

1 Samuel 31

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[0:00] 1 Samuel chapter 31, 1 Samuel chapter 31, bringing the book of 1 Samuel to a close, it really brings the book back full circle. So let's read the text together.

It says, Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Geboa. The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons, and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul.

The battle went heavily against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was badly wounded by the archers. Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, Draw your sword and pierce me through with it, otherwise these uncircumcised will come and pierce me through and make sport of me. But his armor-bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. So Saul took his sword and fell on it.

When his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died with him. Thus Saul died with his three sons, his armor-bearer, and all his men on that day together.

When the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley and those who were beyond the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned the cities and fled. Then the Philistines came and lived in them.

[1:21] It came about on the next day when the Philistines came to strip the slain that they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Geboah. And they cut off his head and stripped off his weapons, and they sent them throughout the land of the Philistines to carry the good news to the house of their idols and to the people. They put his weapons in the temple of Asheroth, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan. Now the inhabitants of Jebesh-Galib heard what the Philistines had done to Saul. All the valiant men rose and walked all night and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan. And they came to Jebesh, and they burned them there. They took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jebesh, and fasted seven days. 1 Samuel chapter 31. As we close up the book of 1 Samuel, I want you to see the final result of unfaithfulness. The final result of unfaithfulness. When we read this account in the book of 1 Chronicles, 1 Chronicles chapter 10 is the same account. There's an additional subscript at the end of that, because if you remember your history of your Old Testament books, the books 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, historically are accepted as being read pre-Babylonian captivity. 1 and 2 Chronicles are written post-Babylonian captivity. That's important to understand, because 70 years had transpired since the people of Israel had been back in their land, so 1 and 2 Chronicles would have been written as kind of an educational tool, at least 70 years, because if you remember in the book of Ezra, Ezra and Nehemiah, that only a remnant of the Jewish people came back to the land of Israel. Not all of them came back. So many of them lived in what they call the dispersion, or the diaspora. They were still scattered among the regions of that land.

This, to us, if you look throughout history, is what led to the Septuagint, or the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, is what led to the disparity in the Septuagint versus the Hebrew Scripture. Now, disparity not meaning that it's wrong, but not everybody that was Jewish could speak Hebrew, so they had to write it in the Greek so that people could understand it, because a man named Alexander, you know him as Alexander the Great, had come around, conquered all the land, and they were dispersed among that. So in order to continue to retrain and to educate their people as to their heritage, books like 1 and 2 Chronicles were written. We have those as the authoritative Word of God recorded for us, too. So there's often a little bit additional information given in those books so that the people who weren't familiar with it from, hey, that happened just a few years ago, would understand why these things happened. 1 Chronicles chapter 10 records this event, and at the end of that verse, it reminds us that the reason Saul died in this battle was because of his unfaithfulness to Yahweh, his unwillingness to follow him completely, and also because he consulted a medium rather than consulting the Lord. And it ends saying, thus the Lord killed him in the battle.

So in case there's any confusion, in case there's any misunderstanding that the Philistines have won the battle, we're instructed later on along with the Jewish people as to their heritage, that the reason Saul and his sons died in this battle was because of his unfaithfulness. That implies that if Saul had walked faithfully with the Lord his God, things could have went different. But as the book of James reminds us, that temptation gives way to sin, and when sin is fully conceived, it gives birth to death.

And that is, unfaithfulness to the things of the Lord will eventually result in death. And we see here the final result of unfaithfulness recorded for us here in the book of 1 Samuel chapter 31. And the record there is not just the result of Saul's unfaithfulness, but the result of all unfaithfulness. What it looks like when we don't obey the Lord completely, what it looks like when we choose to walk in kind of halfway obedience, what it looks like when we choose to pick and choose which commands to follow. We see this being recorded for us, not just for his sake and the nation's sake, but for our sake as well. The first thing that we notice, that unfaithfulness by the individual leads to the first and foremost, a fallen multitude, a fallen multitude. This is a repeated refrain in the book of 1 Samuel, and we'll see it in just a minute, but a fallen multitude. Because it says, now the Philistines were fighting against Israel. Now I want to remind you that the events of chapter 31 were happening at the same time that the events of chapter 30 were happening. So that is to say that while David was fighting against the Amalekites who had taken his people and all of his belongings from Ziklag, when David was pursuing the Amalekites and reigning victorious over them, when David had recaptured and recovered all that was taken, the Philistines were fighting against [7 : 02] Saul and the nation of Israel. So these things are happening at the same time. And as the Philistines, it says, were fighting against Israel and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines.

Make no mistake about it, the enemy will always be present and the enemy's presence always comes at an opportune time. Saul's unfaithfulness is about to come to a head. It has, because he's consulted a spiritist or a medium. He's went and consulted someone that was really supposed to not even be alive, because according to scripture, they were supposed to rid themselves of all mediums and spiritists and fortune tellers and all these things, but yet they had just removed them. They hadn't rid themselves or purged this. They had just kind of misplaced it and cast it to the side. And Saul's unfaithfulness is kind of coming to a head here. And what we see is the enemy shows up at that time because the Philistines are the enemy of the people of God, because the people of God's enemy always knows when to attack. And at this time, they're fighting against the men of Israel.

And it says, and the men of Israel fled. Now, understanding Philistine warfare, I know you really were considering this, right? There are two things that happen here. The Philistines like to fight on flat ground because they had chariots and horses and all this other stuff. And flat ground does much better with chariots and horses. And the nation of Israel liked to fight. They liked to go down to the valley and draw you up into the hill, because then your chariot is no longer beneficial to you. And you kind of fight a guerrilla warfare, you get up into the hills. So it says, they went down to the valley to where the Philistines were spread out and they began to flee, but they didn't make it to where they wanted to because it says, and they fell slain on Mount Geboa. They fell short. [8 : 44] And it reminds us here that Saul was the desire of the people of Israel so that they would have a king that would lead them into battle victoriously, right? The people asked for a king that would go before them into battle and lead them in victory. And yet as the people follow Saul into this battle, they're fleeing and they are falling. And we see a fallen multitude because it says the men of Israel died.

And then three of Saul's sons died as well. We don't know how, but one of them survived. We see that later on, we get into second Samuel because he's actually made king for a short time. But three of the sons, including Jonathan, you know, the best friend of David, the one who had aspirations of being a co-regent with David, the one who had made a covenant with David, even Jonathan dies, but three of Saul's sons die. And then Saul, it's amazing Bible study. If you ever want to look at it and see how people coincidentally get struck, how people, you know, a random arrow or a love when you're reading throughout the old Testament, it says, and a random bow was drawn and the spear went and accidentally hit this man. That's right. God directs all those things. Right. Saul is struck by an arrow. He's mortally wounded. And he, he, he looks at his armor bearers and says, kill me.

Because remember the Philistines are the same ones that made sport of Samson. Right. And if they can do that to Samson, then they'll probably do that to me because to capture a wounded king, Philistine army, I don't want to get too grotesque here, but they, they really liked that. That was something that they could do. And he said, rather than fall into the hand of the uncircumcised, go ahead and kill me. He went and do it. So he committed suicide. He took his own life. And then his armor bearer committed suicide as well. So what we see here is the unfaithfulness of one man led to the fallen nature of all. Every one of these men fell. It says, so Saul and his sons and his armor bearer and all of his men died together. Because make no mistake about it. No sin lives in isolation. And the first tragic result of an individual's unfaithfulness is the fallen multitude that inevitably lies in the wake of it. And we say this comes full circle because we've seen this before.

There was a man who had two sons who died in battle and then he himself died in the book of 1 Samuel. And it was a result of that man's sin. And that man was Eli. Because even the call of Samuel was preceded by a prophet who showed up when Samuel was very young and told Eli that he had problems in his house. That his sons were not living as they should. His sons were making sport of people coming to worship. His sons were using the offerings of the Lord in an improper way. Yet Eli just said, the report's not good sons. And he didn't do anything about it. And the word of God that even came through Samuel to Eli was that it was his sin. Not his son's sins. Right? That it was Eli's sin because he was the priest. And as a result of Eli's sins, his sons went to battle. Took the Ark of the Covenant with them. Died in battle. The Ark of the Covenant is captured. And then Eli falls off backwards off a stool. Which he should have never been sitting in the temple anyway. And just in case we didn't think he was engaged in this misappropriation of God's sacrifices. We are told that he dies because he breaks his neck because he was a heavy man. That is, he got fat off the offerings that were supposed to stay on the altar. So Eli's sons die for his sin. And now we go to the end of the book and Saul's sons die as a result of his sin. Because one of the great tragedies of unfaithfulness is the fallen multitude. That our unfaithfulness or faithfulness has the opportunity.

[12:47] You know, you say, well, the Bible reminds us, and it does. It declares in the prophetic works that the son will not pay for the sins of the father and the father will not pay for the sins of the son because God says that he would judge each man according to his own actions. Right.

But it is possible for the sins of one individual to advertly affect the other. And here, because Saul is the leader, his unfaithfulness has brought about this judgment, this condemnation in the hand of the judgments, the Philistines, which led to the death of all of these individuals. So just in case we ever think we live in such a personal world that we can do whatever we so choose and it really doesn't matter to anybody else.

It's not so when we open up the Bible. Because this is an application we find throughout all of Scripture. Achan, one man's sin, multitude of people fall.

Right? Over and over and over and over and over again. We see it played out throughout history, throughout church history, throughout Scripture. So the first result we see is a fallen multitude.

The second thing we see, and it's a sad irony, is a forsaken inheritance. Saul, his sons, and his men, and his armor bearer are all dead.

[14:09] And there's this little short passage there, really just one verse that if we're not careful we'll miss it. It says, Now the picture is this.

The Philistine army had come into the Jewish territory, or into the Israelite land, and they had attacked them. So they were on the offensive.

The Philistines were on the offensive. They had come into the land of the Israelite people. They were on the defensive. They were trying to fight the battle on their own homeland. And the Bible tells us that when the men who lived in that vicinity saw what had happened, they fled.

They left their cities. Now the reason this is striking is because these are the very cities which God had given them in the promised land. These are the promised inheritance of the Lord their God to His people.

He had declared to them that He would give them a land filled with cities which they did not build, houses which they did not build, gardens they did not plant, and wells they did not dig, and that if they walked faithfully with Him, they would live in those and they would prosper.

[15:43] And this was part of the inheritance, right? Coming into the land, God had drove out all the enemies of His people. He had went before them and led them victoriously.

And He had pushed out the inhabitants of the land so that His people could move in. Now, as a result of the unfaithfulness of Saul, they're leaving behind the inheritance they had gained.

And they left it in such a way, the Bible tells us, the Philistines came and lived in them. That is, the enemy of God's people took up residence in that which rightfully belonged to them.

They handed back to the enemy what God had given them. We don't have to go very far to see the application in that, in that as a result of our unfaithfulness, as a result of our choices to have obedience or full disobedience or picking and choosing how we want to follow the Lord, those things which we are giving as a spiritual inheritance are quite too often surrendered back to the enemy.

We give up the things that God has given us. We see that in the very beginning. In the beginning, God created man in His own image. He created them. Man, male and female, He created them, right?

[17:02] God created man for a purpose. Very beginning of Scripture, we go to Genesis. Remember, many of you weren't here, some of you were. We started seven years ago, Genesis 1.

Making our way, Genesis 1, just through the Old Testament, we've got to here. And it's something that we have to go back to and remind ourselves so often. Every problem of man is introduced in the first 11 chapters of the Bible.

Genesis 1 through 11 introduce every problem of man. Genesis 1 through 11, every problem of man is introduced. Starting in Genesis 12, God declares to us His solution to man's problem.

And we don't see that completed until the end of the book of Revelations. Genesis 12 is when He called Abram out of the land of the Chaldeans. The reason He did that was so that He would raise up a people. And out of that people, He would raise up a Savior.

And that Savior would be that which reinstated man to his original purpose, right? He solved man's problem. But it only takes 11 chapters for the Bible to tell us every problem that man has.

[18:00] The very first problem that man has is that man was given a responsibility. He was given an inheritance. It tells us that God put man in the garden. He gave him the responsibility of keeping it and ordering it.

And it tells him that man was created to rule, right? The inheritance that man was given was the right to rule over creation. He was to rule over it for the glory of God.

When man sinned and walked in unfaithfulness, he chose... We're putting a responsibility on man here. When Adam chose to take from Eve the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was his choice.

He said, well, Eve is the one who took first. Right, but it was Adam that God went to. So when Adam chose to take from the hand of Eve rather than listen to the word of God, he forfeited his inheritance.

He no longer is in a place of rulership over creation. Now, we know that because the second Adam, who is Christ, stay with me, this is where the Bible doesn't tell a bunch of different stories.

[19:04] The Bible tells one grand story. All right, the first Adam was given keys to this world to rule with a place of authority. He forfeited those keys. And we know that because when the second Adam, who is Jesus Christ, was in the wilderness during his temptation, Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the world and said, if you will bow down and worship me, I will give you these, for these are all mine.

Jesus does not argue with Satan and say, these don't belong to you, because he realized that they did belong to him, because when man sinned and walked in unfaithfulness, he forfeited his inheritance, which is the rulership of this world, and handed it over to his enemy, and his enemy made himself at home.

We read that in 1 Samuel 23, or 1 Samuel 31. We moved out and they moved in. The good news for us is our Savior didn't take the plea bargain deal.

Our Savior went to the cross, and the Bible says, and he left the grave holding the keys. He reclaimed our inheritance. That's why, at the end of the story in the book of Revelations, we rule again over the inheritance.

But we've given it up. In our spiritual life, there are things which we inherit as the children of God. If we walk in unfaithfulness, we give that up, and the enemy makes himself at home there.

[20:27] We no longer have authority over that position of our life because of our unfaithfulness. We see a forsaken inheritance. They moved out, the enemy moves in.

It doesn't take long for the enemy to get a foothold and make himself at home. Once you give it up. Number three. We see that one of the final results of unfaithfulness is false worship.

It is false worship. It tells us that after the Philistines moved into the cities on the next day, they walked out and were going to gather the spoils and the plunder from the victory which they had the day before.

And while walking among the spoils, they found Saul and his sons. Now, this is a great deal, a great feat for any army. Because they've killed the king and they've killed the princess.

Three of the princes and the king. They stripped them, it tells us. And then it says, they cut off his head and stripped off his weapons.

[21 : 38] And look at this. And sent them throughout the land of the Philistines to carry the good news. I don't know about you, but when I read that phrase, it bothers me a little bit. Because I know another word that means good news.

And that's the gospel. Right? So they declared the good news to the house of their idols and to the people. That is, it was good news to them that Saul and his sons were dead.

And it was such good news that they declared it not only to the people, but also to the house of their idols. Because in their mind, in the mind of the Philistines, their lowercase g god, they had two of them that were here in this picture.

But their lowercase g god had given them the victory over Saul and the army of the Israelites. So they ascribed the good news to the false god.

Now, we know in 1 Chronicles chapter 10 that it was not the Philistines who slew Saul, but it was the Lord God who slew him for his unfaithfulness. We know that. But in the eyes and in the mind of everyone that is present, the gods of the Philistines have reigned victorious over the God of Israel.

[22 : 57] So they declare the good news into the house of their idols and to the people, and then they take his weapons in the temple of Ashtaroth.

That's another false god. So what we see here is the plunderer which they are reaping from Saul and his sons leads to an engaged worship of false idols and false gods.

Saul's unfaithfulness has led to greater worship of false gods. And they are ascribing their victory to the power of their false god because now the king and his sons are dead.

You say, well, that's not really what happened. Well, we know that's not what happened, but that's all the world knows at this point. Because, see, God had called his people to be a light to the world. He had told them that if you walk faithfully with me, you will be the head, you will not be the tail. He had told them, if you walk faithfully with me, there will not, ten of you will cause to flee ten thousand, right?

[24 : 03] That you will go, that none will be able to stand before you. If you walk faithfully with me, you will be stronger, you will be mightier, you will be better. You may not always outnumber, but you will be victorious.

If you will be faithful to me, the rain will not fail, the grain will not fail to grow, your animals will not fail to give birth. If you are faithful to me, I will rain my blessings down upon you. And all that was not just so he could pander his people and his people could walk around being easy.

He was doing it. Never lose sight of this. Again, one grand story. God was calling his people to look different, to live different, to behave different, so that everyone else would see.

And he was doing it so that everyone else in the world would take notice of their God. He was using the nation of Israel as a tool to draw the world to himself.

But when they walked unfaithfully, they pushed the world away from him. And they pushed them into the temples of their false gods.

[25 : 12] Now, that's absolutely necessary to understand. We'll take some time to camp out here for just a minute because that's absolutely necessary. I had the strangest phone call a couple Sundays ago. Not this past Sunday, but a couple Sundays ago. Strangest phone call I've ever had.

Somebody from, I know the telephone number was from Florida. I have no idea who it was. He never told me his name. I don't know how he found my name.

He just called, my phone rang, and I ended up on a 45-minute conversation. He said, are you a pastor? I said, I am. He said, all right, I got a question. I don't know where he's from. I don't know if he's in this area and just had a number from Florida or if he's actually from Florida.

I don't know. Evidently, he had talked to somebody, Jeremiah 29, verse 11, 29, 10. For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper. You know that verse, right? Some of you read that today.

Now, if we want to be biblically accurate, that verse has application directly to the nation of Israel.

Because Jeremiah 29 is about the nation of Israel and the restoration of the nation of Israel. Someone had told this individual that, and he was completely upset. He's like, you mean God doesn't care about me and all this? And someone had told him, and he was just bent out of shape. [26 : 13] And just went into this whole character. And also, what you're telling me is that God could care less about me. That I'm just kind of this off person. Nobody really cares about me. And he was saved. He declared salvation and all these things. Anyway, so, you know, I'm so thankful that God has put me in the Old Testament for as many years as he has.

Because I was able to tell him, wait a minute. We've got to understand. What's God doing with the nation of Israel? Right? What is he doing with the nation of Israel? What was his purpose behind choosing them and restoring them and appointing them? Why was he concerned about plans to prosper them after the Babylonian captivity, which is Jeremiah 29?

Because it doesn't reveal to us what God's care about the nation of Israel. It's revealing to us the character of God. And in the character of God, he's drawing the world to himself. And the reason he's using the nation of Israel is to draw the world to himself because he cares about you.

And because of the character of God, he chose a particular people, the nation of Israel, in order that the world may know who he is so that the world would come to him because he cares about the world. And when the nation of Israel failed to do that, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him shall be saved.

Right? That he desires that none should perish. No, not one. That he's calling the world to himself. But God hasn't given up on the world because God knows in the nation of Israel's rejection, they push man to false worship.

[27 : 23] So now he has put in that place not to take over the position of the nation of Israel, but the church is the billboard that is supposed to draw a watching and waiting world to the reality that there is a God who is concerned and cares about them.

But unfortunately, the unfaithfulness of the church often pushes people into false worship too.

Because until we realize that, this consistent story, we think that God's just picking and choosing people he wants.

When the reality is, is the reason that God picks and chooses people is so that other people will see. So our actions matter. And the unfaithfulness of Saul not only led to the death of those around him, the unfaithfulness of Saul also increased idolatrous worship.

Bring that back to us. Does my walk promote the worship of God? Or do the things I do promote the worship of false idols?

Because my walk will do one of the two to other people. No matter what we know about the truth of it, no matter what we know about the reality, the perception of what people see happening in our life, just go ahead and understand this.

[28 : 46] Pastors aren't the only people who live in glass houses. People are watching you too. If you name the name of Jesus Christ, you are the light. The Bible says you are a light.

You are a city set up on a hill. Not that you can choose, that you may be. That is, you have a job. And that job is to let your life so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

So we are either promoting the worship of a true God or by our unfaithfulness we are promoting the worship of false gods. So the fallen multitude, the forsaken inheritance, the false worship, it is good news.

We will end on good news, right? The final result of unfaithfulness, number four, there is a faithful remnant. There is a faithful remnant. Just in case we end 1 Samuel, doom and gloom thinking that the plans and purposes of God aren't going to come about because of this one man, we are introduced to a group of other men.

Now the inhabitants of Jabesh-Galib. Now the inhabitants of Jabesh-Galib kind of had this affinity towards Saul because the first victory Saul ever recorded was when he went and defended the honor of the inhabitants of Jabesh-Galib.

[30 : 04] And he went and defended their honor and he came back victorious. So that was the first battle we ever fought. Again, I told you we went full circle.

Now, to a Jewish individual, for your body to be stripped naked, beheaded, they made sport of him, and put on display like that, even after death, is the utmost of dishonor.

A proper burial, so important to the Jewish people. Because it's an utmost of dishonor. So important that God even decrees in the criminal that he was not to hang on a tree overnight.

Remember that? That the criminal who had to be executed, that was hung on a tree, that they were to take him down, wasn't to hang on a tree overnight.

Because he wasn't to defame or dishonor that man or his family. But yet Saul and his sons were being dishonored. So the inhabitants of Jabesh-Galib hear this, and it says, so they walked all night.

[31 : 08] About 12 to 15 miles. They went into enemy territory, they got the bodies, and they brought them back. It's 12 to 15 miles one way. So about a 30 mile round trip.

They walked all night. They risked their lives. And they took the bodies down. It says, and they brought them back. And the bodies had been so defamed, so ridiculed, they burned their bodies to rid of the flesh, but they preserved the bones.

Okay, this isn't cremation. They preserved the bones. So they removed all the uncleanness. And it says, and then they gave a proper burial to the bones, and then they fasted seven days.

What this shows us is, even though Saul and his unfaithfulness had greatly affected the nation, God still had a remnant. Right? He had a remnant of people who cared.

He had a remnant of people who were concerned. They were honoring the position and the anointing of Saul, not necessarily the person of Saul. Say what you will, but Saul was still the anointed and appointed king of the people of Israel.

[32 : 17] The position mattered. Because God had declared that he was king through the prophet Samuel. And they were honoring that.

And they gave him a proper burial, and they had a time of mourning, seven days of mourning and fasting, to give honor. Now, 1 Chronicles chapter 10, last verse.

For this reason, Lord God killed Saul. But it doesn't end there. And handed over his kingdom to David, the son of Jesse.

God always has his man. God always has his man. Before God rendered judgment upon Saul for his unfaithfulness, he had his man in waiting.

A man after his own heart. A man of perfection? No, absolutely not. I mean, we're going to get in a second, Samuel. We'll see David and all of his imperfections, right? We don't have to go very long before we see it.

[33 : 21] But God had his man. Because the unfaithfulness of man does not upset the purposes and plans of God.

God is greater than that. He always has his man. And we see that in the course throughout biblical history until the man, Jesus Christ, comes.

The one who will walk in full faithfulness. The one who walks in full obedience. The one who walks in full perfection. To pay for the sin of all mankind.

There's always a remnant. God always has a purpose. God always has a plan. And God will always bring it about. But sadly, what we see is the final result of unfaithfulness being played out in the life of Saul and those around him.

Thank you, brother. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.

[34 : 52] God bless you.

God bless you. God bless you.

God bless you. Thank you.