FIRST SAMUEL

Chapter 31

*Saul Takes His Life*

**Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell slain on Mount Gilboa. 2 The Philistines pressed hard after Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. 3 The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically. 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. 5 When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. 6 So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day. 7 When 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. 8 The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. 9 They 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. 10 They put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan. 11 When the people of Jabesh Gilead heard of what the Philistines had done to Saul, 12 all their valiant men journeyed 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. 13 Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted seven days.**

**31:2** *Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua.* See note on 14:49. The surviving son, Ish-Bosheth or Esh-Baal (1Ch 8:33; 9:39), was afterward promoted by Abner, who somehow survived the battle, to succeed his father as king (2Sa 2:8–9). (CSB)

**31:4** *uncircumcised fellows.* See 14:6 and note. (CSB)

 *abuse me.* A practice that was not uncommon; previously the Philistines had mutilated and humiliated Samson after his capture (see Jdg 16:23–25). (CSB)

 *took his own sword and fell on it.* The culmination of a long process of self-destruction. (CSB)

**31:6** *all his men.* Those who had served around him in his administration (but see note on v. 2). (CSB)

**31:9** *They cut off his head.* David had done the same to Goliath (see 17:51). (CSB)

 *sent messengers throughout the land.* Probably bearing Saul’s head and armor as proof and trophies of their victory. (CSB)

**31:10** *They put his armor in the temple.* Symbolic of ascribing the victory to the Philistine gods. (CSB)

**31:11** *Jabesh Gilead.* See note on 11:1. (CSB)

**31:12** *They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons.* The men of Jabesh Gilead had not forgotten how Saul had come to their defense when they were threatened by the Ammonites (see ch. 11). (CSB)

 *burned them.* Cremation was not customary in ancient Israel and here appears to have been done to prevent any further abuse of the bodies of Saul and his sons by the Philistines. (CSB)

**31:13** *took their bones and buried them.* David later had their remains removed from Jabesh and placed in the family burial grounds of Zela in Benjamin (see 2Sa 21:12–14). (CSB)

 *fasted seven days.* As an indication of their mourning for Saul (cf. 2Sa 1:12; 3:35; 12:16, 21–23). (CSB)