



A Kingdom Established • Saul's Downfall •

1 SAMUEL 28:4-19, 1 CHRONICLES 10:1-14, 1 CHRONICLES 11:1-3 • 11/18/2018

Main Point

Saul's final downfall came about because of his unwillingness to obey God and his word.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

When it comes to your favorite sport or pastime, are you a fair-weather fan or a true blue supporter?

Who or what has gained your loyalty? If given a chance, what product would you be a spokesperson for?

When it comes to loyalty, it's usually not difficult to identify our favorite sports team, musical artists, or recreational hobby. If we're not publicizing our devotion with bumper stickers, we're displaying it with our clothing choices. Each fall, college football fans take seriously their role in cheering a team on to a winning season.

Could the same be said about our loyalty to the Lord? What about our willingness to follow His commands and instruction? Unfortunately, it's all too easy to fall into a pattern of partial interest and occasional obedience. If we're honest, we're not always "all in" when it comes to seeking God and following through on what He's called us to do. Our attention wavers and we veer off in another direction. If we're not careful, we'll find that our lives display very little loyalty to Him, and even less obedience to His Word. In 1 Chronicles 10-11, we get a glimpse of God's desire for wholehearted devotion that is evidenced in obedient actions.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read 1 Samuel 28:4-19.

Fighting between the Philistine and Israelite armies can be traced back to the times of the judges. In 1 Samuel 28, the stage is set for yet another battle, this time near Mt. Gilboa. While fighting between these two groups was hardly new, what was new was the Philistines success in battle. Up until this point, King Saul had kept the Philistines contained to their own territory located to the south of Israel. Those days, and Israel's upper hand, were gone. The Philistines had successfully trapped the Israelite army and were about to launch into battle.

Where do you typically turn to for guidance? Why do we look to sources other than God?

What are the dangers of partial obedience to the Lord? Where are you tempted to give half-hearted obedience to God?

King Saul, once confident in his military successes, was now terrified. He immediately sought direction from the Lord through dreams, Urim, and the prophets. This leaves us to question: If he sought the Lord, why didn't he hear from God? Many scholars agree that these measures of seeking God's guidance were completed without a genuine desire to know and follow God's instruction. Saul wanted a quick word from God, but had not been nurturing an ongoing relationship with Him. In desperation, he chose to visit a medium. It's important to note here that the Mosaic law prohibited consulting mediums and spiritists. In a previous moment of obedience to the Lord, King Saul had outlawed these occultic practices. He was now seeking guidance from the very source he knew went against God's law.

What makes God's guidance a better source of direction than any others?

| Have a volunteer read 1 Chronicles 10:1-6, 13-14.

First Chronicles begins in the midst of the Israelite versus Philistine battle that had terrified King Saul in 1 Samuel 28. The Philistines proved too powerful for the Israelites and succeeded in killing Saul's three sons: Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua. Saul, realizing that he would surely be captured by the Philistines, commanded his armor-bearer to kill him before the Philistines could. The armor-bearer refused, so Saul fell on his own sword.

What can we learn from these verses about God's view of sin?

What do we lose when we refuse to genuinely seek God's guidance?

What do we gain when we choose to seek and obey God’s guidance?

Saul’s reign as king was over. Verse 6 proclaims, “Saul and his three sons died—his whole house died together.” Interestingly, Saul did in fact have a surviving son, Ish-Bosheth, who succeeded Saul for a short time (2 Samuel 2:8-5:3). However, Saul would have no long-term dynasty as some kings enjoyed. Verses 13-14 explain why the Lord did not allow his legacy to continue: Saul was unfaithful to God and didn’t follow His Word. He lacked a desire to know and obey God’s instruction, choosing to consult a medium instead of genuinely seeking the Lord.

| Have a volunteer read 1 Chronicles 11:1-3.

Several years had passed since the battle between the Philistines and the Israelites. David reigned over the tribe of Judah while Ish-Bosheth reigned over the tribes of Israel. After battles and bloodshed between the two groups, the time of solidarity had come. Both Abner and Ish-Bosheth had been murdered, leaving the tribes of Israel without their two most powerful leaders (2 Samuel 3-4). The Israelites relented and fighting ceased between the house of Saul and the house of David. The people came to David and pledged their allegiance and recognition, that he was ultimately the Lord’s chosen one to lead both the tribes of Israel and the tribe of Judah: “The LORD your God also said to you, ‘You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will be ruler over my people Israel’” (v. 2). All of the tribes of Israel finally united with Judah under David’s leadership. God’s plan for David to ultimately become king had come to fruition.

What does this passage teach us about obeying and disobeying the Lord?

What does God provide to those who obey Him? What should motivate our obedience to the Lord?

David’s triumph came seven and a half years after he became king of Judah and twenty years after Samuel had anointed him. What does this story say about the timing of God’s acts in our lives?

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is one decision or situation for which you need to seek God’s wisdom?

Is there an area of your life where you’re displaying disobedience to God’s guidance? What steps do you need to take to align yourself with God’s desires for you in this area?

What step or steps can you take this week to develop your love for and loyalty to God?

Pray

Close your Bible study time with prayer. Thank God for His unwavering love for His people, as well as the trustworthy guidance He provides. Pray for a clear understanding of His instruction and the faith to follow Him in obedience.

Commentary

| 1 Samuel 28:4-19

28:4. The Philistines camped at Shunem deep into the Jezreel Valley at the foot of Mount Moreh. Saul camped at Gilboa at the valley's southeastern edge, a vantage point from which he could observe the enemy army.

28:5. Jonathan, Saul's son, knew the Lord was not limited by the size of Israel's army (14:6), but Saul trembled violently when he saw the numbers in the Philistine camp.

28:6. Saul inquired of the Lord for direction. Urim (lit "lights") denoted the device the priest used for discerning God's will (Ex 28:30; Num 27:21), but Saul may not have had that available to him since Abiathar had taken the ephod to David (23:6). The prophets likewise gave Saul no answer, perhaps because Saul had cut himself off from them through his clash with Samuel (15:34-35).

28:7. Desperate to find spiritual guidance of any kind about war with the Philistines, Saul turned to the very avenue he knew was wrong and had tried to destroy. Traveling to En-dor would present some risk, since it lay about six miles northeast and two miles beyond the Philistine camp.

28:8. Saul disguised himself to avoid being recognized by Philistines who might be patrolling the valley. Traveling with only two of his men put the king in a high-risk situation, but they also looked less "official" than a large group.

28:9. The medium knew about Saul's cleansing Israel of spiritism and suspected the king of setting a trap for her.

28:10. The king swore that she would suffer no harm—an oath by the very Lord who condemned divination.

28:12. The text suggests that the spirit of Samuel actually appeared and alluded to events in which Samuel had participated (vv. 15-19); the tone of his speech sounds just like Samuel. Perhaps the woman recognized Saul in the light of Samuel's appearance, or perhaps the king pulled back his hood to look closer at the spirit who appeared before them.

28:16. Since Samuel was the Lord's servant and spoke as God's representative, it didn't make sense for Saul to ask for guidance from Samuel since God had refused to answer him. In the next three verses, however, Samuel would give Saul his answer, though it wasn't the answer Saul wanted to hear.

28:17. The spirit of Samuel specifically named Saul's successor as David, whereas before he had only alluded to him (13:14; 15:28).

28:18. The words of Samuel's spirit, You did not obey the Lord , is a reference to 15:1-3,7-9—Saul's miserable failure regarding Amalek, whom God had commanded Saul to destroy.

28:19. The nation's defeat would come at God's hands. The words of Samuel's spirit, you and your sons will be with me, was an unmistakable verdict of death on Saul and his house.

| 1 Chronicles 10-11

10:1. Without going into any of the details leading up to this event, the Chronicler takes us right to the death of Saul and his sons. The Philistines had come upon Saul's army from the north, trapping Saul's men on Mount Gilboa and killing those who could not escape.

10:2. Jonathan and his two brothers were able warriors, but they could not hold out once the Israelite army had fled.

10:3. Because the battle was going so well for the Philistines, the archers were in the middle of the fight and were able to deal Saul a mortal blow.

10:4-5. Saul knew the Philistines would torture him, but this did not give him the right to take his own life, let alone to ask his armor-bearer to do it for him. Only when the boy refused did Saul kill himself, and then his armor-bearer also committed suicide.

10:6. Not every member of Saul's house died at that time, but the family unit, in the sense of Saul's dynasty (his whole house), came to a halt.

10:13. Saul was not as evil as many of the idolatrous kings who came after him, but a king who outwardly followed God but inwardly went his own way was worse than a king who did not make any pretense of following God. Saul's apparent piety combined with his blatant disobedience (1Sam 13:7-14; 15:1-9) was unacceptable to God and served as a destructive example for onlookers.

10:14. Saul did make a show of inquiring of the Lord (1Sam 28:6), but this was purely fortune telling; he dashed off immediately to speak to the now-departed Samuel. Not even the king was allowed to treat God as though He were a daily horoscope. The Chronicler also reminds us that it was God who led things in this direction and that the goal was for David to be placed on the throne.

11:1-2. The Chronicler skips over a lengthy series of events and takes us directly to the time of David's coronation. David was not accepted immediately as king of Israel by everyone. He had opposition from Jonathan's surviving brother Esh-baal, and it took warfare and bloodshed before David emerged as the

undisputed victor (2Sam 1-2). Thus, this peaceful assertion by all Israel of blood relationship with David and his entitlement to the throne was as pragmatic as it was firm. The people even quoted the Lord's approval of David, even though some of them had fought against him not too long ago.

11:3. David's initial coronation took place at Hebron, a city from which he ruled for seven years.