

CHAPTER 10

The design of Ezra, in these books of the Chronicles, was to preserve the records of the house of David, which, though much sunk and lessened in a common eye by the captivity, yet grew more and more illustrious in the eyes of those that lived by faith by the nearer approach of the Son of David. And therefore he repeats, not the history of Saul's reign, but only of his death, by which way was made for David to the throne. In this chapter we have,

- I. The fatal rout which the Philistines gave to Saul's army, and the fatal stroke which he gave himself (v. 1-7).
- II. The Philistines' triumph therein (v. 8-10).
- III. The respect which the men of Jabesh-Gilead showed the royal corpse (v. 11, 12).
- IV. The reason of Saul's rejection (v. 13, 14).

1 CHRONICLES 10:1-7

THE DEATH OF SAUL

This account of Saul's death is the same with that which we had, ¹ Samuel 31:1, etc. We need not repeat the exposition of it. Only let us observe,

1. Princes sin and the people suffer for it. It was a bad time with Israel when they *fled before the Philistines* and *fell down slain* (v. 1), when they quitted their cities, and *the Philistines came and dwelt in them*, v. 7. We do not find that they were at this time guilty of idolatry, as they had been before, in the days of the judges, and were afterwards, in the days of the kings. Samuel had reformed them, and they were reformed: and yet they are thus *given to the spoil and to the robbers*. No doubt there was enough in them to deserve this judgment; but that which divine Justice had chiefly an eye to was the sin of Saul. Note, Princes and great men should in a special manner take heed of provoking God's wrath; for, if they kindle that fire, they know not how many may be consumed by it for their sakes.

2. Parents sin and the children suffer for it. When the measure of Saul's iniquity was full, and his day came to fall (which David foresaw, ^{<1308>}1 Samuel 26:10), he not only descended into battle and perished himself, but his sons (all but Ishbosheth) perished with him, and Jonathan among the rest, that gracious, generous man; for *all things come alike to all*. Thus was the iniquity of the fathers visited upon the children, and they fell as parts of the condemned father. Note, Those that love their seed must leave their sins, lest they perish not alone in their iniquity, but bring ruin on their families with themselves, or entail a curse upon them when they are gone.

3. Sinners sin and at length suffer for it themselves, though they be long reprieved; for, although sentence be not executed speedily, it will be executed. It was so upon Saul; and the manner of his fall was such as, in various particulars, answered to his sin.

(1.) He had thrown a javelin more than once at David, and missed him; but the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers.

(2.) He had commanded Doeg to slay the priests of the Lord; and now, in despair, he commands his armour-bearer to *draw his sword and thrust him through*.

(3.) He had disobeyed the command of God in not destroying the Amalekites, and his armour-bearer disobeys him in not destroying him.

(4.) He that was the murderer of the priests is justly left to himself to be his own murderer; and his family is cut off who cut off the city of the priests. See, and say, *The Lord is righteous*.

^{<1308>}1 CHRONICLES 10:8-14

THE DEATH OF SAUL

Here,

I. From the triumph of the Philistines over the body of Saul we may learn,

1. That the greater dignity men are advanced to the greater disgrace they are in danger of falling into. Saul's dead body, because he was king, was abused more than any other of the slain. Advancement makes men a mark for malice.

2. That, if we give not to God the glory of our successes, even the Philistines will rise up in judgment against us and condemn us; for, when they had obtained a victory over Saul, they *sent tidings to their idols* — poor idols, that knew not what was done a few miles off till the tidings were brought to them, nor then either! They also put Saul's armour *in the house of their gods*, v. 10. Shall Dagon have so honourable a share in their triumphs and the true and living God be forgotten in ours?

II. From the triumph of the men of Jabesh-Gilead in the rescue of the bodies of Saul and his sons we learn that there is a respect due to the remains of the deceased, especially of deceased princes. We are not to enquire concerning the eternal state; that must be left to God: but we must treat the dead body as those who remember it has been united to an immortal soul and must be so again.

III. From the triumphs of divine Justice in the ruin of Saul we may learn,

1. That the sin of sinners will certainly find them out, sooner or later: *Saul died for his transgression*.

2. That no man's greatness can exempt him from the judgments of God.

3. Disobedience is a killing thing. Saul died for *not keeping the word of the Lord*, by which he was ordered to destroy the Amalekites.

4. Consulting with witches is a sin that fills the measure of iniquity as soon as any thing. Saul enquired of one that *had a familiar spirit*, and *enquired not of the Lord, therefore he slew him*, v. 13, 14. Saul slew himself, and yet it is said, *God slew him*. What is done by wicked hands is yet done *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*. Those that abandon themselves to the devil shall be abandoned to him; so shall their doom be. It is said (¹1 Samuel 28:6) that Saul did *enquire of the Lord* and he *answered him not*: but here it is said, *Saul did not enquire of God*; for he did not till he was brought to the last extremity, and then it was too late.