**SAUL TOOK HIS OWN SWORD AND FELL ON IT**

1 Samuel 31:1-13

Key Verse 31:4

**“Saul said to his armor-bearer, “Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me.” But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it.”**

Today’s message is the last chapter of 1 Samuel. Throughout the book of Samuel, we see how Saul kept disobeying the Lord. He did not obey the Lord when he had to wait on Samuel for sacrificing offerings. He did not obey the Lord when the Lord asked him to destroy Amalekites completely. He kept trying to kill David who was innocent. He killed 85 innocent men of priestly family, Achimelech, including children and women. But the Lord was silent. He did not judge him. So we may wonder what will happen to Saul in the end when he is disobeying the Lord continually. But now in today’s passage finally we see the Lord’s judgment upon Saul. So we want to see how the Lord delivered his judgment upon Saul.

1. The Lord delivered his judgment upon Saul with Saul’s own hands. Saul committed suicide.
2. The Lord delivered his judgment upon Saul by killing his 3 sons and his armor bearer and all his people together with Saul.
3. The Lord delivered his judgment upon Saul by allowing the Philistines to abuse Saul’s body.
4. The Lord delivered his judgment upon Saul with his grace.

**1) The Lord delivered his judgment upon Saul with Saul’s own hands. Saul committed suicide. (v.1-4)**

Look at verses 1-4.

**“Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell dead on Mount Gilboa. 2The Philistines were in hot pursuit of Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. 3The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically. 4Saul said to his armor-bearer, “Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me.” But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it.”**

The battle was on Mount Gilboa. Look at the map. Interestingly both the armies of the Philistines and the Israelites gathered around the Mount Gilboa. According to 1 Samuel 29:1, the Philistines gather all their forces at Aphek, and Israel camped by the spring in Jezreel. And there was valley of Jezereel around their camps and Jordan River is on the right side of battle field. There is Beth Shan and Jabesh Gilead. This map shows that the Israelites fled toward the east side of the Mount Giboa.

When the battle started the Israelites were defeated by the Philistine army. Verse 1 reads, “**the Israelites fled before them, and many fell dead on Mount Gilboa.”** This is the topic sentence for the battle. It is the summary of what is happening in the battle. Verses 2 and 3 reveals that Saul and his three sons lost all their soldiers and they were under the threat of death. Indeed all of Saul’s three sons were already killed. And the Philistines were pressuring around Saul and finally the archers overtook Saul and they wounded him critically. When Saul saw that he did not have any chance to live again he said to his armor bearer, “**“Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me.”** Although Saul was a disobedient man before God he had a sense of honor for himself. He did not want to be abused by these uncircumcised fellows, the Philistines. When he saw that his armor bearer would not run him through he took his sword and fell on it and he died. So he committed suicide. He would rather die than to be abused by unbelieving Philistines.

This is how Saul died. Suicide. Why? To avoid ‘abuse’ from the Philistines. It means to keep his own honor was the major reason. Since he used the word ‘these uncircumcised fellows’ it sounds like he was thinking about the Lord’s honor. But it is not true. He was just despising them. He disobeyed the Lord and he did not have fellowship with the Lord and he did not honor the Lord for a long time like 3 or 4 decades and he was possessed by evil spirits. How could his main motive be the honor of the Lord? Indeed how he died shows his deep motive in his life. So far according to 1 Samuel’s account his main motive for his life is ‘his own honor’. When Samuel rebuked Saul when he disobeyed the Lord in the battle with the Amalekites, this is what Saul said in 1 **Samuel 15:30 “30Saul replied, “I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the Lord your God.”**

Saul sinned against the Lord but his main concern was how to be honored before the elders of his people. His own honor was his main concern.

In fact, his jealousy against David, which became the major source of his downfall, started when his people honored David more than himself.

**1 Samuel 18:7-9** reads, **“As they danced, they sang: “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.” 8Saul was very angry; this refrain displeased him greatly. “They have credited David with tens of thousands,” he thought, “but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?” 9And from that time on Saul kept a close eye on David.”**

Surely how he died shows something about himself. Saul lived for his own honor rather than the honor of the Lord.

Now the death of Saul came as the Lord’s judgment. Samuel already pronounced his death as the Lord’s judgment on **1 Samuel 28:18-19** “**18Because you did not obey the Lord or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the Lord has done this to you today.** **19The Lord will deliver both Israel and you into the hands of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The Lord will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.”**

So Saul’s death was the result of the Lord’s judgment. It did not happen by chance. 1 Samuel 28:20 reads, **“Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, filled with fear because of Samuel’s words. His strength was gone, for he had eaten nothing all that day and all that night.”**

Saul was fearful of Samuel’s word but he did not believe. If he had believed the Lord’s judgment upon him and his sons and all his soldiers he would have tried to find some ways to save them. But he did not take any action. He heard it and he knew it but he did not believe it from his heart.

The bible clearly says that there will be God’s judgment. But like Saul many times people do not believe it even though they hear it and know it. So when the judgment comes people will be amazed. So Jesus in **John 5:28-29 “28 “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.”**

People will be amazed at the time of God’s judgment, saying “Wow God’s judgment is real. I heard about it millions times and knew it but I did not believe it.”

Surely the death of Saul was the result of God’s judgment.

1. **The Lord delivered his judgment upon Saul by killing his 3 sons and his armor bearer and all his people together with Saul. (v.5-6)**

- This part deals with 3 result of Saul’s death.

Firstly, Saul and his three sons and his armor bearer and all his men died together.

Look at **verses 5 and 6**.

“**5When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. 6So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day.”**

Verse 6 is very interesting verse. When I first read it I thought, “what is the big deal of dying others? Is the main point Saul’s death?” Furthermore I wondered why the bible says, “All his men died together that same day.” Physically it is not true because some of Saul’s soldiers could run away and did not die. Saul’s last son, Ish-Bosheth, and general Abner somehow did not die or were not in the battle.

But why then the Holy Scripture which is written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit emphasized the death of all Saul’s people in the battle?

It emphasized the death of all people together with Saul because the Holy Spirit reveals Saul became the source of destruction of many. His life became the source of death for many people. He was not the source of hope or joy but the source of death.

In a way his death is like the death of Adam because **1 Corinthians 15:22a reads, “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”** The Holy Spirit emphasized that all people related to Saul were dead that same day. Saul’s death is the death of disobedient sinner. All disobedient men would be judged by God. Furthermore they will bring many people as their victims.

Think about it! For example, Saul’s son Jonathon. He could have become a prime minister in the kingdom of David. But he became a victim of his father Saul because Saul’s disobedience. Jonathon died because of his father.

One man’s influence is great before God’s eyes. **Romans 5:19 reads, “for just as through the disobedience of one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”**

Saul because the source of destruction of many people but Jesus Christ became the source of salvation for all peoples on earth.

1 Corinthians 5:22 reads, “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” So as in Saul all died but in Christ all will be made alive.

Saul committed suicide for his honor but Jesus was insulted and abused for the honor of God and finally in him all will be made alive.

1. **The Lord delivered his judgment upon Saul by allowing the Philistines to abuse Saul’s body. (v.7-10)**

Look at **verses 7-10.**

“**7When the Israelites along the valley and those across the Jordan saw that the Israelite army had fled and that Saul and his sons had died, they abandoned their towns and fled. And the Philistines came and occupied them. 8The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. 9They cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and they sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temple of their idols and among their people. 10They put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan.”**

Saul’s death influenced all the Israelites along the Jezreel Valley and those across the Jordan. When they saw the Israelites army had fled and Saul and his sons had died they all abandoned their towns and fled. Then the Philistines came and occupied them. So the land of Israel was reduced due to the loss in this battle.

Then the next day when the Philistines came to strip the death to their great surprise they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. **9They cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and they sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news in the temple of their idols and among their people. 10They put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan.”**

Saul did not want to be abused by the uncircumcised Philistines but he could not avoid it after he was dead. The Philistines cut off his head and stripped off his armor and honored their idols by proclaiming their victory news in temple of their idols and among them. They put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths as the victory trophy. Then they fastened Saul’s body to the wall of Beth Shan together with bodies of his sons. Please look at the map again. This is Beth Shan.

1. **The Lord delivered his judgment upon Saul with his grace. (v.11-13)**

Look at verses 11-13. “**11When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, 12all their valiant men marched through the night to Beth Shan. They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan and went to Jabesh, where they burned them. 13Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.”**

Why do the people of Jabesh Gilead honor Saul?

 It was right after Samuel anointed Saul as king and the Israelites even did not recognize him as their king fully. But Saul rescued the people of Jabesh Gilead from the hand of Nahash the Ammonite who want to gouge out the right eye of every one of the people of Jabesh Gilead.

**1 Samuel 11:1-7 “Nahash[**[**a**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Samuel%2011:1-11&version=NIV#a)**] the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh Gilead. And all the men of Jabesh said to him, “Make a treaty with us, and we will be subject to you.” 2But Nahash the Ammonite replied, “I will make a treaty with you only on the condition that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you and so bring disgrace on all Israel.” 3The elders of Jabesh said to him, “Give us seven days so we can send messengers throughout Israel; if no one comes to rescue us, we will surrender to you.” 4When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and reported these terms to the people, they all wept aloud.** **5Just then Saul was returning from the fields, behind his oxen, and he asked, “What is wrong with everyone? Why are they weeping?” Then they repeated to him what the men of Jabesh had said. 6When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he burned with anger.** **7He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent the pieces by messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, “This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel.” Then the terror of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out together as one.”**

In this way Saul saved the people of Jabesh Gilead. The people of Jabesh Gilead remembered the kindness of the Lord expressed through Saul although it happened 40 years ago. Saul did many wicked things but the people of Jabesh Gilead remembered one thing that Saul did for them and they were very thankful. The Israelites along the valley and those across the Jordan abandoned their towns and fled. But they did not leave. They risked their lives and recovered the bodies of Saul and his sons and burned them and they even fasted 7 days to honor their master.

They are kind of people who pleased the Lord. In today’s dark story what they did and their thankful heart lightens our hearts and gives us hope.

One day Jesus healed 10 lepers but only one person came back and expressed his thanks.

**Luke 17:15-19** reads, “**15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.** **17 Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” 19 Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”**

Can we remember the grace of our Lord Jesus who delivered us from the power of sin and death. Can we remember the Lord’s kindness given to our lives through the Lord’s servants? Can we express our great thanks for them?

I have one person who made many negative remarks against our ministry and me and broke relationship with me. Whenever I think about him my hear aches. But one day I was very surprised because I found one thing that person did for me. Then I was very thankful. So I made a decision to remember only one thing that the man did for me as the Lord’s kindness and forget all of his wrong doing against me.

Many times we hear that if we know the will of God we will do it, but we do not know what is the will of God. Here is the bible which says the will of God.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

**“16Rejoice always,** **17pray continually,** **18give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”**

To be thankful for God’s grace is really right thing for us to do. Saul did not remember God’s grace upon his life. God anointed him as the first king of Israel out of nowhere but he did not remember the Lord’s kindness and became disobedient. But the people of Jabesh Gilead remembered one thing Saul did for them a long time ago and expressed their thanks.

In conclusion, “How did the Lord deliver his judgment upon Saul?”

1. The Lord delivered his judgment upon Saul with Saul’s own hands. Saul committed suicide.
2. The Lord delivered his judgment upon Saul by killing his 3 sons and his armor bearer and all his people together with Saul.
3. The Lord delivered his judgment upon Saul by allowing the Philistines to abuse Saul’s body.
4. The Lord delivered his judgment upon Saul with his grace.

One word: All his men died together.