off his head and stripped off his armor and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to carry good news, the good news of Saul's death to the house of their idols and to the people, verse 10, they put his armor in the temple of Ashtaroth and they fastened his body to the wall of Baitshan or Bethshan.

Pretty distorted stuff, pretty heartless people, shows you the depravity of the enemy, First Chronicles chapter 10 actually retells this entire story. I'm going to give that to you as homework. Go home and read First Chronicles chapter 10. It is almost a verbatim retelling of this chapter.

Although it does contain a few additional details that we don't get here in chapter 31 verse 10. For example, here in chapter 31 verse 10, It has only told us that they put Saul's armor in the temple of Ashtaroth. They fastened his body to the wall, you know, this is a walled city. They fastened his body to the wall of the city there in Bethshan.

Doesn't tell us what they did with the head. Probably no one really even cares to know. But because I dig through the Bible and find these things, I found this and I want to share it with you. If you look at 1 Chronicles chapter 10 verse 10, it does tell us what they did with the head of Saul.

It says, And they put his armor in the temple of their gods, that would be the ashtaraoth that checks out, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. So man, they just scattered the dude. It's terrible. His body is hanging up on the wall there in the city of Bethshan.

His armor is on display in the temple to Ashtaroth and his head is fastened. That means spikes, you know, his head is basically like a deer. His head is mounted there in the temple to doggone or daegon. So it makes you wonder, did they like maybe not know who to thank, who to credit for this victory?

See that's the problem with polytheism when you have too many gods, then when something goes wrong, you don't even know who to thank. It's like, alright guys, which one of you did this? Thank you so much. Which one was it?

I want to know so that I can bring you a present. You wouldn't even know which of your gods were acting on your behalf. Monotheism is so much easier. Any time something good happens, you know who it was, and the fact that it's legit, and there really is only one true and living God, yeah, that just makes things a whole lot simpler.

So Saul's body parts scattered all over the place like trophies. Then it gets to the heart of something here, the fact that these battles that we read about in the Old Testament, they weren't just battles of people fighting people, they never were. You read any of these accounts and every time there's a victory, you know, if it's a pagan victory, well the pagans are celebrating and thanking their gods for giving them the victory. Israel, when they fight a battle and they win the battle, the majority of the time they thank their God for giving them the victory in that battle.

Not always, but we're guilty of that too. We pray for a lot of things. The Lord answers a ton of it and we're so busy with life we don't even, you know, we're the nine. We're the nine, right?

than nine lepers that didn't come back and say thank you often, very often. Well, they thought of it not just as people fighting people, they thought of it as God versus God, or gods versus God. And this is on display here once again. They believe that this was Yahweh versus all of their Philistine gods, because they They won that battle, they are celebrating their false gods.

And it shows you, like just in picture form, in story book form, the reality of what Paul was teaching us in Ephesians chapter 6 verse 12, where it says that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. They were living this out, they believed this stuff. It's funny, a lot of times our sophisticated, educated society, we look back on folks like this and think that they're foolish and superstitious. The truth is they knew at least more than the atheist of this generation that obviously there is a higher power of some sort.

They may come about it the wrong way and find the wrong gods, the false gods, but But they at least were sensitive enough to reality back then that they could easily determine, well obviously there's some kind of gods. We're so intellectual and sophisticated these days that we can't even see that. It was obvious to them, spiritual warfare was real to them. And Ephesians chapter 6 verse 12 should be real to us, again it's that repeat lesson that it's never you against your flesh and blood enemy.

It's never the case. You're not fighting against people. You're fighting against the spiritual forces that are motivating your enemy. If it's you against another flesh and blood Christian, well, it would just have to advise you to cease and desist.

That should not be happening at all. Christians It shouldn't be your enemies. We got enough of them. Let's not make them right in our own fellowships, right?

So it's just this clear picture of the reality of spiritual warfare. They understood it. And I sure hope we do in 2025 because it's getting real, isn't it? The world's getting dark.

The enemy, he is becoming less and less subtle. I get the idea that he cares very little at this point if anyone knows of his existence or what his agenda is because it doesn't seem to matter. The world still

follows after him. We're still fighting that battle.

It's not people versus people. It's God versus false gods. And we are praying to God. We're praying to God.

So we should expect victory in our battles. The treatment of Saul's body is a good snapshot of the hatred and the evil that our enemy has for us. It's not good enough for your enemy. Just to kind of discourage you, disrupt your week, get you bent out of shape a little bit, get you fighting with the spouse.

It's not good enough for the enemy. He is not going to be happy and he's willing to bide his time for a very, very long time just so that at the end of it, he can stand over your body and then humiliate you and rejoice over your death, rejoice over that final victory. It's a real battle we fight. And he plays for keeps.

This is life and death, eternal life and death consequences. And I have something very heartbreaking to report. I'm only leaking it just a little bit early here that it was not just Saul that they did this to. We're going to read in verse 12 that they did this to Saul's three sons as well.

When they take Saul's body down from the wall there in Bethshan, Jonathan's body is nailed to the wall as well. So it's a very dishonorable way to see a very honorable man like Jonathan go. It's tough to read about this concerning Jonathan. Humanly speaking, he did not deserve that.

Verse 11, but when the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, verse 12, all the valiant men, so warriors that were experienced in battle and brave in battle, all the valiant men arose and went all night and took the body of Saul, here it is, and the bodies of his sons, Jonathan included, from the wall of Beth Shan. Now, I don't know if you remember this, but back in 1 Samuel chapter 11, right after King Saul, well, right after Saul was anointed to be the king, the Ammonites launched an attack on the people of Jabesh Gilead. And obviously, it was a situation where the Jews there in Jabesh Gilead were completely outnumbered. just a small village and this was a whole Ammonite force, a whole Ammonite army that had crashed down in on their little city so they didn't really have much choice but to either surrender or try to work some kind of peace deal.

So they begged this king in 1 Samuel chapter 31, Nahash, to make a peace pact with them. And Nahash's response was, okay, well, you know what, I'll do that on one condition. I'll do that. I'll make a peace pact with you and let you walk away.

I'll let you live if you let me pluck out all of your right eyeballs. That story sound familiar? And I love their response. The elders of the city, they said, I'll put this in my own words.

They said, well, okay, sounds like that might be a pretty good, I think we might be able to make that work. I tell you what, give us a week to think about it and we'll get back to you. That's a brilliant idea. He bought time and in the course of buying time they get word eventually to Saul.

And when Saul hears it, this is right after he was anointed king. No one really knew what Saul was made out of at that point. And when he got word of it, Saul went nuts. But not the kind of Saul going nuts that you're used to in the last handful of chapters.

This was Saul going nuts in jealousy over the people of the Lord and wanting to protect and preserve them. We read there in that chapter in verse 6 that the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul. He was baptized with the Holy Spirit right there. Saul raised up an army and Saul took his army and defeated the Ammonites and delivered the people of Jabesh Gilead.

It was Saul's first great act as king, first great act as a man, at least according to biblical record. It was a wonderful victory for Saul, kind gesture toward the people of Jabesh Gilead. It would seem, church, that they have not forgotten about that. Makes me wonder if they remember Saul as the guy from 1 Samuel chapter 11, just watching him filled with the Holy Spirit, working in the power of God, delivering the people of Israel as God led him and empowered him.

Makes me wonder if that's how they remembered this guy. If not, I think this was like a gracious honoring of the king who at one time was filled with God's spirit following the Lord. I know it only lasted a couple of days. But who had done something so helpful to save the people of Jabesh Gilead.

Doesn't give us any details about how this took place. know if they simply requested the bodies and that that request was granted, doesn't tell us that maybe they snuck in there in the middle of the night and stealthily took the bodies off the wall. We don't really know how it happened. All we know is they end up rescuing the bodies from further mutilation and humiliation from the Philistines.

Starting on in verse 12, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. They burned the bodies, Saul, Jonathan, his other two sons, the armor bearer. It's a strange thing. You don't see Jews ever doing this.

It wasn't against the law of Moses per se, but the Jews have always had a really strong position against cremation. But it would seem that these bodies were so badly mutilated that they determined the best thing to do is just cremate them, just not going to have an open casket, just cremate them, just burn the bodies. And so they do. Verse 13, and they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh and fasted seven days.

Pretty heavy stuff huh? Pretty heavy conclusion to the book of 1 Samuel. And now it is my privilege to be able to say to you, my favorite line, you know I love it because we seldom get to do it, thus concludes our chapter by chapter, verse by verse study. through the book of first Samuel anyone want to take a yes give the Lord a hand Lord I can't believe you got into a whole book another one wow miracles anyone want to take a shot at what the next books going to be that we're going to study second Samuel yeah gonna have you stand with me isn't the Lord good even in the midst of all this garbage and death and carnage that we're studying about tonight.

There's an empty crown. There's an empty throne. And the Lord is moving the man after his own heart toward that crown and toward that throne. There's good stories ahead.

You're gonna love Second Samuel. I really believe that. Hope to see you out for our Second Samuel studies. Father in heaven, you're so good to us.