

# King Saul

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### 1 Samuel 8 - 10.

There is not in Scripture a character that furnishes more solemn warning than that of King Saul. As we pass on from stage to stage through his history, it fills the soul with very awful thoughts of the treachery and corruption of the heart of man; and as we are sure that it has been written for our learning (Rom. 15: 4), we may well be thankful to our God for the counsel that it gives us, and seek His grace that we may read the holy lesson to profit.

But this we should know, that, though the Spirit of God may have thus graciously recorded these acts of the wicked for our learning, they were all executed by the hand and according to the heart of the man himself. God is to be known here, and in similar histories, only in that holy sovereignty which draws good out of evil, and in that care for His saints which records that evil for their admonition.

The first Book of Samuel has a very distinct character. It strikingly exhibits the removal of man and the bringing in of God. It accordingly opens with the barren woman receiving a child from the Lord; this being, in scripture, the constant symbol of grace, and the pledge of divine power acting on the incompetency of the creature. It then shows us the priesthood (which had been set in formal order and succession) corrupting itself and removed by judgment, and upon that God's Priest (who was to do according to his heart, and for whom he was to build a sure house) brought in. (1 Sam. 2: 35.) And then, in like manner, it shows us the kingdom (at first set according to man's desire) corrupting itself, and removed by judgment, and upon that God's King (who was also after His heart, and for whom He would also build a sure house) brought in. Thus, this Book exhibits everything, whether in the sanctuary or on the throne, while in man's hand coming to ruin, and the final committal of everything to the hand of God's anointed. And this anointed of God, we know, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, is to be none less than the Son of God Himself, God's King to hold the immoveable kingdom, and God's Priest to hold the untransferable priesthood.

The history of King Saul properly begins with the eighth chapter of this book. There we find the revolted heart of Israel, which had been departing from the Lord, as He there tells Samuel, ever since He had brought them out of Egypt, seeking still greater distance from Him, and desiring a king in the stead of Him. The ill government of Samuel's sons at this time was their pretence, but it was only a pretence. There is no doubt that they did act corruptly, and Samuel may have been at fault in making them judges, consulting perhaps too much with flesh and blood, and too little with Israel's welfare and

the Lord's honour. But the Lord discloses the real source of this desire for a king, saying to Samuel, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." Like Moses in such a case (Ex. 16: 7), Samuel was nothing that the people should murmur against him or his sons; their murmurings were not against him, but against the Lord.

"Israel would none of me," says the Lord, "so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels." (Ps. 81: 12.) They shall have what their soul was now lusting after, but they shall find it to be their plague. Their own king shall be their sorrow and ruin, as all our own things are, if we will follow them and have them. "He feedeth on ashes, a deceived heart turned him aside." What but ashes (sorrow and death) does the labour of our own hands gather for us? So is it always, try it in what way we may, and so was Israel now to find it in their own king. (1 Sam. 8: 11-17.)

But in wonted grace, the Lord here gives His people space to repent of this their evil choice before they reaped the bitter fruit of it. And this was just what He had done before at Mount Sinai. When they were there bent on accepting the fiery law, as though they could keep it and live by it, Moses is made to pass and repass between them and the Lord, in order, as it seems, to give them space to turn and still trust in that grace which had redeemed them from Egypt, and not cast themselves on the terms of Mount Sinai. (See Ex. 19.) And so here, I believe, with the same intent Samuel passes again and again between the Lord and the people, But as they there listened to their own heart in its confidence and self-sufficiency, so here they will have a king in spite of all God's gracious warning. They take their own way again.

And I ask, dear brethren, is not this His way, and alas! too often our way still? Is He not often checking us by His Spirit, that we go not in the way of our own heart, and yet are we not like Israel, too often heedless of His Spirit? And what do we ever find the end of our own way to be, but grief and confusion? For the Lord has only to leave us to ourselves, if He would fain leave us for destruction. Legion is the fearful witness of this. (Mark 5.) He presents man in his proper native condition, choosing the captivity of Satan, and, as such, being one whom nothing could relieve but that sovereign grace which does not stop to take counsel with man's own desire (for then it would never act), but which goes right onward with its own purpose to rescue and to bless.

But such was Israel now, knowing only their own will in this matter of the king. And this at once prepares us for the manner of person that we are to find in their forthcoming king. For the wilful people must have a wilful king. Of none other could it be said that all the desire of Israel was on him. Of none other could Samuel have said, "Behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired." None other could have been the king of this people.

But all this forebodes fearful things in the king, and fearful days for Israel. And so shall we find it. In the divine order such a time as the reign of King Saul has its appointed uses. Showing us the kingdom in man's hand, it serves to set off the kingdom in God's hand — mischief and corruption and disaster marking the one, honour and blessing and rest the other. The kingdom brought in by their own desire would let them see how unequal they were to provide for their own happiness; just as "this present evil world," which our own lusts have formed and fashioned, is found unequal to satisfy, leaving us subject to vanity still. But with all this, God's workmanship will stand in blessed contrast. The kingdom under Saul in all its wretchedness and shame might set off the glorious and peaceful days of David and Solomon, as this world of ours will set off "the world to come" in the days of the Son of man.

But however the Lord may thus serve His own glory and His people's comfort by this, it is Israel that now bring this season of shame and sorrow on themselves. They sow the wind to reap the

whirlwind. Saul comes forth, the chosen one of a wilful and revolted nation, to do his evil work. And thus he stands in one rank with another more wicked than himself. He stands as the type and brother of that king in the latter day who is to do "according to his will" — the one who is to come "in his own name," and say in his heart "no God." Saul was now coming forth the first of that line of shepherds or rulers who were "to feed themselves and not the flock," to eat the fat, and clothe them with the wool (Ezek. 34), and do all that evil work that is here prophesied of Israel's own king, and fill out that character that is here drawn of Saul.\*

\*Saul is expressly treated of as "the violent man" or last enemy of Israel in 2 Sam. 22 and Ps. 18. This last enemy, or the last of these kings of the people, will give place to the true David, who shall feed God's heritage with integrity of heart and skilfulness of hand, as this first of them is succeeded by David the son of Jesse, the man after God's own heart. This last of them is called "the foolish shepherd" in Zech. 11: 15.

Into the hand of such shepherds Israel is now cast, seeing they had rejected the Lord their good Shepherd, and desired one after their own heart. The first of them, as we here find, was of that tribe of which it had been said of old, "Benjamin shall ravine as a wolf, in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil." (Gen. 49: 27.) And he was of that city, in that tribe, which had already wrought such mischief in Israel, and been the occasion of nearly blotting out the memorial of one of the tribes from among the people of the Lord. (Judges 19 - 21.)

But we further learn of him, that though belonging to the least of all the families of his tribe, and that, too, the smallest tribe in Israel, his father Kish was "a mighty man of substance." And from this description, I gather that Saul and his father had prospered in this world, being men who were wise in their generation, people of that class who "will be rich," though nature and family and circumstances are all against them. And Saul is first shown to us searching for his father's asses. Some thing of the family property was missing, and it must be searched for — their own ass had fallen into the ditch and it must be taken out. But though thus careful of his own things, he seems, as yet at least, to have had no great care for the things of God, for he does not at this time know even the person of Samuel, who was now the great witness of God in the land; and soon after this, his neighbours, "who had known him aforetime," wonder with great wonder that he should be found among the prophets, so that to this day he is a proverb. All these are notices of what generation he was, telling us that though as yet in an humble sphere, he and his father's house had been formed rather by the low principles of the world, than by worthy thoughts of the Lord of Israel. And such an one was just fit to be directed to Samuel at the time when the worldly heart of the people was desiring a king. His mind was upon the asses, as Samuel seems to him. The world was set in his heart, though from circumstances it had not as yet been developed in many of its proper fruits. And this is awful warning, beloved. Circumstances, as here, may indeed be needed in order to prove the ground of the heart; but it is the heart itself that determines the man before God (1 Sam. 16: 7), and sooner or later will determine the life before men. (Proverbs 4: 23; Matt. 15: 19.)

In accordance with all this, on being introduced to the intended king, we have no mention whatever of any moral qualifications that he had. All that we learn of him is this, "that he was a choice young man, and a goodly, and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he; from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people." Thus and thus only is he spoken of. He is judged of simply after the flesh, looked at only in the outward man, and thus was suited to man who had desired him, for "man looketh on the outward appearance." Therefore when the people saw his stature and nothing more, they cry, "God save the king." This was the king after their heart. He was of the world, and the world loved its own.\*

\* Absalom, another of the same generation with Saul, is described only in this way also. "In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him." And surely both of them are types of the beast or the wilful king of the latter day. And will not he be decked out with the same beauty in the flesh? Will he not have his parts and comely proportions all to admiration? Will he not be perfect in all subtle attractions and forms of beauty as the serpent in the garden?

And here let me say, that if Saul be thus the man after man's heart, and David, as we read afterwards, the man after God's heart, we learn in the one what we are, and in the other what God is. And the distinctive characters of the two kings is this: Saul would have everything his own and be everything himself; David was willing to be nothing and to have nothing, but still in whatever state he was, to be the diligent unselfish servant of others. And thus man, to our shame, is presented in the narrow-heartedness of Saul, but God to our comfort in the generous self-devotement of David.

All this character of Saul will be awfully disclosed in all the passages of his future history, but the same principles are even now early at work. It may be that the less practised eye cannot discern this, and it is indeed well and happy to be "simple concerning evil." But heart will sometimes answer to heart, and make some of us, beloved, quicker to detect its treachery than others. Thus in Saul keeping back Samuel's words touching the kingdom, in hiding himself among the stuff when the lot had fallen upon him, and again in holding his peace when some would not give him their voices, there is in all this, I judge, only the show of virtue.\* For the love of the world and of its praise can afford to be humble and generous at times. It can even send forth those or any other virtues, taking care, however, to send them forth in such a direction as to make them bring home, after a short journey, some rich revenues to the ruling lusts.

\*Another indeed hid Himself when they would have come to make Him a king (John 6), but He was acting according to God's glory and will in that; Saul in this was resisting it, however his modesty, as it might be thought, may attract the judgment of the mere human mind for awhile.

In the hand of such an one is the kingdom of Israel now vested, but such an one was not "God's king." To give them a king, however, appears to have been God's purpose from the beginning. The prophetic words of both Jacob and Moses upon Judah, as also the words by Balaam (Num. 24: 17), intimate this; as also Moses' title, "king in Jeshurun." And more than these, the ordinance touching the king in Deuteronomy 17, and the fact that the Lord Jesus Himself sought the kingdom when He was here (Matt. 21: 1), and in the end, at His second coming will take it (Ps. 2: 6), prove that God's first purpose was to give Israel a king.

But things were not ready for the king all at once; various previous courses must be accomplished, ere that top stone in the divine building could be brought forth. Israel at first had to be redeemed from bondage — then to be carried through the wilderness to learn the ways and secrets of God's love — then to get their promised inheritance delivered out of the hand of the usurper. Till these things were done, all was not in readiness for the king. Had these things been simply accomplished, the king without delay would have appeared to crown the whole work with the full beauty of the Lord. But each stage in this way of the Lord Israel had sadly interrupted and delayed. After redemption from Egypt they had given themselves, through disobedience, forty years' travel in the wilderness; after taking the inheritance, they had again, through disobedience, brought pricks into their sides and thorns in their eyes; and now they forestall God's king, and through disobedience and wilfulness again bring their own king, as another plague upon them. But this is the way of man, beloved, the way of us all by nature. Through unbelief and wilfulness we refuse to wait God's time, and we procure a Saul for

ourselves. It was thus that Sarah brought Ishmael into her house, and Jacob his twenty-one years of exile and servitude upon himself. Our own crooked policy and unbelief must answer for these sorrows. God, if waited for, would bring the blessing that maketh rich and which addeth no sorrow with it; but our own way only teaches us that he that soweth to the flesh must of the flesh reap corruption. To this day Israel is learning this, and reaping the fruit of the tree they planted, learning the service of the nations whom, like Saul, they have set over themselves; and their only joy lies in this, that God's counsel of grace, in spite of all, is to stand, and His own king shall still sit on His holy hill of Zion.

But in spite of all this, and though Israel is now transferred into other hands, God will prove that nothing should be wanting on His part. He had not only signified Saul to Samuel, and Samuel had then signified Saul at the sacrificial feast, and anointed and kissed him, (1 Sam. 9, 10), but in the mouth of several witnesses the divine purpose had been established, and the Spirit, as faculty for office, had been imparted, and an "occasion," as Samuel speaks (1 Sam. 10: 7) for proving that God was thus with the king, now arrives.

## **1 Samuel 11 - 15.**

The insult of Nahash the Ammonite towards Jabesh-Gilead was this "occasion," and the Lord gives Israel a complete victory over him by the hand of their king. For this battle was the Lord's, inasmuch as the Lord would fulfil His part in this matter. We need not inquire where Israel got their instruments of war, if now there was "no smith found throughout all the land," for this day was won not by might nor by power, but "by My Spirit, saith the Lord." This victory might therefore have been gained as well with lamps and pitchers, or with the jawbones of asses, or with slings and stones from the brook, as with the battle-axe and bow.

Thus again, as in ancient days, the Lord approves Himself not wanting, however wilful and stiff-necked His people may be found. And after this, the king is accepted again of the people (1 Sam. 12); and this chapter reminds us of Exodus 20 as the eighth chapter reminded us of Exodus 19. For in Exodus 20 Moses transfers them into their new position, but convicts them of the terribleness of it; and here Samuel formally plants them under their king, but convicts them again as with the thunder and tempest of Mount Sinai. The thunder and rain came upon them here, as the fearful pledge and prelude of the end of their own kingdom, as the shaking of the earth at Sinai pledged the end of their own covenant. And under it they cry out in terror here, as they had done there. There they had said to Moses, "Speak thou with us and we will hear, but let not God speak with us lest we die," — and here they say to Samuel, "Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not, for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king." And in mercy Samuel here, as Moses there, encourages them still to hold fast by the Lord, who, in spite of all, was still graciously owning them as His people.\*

\*This thunder in harvest is noticed here as something remarkable; and so it was. Jehovah was the husbandman of the land of Israel (Deut 11), and had Israel been in simple allegiance to Him, everything would have witnessed the care and skill of the divine husbandman, and the blessing of that people that had the Lord for their God. There would have been nothing out of season: the early and the latter rain would have fallen only in their appointed months. Thunder in harvest would not have been known, or known only in judgment, as it is here.

These two occasions are thus in strict moral analogy, and show us that king Saul was introduced into the Jewish system now, as the law had been at Mount Sinai, through the wilfulness and unbelief of the people, Saul being no more God's king than the law was God's covenant. Israel has again lost their peace by all this, and cast themselves into sorrows and difficulties that they little counted on; but the

Lord pardons and accepts them, as He had done at Sinai, and now sets them in the way again in their new character.

And now comes the trial again. "Fear not," says Samuel to them, "ye have done all this wickedness, yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart." But, ere the first scene in the kingdom closes, all is broken and forfeited, just as the covenant from Sinai was broken ere Aaron and the people had left the foot of the Mount. There the people grew impatient at the delay of Moses, and, in violation of the very first article of the covenant, made a golden calf. So here Samuel had left Saul for awhile, telling him to go down to Gilgal, and wait for him there till he should come and offer the sacrifices, but now Saul offers the sacrifices himself. (1 Sam. 13.) He forsakes the word of the Lord. The first act of the king was thus again a violation of the first command he had received. And thus was it all again, as at Sinai so at Gilgal, the immediate breach of the covenant on the part of man. The Lord, it is true, had grace in store for Israel while they were thus destroying themselves; as at Sinai He showed the witnesses of mercy on the top of the Mount, while Israel was sinning away all their present blessing at the foot of it. But still, in the king's hand now, as in the people's then, all was disaster and loss.

Speedy and yet fully ripe fruit was this of their own way. But, beside this one great act of forfeiture, there are traits of character now displaying themselves in the people's king that strongly mark his generation. We see him acting now after the manner forewarned of Samuel. He chooses three thousand men of Israel to wait upon him, sending the rest to their tents, thus dealing with them as his property, having right to do what he would with his own. "When Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him" — taking thus their sons and appointing them unto himself, as Samuel had said. And all his ways are in the same tone of self-will, fully opposed to the manner of God's king as prescribed by Moses. (Deut. 17.) In the sovereignty of his own good pleasure, the people's king now does his own will, exalting himself above his brethren, blowing the trumpet throughout the land, speaking, as with the voice of a god and not of a man, and saying, "let the Hebrews hear;" thus bringing, as it were, the people to his own door-posts, and there boring their ears, that they might be his servants for ever.

And he would be priest as well as king. He would fain sit in the sanctuary as well as on the throne; in disobedience, he will himself offer the sacrifice; in all these things giving us awful pledges of the ways of him who is still to be more daring, magnifying himself above all, planting his tabernacles on the glorious holy mountain, and sitting in the temple of God.\*

\*To mark the wilful infidel character of Saul still further, I may observe that the ark of God was not once consulted all through his reign. (1 Chr. 10: 13, 14.)

Such was Saul, and such will be his elder brother or antitype in the latter day. But as, in spite of all the trespass and breach of covenant at Mount Sinai, the Lord did not allow the enemy to triumph over Israel, but brought them into the good land that He had promised them; so here, in spite of all this, He works deliverance for them from the Philistines as He had promised, and that, too, in a way that more marvellously displays His hand than the day of Gideon or of Samson. (1 Sam. 14.) This victory at Michmash, like the victories of Joshua, verified the faithfulness of the God of Israel. Not one good thing could fail. He had promised strength against the Philistines now, as He had promised the land of the Canaanites then, and this day of Michmash and that which follows fulfils the word of the Lord. (1 Sam. 9: 16, 1 Sam. 14: 47, 48.)

But all this, as everything else, serves only to develop the people's king more and more. The ways of a wilful one are strongly marked in all that he does. His course is uncertain and wayward, because it

is just what his own will makes it. But in the midst of all the present gathering darkness there is one object of relief to the eye — the person and actions of Jonathan. He is the one in the apostate kingdom who owns God and is owned of Him, the remnant in the midst of the thousands of Israel, the one who stood in the secret of God, and knew where the strength of Israel lay. And thus he is in full readiness for all the openings of the divine purpose. We see him in immediate sympathy with David, as soon as David appears. (1 Sam. 18: 1.) His deeds in Israel, before David is heard of, savour of the very spirit that animates David afterwards; for the victory of Michmash which his hand won was in full character with that in the valley of Elah, which David afterwards achieved. God was trusted in both of them, as the only giver of victory. The spirit with which Jonathan entered the passages between Bozez and Seneh carried David into the front of the battle against the giant. And this, I may say, is the character of every remnant — they walk in the spirit of the hope set before them, so that when it is manifested they are ready for it. As here Jonathan was ready for David, Anna and Simeon waited for "the consolation of Israel," and embraced the Child the moment they saw Him. In the latter day, in like manner, the remnant will be looking for the Lord as an afflicted and poor people; and so, in the meanwhile, we should watch for the heavenly glory in the spirit of holy retirement from the world and the things of the world. In spirit and conversation we should be as "children of light and children of the day," thus signalling our remnant character, though the night is still around us; so that when the light of the morning breaks, and the day of the kingdom comes, we may find our native place in it. The oil in the vessels of the wise virgins tells us this. It tells us that they had counted the cost of being wakeful to the end — that they knew themselves only as "prisoners of hope" in this world, and that it was still but night-time, which would need the lamp, till grace should be brought to them at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

And the character of the apostate is marked in the very opposite way. It is this remnant that they hate, and their hope that they are not preparing for. It is this righteous Jonathan who now moves Saul's envy. Saul, it appears, would now have sacrificed him to his lust, as we know he afterwards sought to slay him. For envy, or the love of the world, cares not though it have even a child of our own bowels for its prey, as we know, in the case of Joseph, it craved a brother for a sacrifice. In Saul it also hunted David like a partridge in the mountains, and even would have killed Samuel, to whom under God Saul owed everything. (1 Sam. 16: 2.) As says the divine proverb, "wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who is able to stand before envy?"

And with all this, he had no courage in the Lord's cause when the trial came. He makes a stir and bustles a good deal with his six hundred men behind him at Gilgal; but as we follow him to Gibeah, where the battle was at hand, he tarries in the uttermost part under a pomegranate tree, nor do we see him in the field till the day is won. He rages after the fight, but strikes no blow in it; and all that he does is to sacrifice the honour of Israel to his own will, for in the mere exercise of his own good pleasure, he adjures the people not to touch any food till the evening, and that curse hinders the full overthrow of the Philistines.

Thus all that he really is, on this memorable day, is the Achan in the camp. Jonathan is the strength, and he but the troubler of Israel. But with all this, he can be very religious, when religion does not turn him out of his own way, or when, like Jehu, he can serve himself by it. After the offence of the people eating the blood with the flesh, he orders the table of the camp himself in due religious form. But this, instead of crossing his own desire, only serves it, for by this he seems to take the honour of the priesthood to him, and thus to exalt himself. He bustles again as though he were the one object of importance in the whole scene, thus gathering the thoughts of man to himself, and walking in the full light of the world's countenance, which was everything to him, the thing that he lived for.

All this is indeed darkness, but we have gloomier shades to penetrate still.

When Israel entered the land, they received a commission to destroy the nations, for the day of their visitation had come. But here I would observe that it was not the whole earth that was thus to be destroyed, but only those nations which had been guilty of doing despite to God, and had filled up the measure of their sins. The Canaanites had had God's witnesses among them in old time, for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been there, but they remained Canaanites still. The Egyptians had known Joseph and the grace and power of the God of Joseph, but they had ceased to remember Him. And Amalek had seen the God of glory leading His hosts out of Egypt, with His cloud over them, and the water from the rock following them, but the hand of Amalek was at that moment raised against the throne of God. Of these three, Egypt, the Canaanites, and Amalek, Egypt and the Canaanites had been already judged, and the day of Amalek had now come; for surely when the Lord's cup was passing, they could not be forgotten.\*

\*And I would further observe, that in the same way will be the judgment of the nations in the latter day. It is not all the earth that is then to be destroyed, but only those nations among whom God's witnesses have previously been, those who will then make up the confederacy against the Lord's anointed. The kingdoms of the world shall then become the Lord's, and not be destroyed; the isles afar off shall form the train of the earthly glory of Messiah, as the distant cities and people of old were to be left in order to become tributaries to Israel (Deut. 20: 10-18), and those only to be cut off, as I have noticed above, who had filled up the measure of their sin, and done despite to God. (Gen. 15: 16.)

But Israel had not been fully faithful to the commission which they had received against the Canaanites, as the 1st chapter of the Book of Judges shows us; and now our 15th chapter is just that chapter again under the hand of king Saul. The kingdom was now received, as the land had then been, and the king gets his commission now, as the nation then did. "Go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that he hath," says the Lord to Saul by Samuel. But Saul makes terms with Amalek, as the tribes before had done with the Canaanites. He spares Agag, as Benjamin had spared the Jebusites, Manasseh the people of Dor, Ephraim the people of Gezer, Zebulun the people of Kitron, Asher the people of Accho, and Naphthali the people of Bethshemesh. (Judges 1.) And thus we have here with the king, as there with the tribes, the disobedience of man, and the consequent forfeiture of all blessing and honour. "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord," says Samuel to Saul, "He hath also rejected thee from being king." (1 Sam. 15: 23.)

And this was as the loss of Eden to the Lord. The land of Israel should have been the earthly rest, where God would have kept His sabbath. But now it was defiled, as paradise of old; and as of old God repented that He had made man on the earth (Gen. 6: 6), so now does He repent that He had made Saul king over Israel. (1 Sam. 15: 35.) Thorns and briars and sorrow of heart the kingdom was now to yield, as the cursed earth did then. Samuel goes away to weep, and the Lord takes no pleasure in the kingdom.

Thus all is ruin under the hand of the people's king, and the lust of his heart is seen again to work in this scene with fearful power. For he seeks at once to turn this conquest of Amalek to his own profit and glory, careless as he was of the word and glory of the Lord. He first flies upon the spoil, and then sets him up a place (1 Sam. 15: 12), that is, erects some monument to his own name, thus seeking to make this victory serve both his pride and his covetousness.\* It is true, he says, "I have sinned;" but so said Balaam before him, and Judas after him. And even in that confession, the desire of his heart was not towards God's forgiveness and peace, but towards his own honour before men. For these are his words to Samuel, "I have sinned; yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel." This was his lust — he loved the praise of men. He would at all cost have the honour

that cometh from man, and Samuel now delivers him over to a reprobate mind. He turns for a moment with him towards the people, but then leaves him for ever.

\*We read also of "Absalom's place." (2 Sam. 18.) But Saul and Absalom, as I have already noticed, were children of the same generation, both types of the Great Pretender of the latter day.

## **1 Samuel 16, 17.**

Thus the judgment of God lies upon him, and an evil spirit from the Lord comes to trouble him. (1 Sam. 16.) And now the time has arrived for revealing again "the secret of God." For in all the seasons of man's destruction of himself, there has been another thing going on in the plans of the blessed God. Thus of old, the promised seed is sown in man's field of briars and thorns. (Gen. 3.) While his brethren are filling up their sins and sorrows in Canaan, Joseph, unknown to them, is growing up in Egypt for their help: while Israel is in the heat of the furnace, Moses is preparing to be their deliverer in the distant solitudes of Midian. And again, while disasters follow sins in quick succession, the Judges are brought forth as God's deliverers for the people; and at last, when the priesthood was defiled, and the glory gone into the enemy's land, Samuel the child is brought forth to raise the stone of help.

Thus had it been before, and so is it now again. Saul and the kingdom are bringing ruin on themselves, but David, "the secret of God," is under preparation to set the throne in honour, and the kingdom in order and strength. And what are all these things but notices to us of Him who is the true secret of God. For as such, the blessed Son of God is now, though flesh and blood decay, the hidden seed in the believer, that is to burst forth in the resurrection a plant of glory. And as such He will by-and-by bear up the pillars of the earth, when all things else are dissolving. He will then come forth out of His secret chambers, as Joseph or as Moses, as Samuel or as David, and shall be as the light of the morning, after a dark and dreary night, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.\*

\*Moses preaches Christ as "the secret of God" in Deut. 29: 29. In connection with that, in the next chapter (Deut. 30: 11-14), he speaks of a certain "commandment," which he there describes; and Paul in his ministry refers to those words of Moses as descriptive of "the righteousness which is of faith," or, the word of Christ. (Rom. 10: 6.) And thus the Apostle fully discloses what the Lawgiver had only darkly intimated, and shows that Jesus is the secret that belongs to God — God's true resource for sinners. And I may further observe, that one of the names of Christ is "Secret." (Judges 13: 18; Isa. 9: 6.)

And this is always the way of grace: it comes into exercise after man has been convicted of entire insufficiency. It speaks on this wise: "Except the Lord had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Man makes Jerusalem a Sodom, a filthy ruin, and then out of that ruin, God in His own grace and strength builds again "a city of righteousness." (Isa. 1.) And this grace ever takes for its instrument the weak thing and the foolish thing of this world. Such was Jesus of Nazareth, such was Paul with a thorn in his flesh, and such is David now. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart." Man had already, as we have seen, looked on the outward appearance, and found his object in Saul, who in person was the goodliest of the children of Israel. But God's choice was not to be ordered by such a measure. (Ps. 147: 10.) A rod out of the stem of Jesse is His object, a root out of a dry ground in which there was no comeliness before the eye of men, the one of whom his father, "according to the flesh," says in scorn, "there remaineth yet the youngest, and he keepeth the sheep" — the one, who like a greater than he, man was thus despising and the nation abhorring. (Isa. 49: 7.) This one, this youngest son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, the keeper of a few sheep in the wilderness, is now God's object. "Arise,

anoint him," says the Lord to Samuel, "for this is he."

And here again I must notice something that seems to me to have great moral value in it. I allude to what appears to have been the different condition of Saul's house and David's house, when they are severally brought before us. Saul's house, as we have seen, was of no repute in Israel, but had made a fortune as people speak. David's, on the other hand, had once been in honour, was of the tribe of Judah, and in its genealogy bore the distinguished name of Boaz, who had been, perhaps, the first man in his generation. But now it seems to be otherwise with them, for David and his father and his father's house have no distinction now, but simply take their place among the many thousands of Israel. But what of all this? the world finds its object in Saul ("for man will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself"), and God, in David. And these things teach us, beloved, that it is safer to be "going down," than "getting up," as the word is, in the world. And they tell us also that whom God will exalt, He first abases; whom He will glorify, He first humbles. He puts the sentence of *death* in the children of *resurrection*. But with the wicked there are no bands, their strength is firm.\* (Ps.73.) Saul went through no sorrow up to the throne, as David did. Esau, the man of the earth, had dukedoms in his family, while Jacob's children were still homeless strangers on the earth (Gen. 36), yet it is written, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated."

\* Ps. 73 is the trial of the soul in learning that death and resurrection is God's principle.

God's way is according to this, hard indeed for flesh and blood to learn, and God's hand thus found its object in David, and we now have accordingly a new feature in the scene before us. We have David, God's chosen, as well as Saul within, and the Philistine without. David is before us in the strength of the Spirit of God, and he soon gives proofs of his ministry both upon the rejected king and upon the uncircumcised. Both are made to own the power of the Lord that was in him. Whether it were the harp or the sling, his hand is skilled to use either. The king had an evil spirit in him, and the uncircumcised is breathing out slaughter, but David stands above both in the strength of the Lord. The unclean spirit goes out from the king at the bidding of his harp, and the Philistine giant falls under his sling. (1 Sam. 16, 17.) It might be thought that king Saul's evil course was interrupted by this, but it soon appears that this was rather only another stage in his downward way. The sow was to return to her mire. The unclean spirit goes out only to gather and bring in seven other spirits more wicked than himself. This quieting of the evil spirit was but a flattering of God with the mouth, for the king's heart was not thereby set right with Him. He was not estranged from his lusts by it. His love of the world and its praise, his self-will, and hatred of the righteous, rule him still, and God and His word and His glory are as little regarded as ever.

## 1 Samuel 8 - 10.

And in all this we see Israel; for (like prince, like people) Saul is the representative of Israel in apostacy, as he is the forerunner or type of their king in the latter-day. This way of Saul under David's harp has been the way of Israel under God's ministers. Elijah raised among them for a moment the cry, "the Lord He is God, the Lord He is God," but all was quickly "Baal" again. In the light of John the Baptist they afterwards rejoiced, but it was only for a season; and when the hand of the Son of God Himself was among them to heal them and bless them, for awhile they flocked to Him in thousands, and when He preached they wondered (Luke 4), and when He entered their city they cried "Hosanna" (Matt. 21), but all soon ended in the cross. The evil spirit had been charmed, the unclean spirit had gone out, but the house was still ready for it, and for it only. And thus the harp of David and the grace and ministry of the Son of God were only the same stage in the downward paths of the king and the

people. They were, both of them, disobedient and gainsaying still. And it was this case of David's harp, as I judge, which our Lord had especially in mind, when He said, "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out?" — thus likening to Saul that generation of Israel to whom He was preaching, and making the power of David's harp the same as the power of that preaching. And the parable of the unclean spirit going out and returning with others more wicked than himself, which the Lord then delivers (Luke 11), is thus a setting forth both of the history of Saul and of that generation. And so we shall find, that the spirit which now went out of Saul came into him again with increased strength, as the casting out of devils and cleansing the house of Israel for a time by the Son of God ended only in His becoming the victim of their lusts and enmity. For Saul was the man after Israel's heart, the full representative of the revolted and unbelieving nation.

But Saul's sin is not to hinder God's mercy. David has a work to do with the Philistine, which must be done, be the king never so unworthy. And in this we still see the way of the Son of God. He came to destroy the power of the enemy, as well as to heal the daughter of Zion; and though she, like Saul, may refuse to be healed, the Son of God must do His work upon the great Goliath. He must lead captivity captive. He must make an end of sin. He must break down the middle wall of partition and nail the handwriting to His cross. He must slay the enmity and abolish death. He must accomplish all this glorious triumph over the full power of the enemy, though He find none in Israel, who were His own, to receive Him, nor any in the world, that He had made, to know Him.

This again is shame and comfort to us: shame, that we could thus treat His love; comfort that His love survived such treatment. And upon this, I would further notice (for it carries another lesson to ourselves), that though Saul knew the power of David's harp for a time, he never knew David himself. He had not learnt David, if I may so speak — David was still a stranger to him (1 Sam. 17: 56). And how does this tell us of man and of Israel still!\* Man will enjoy the rain from heaven, and the fruitful season; but remain ignorant of the Father who orders all this for him. Israel was healed of Jesus, but did not learn Jesus; many pressed on Him in the throng, who never touched Him. And all this is like Saul who could be refreshed by David's music, but still have to ask, "Abner, whose son is this youth?"

\*The transposition of the latter part of 1 Sam. 17 to 1 Sam. 16 in order to meet the objection which has been made to the fact of Saul not knowing David in chap. 17, when he had been so much with him in the preceding one, is, I judge, quite uncalled for; and it does strike me that such efforts as that arise from the book of God being handled more with a critical than with a moral mind. We want the temper of "little children," for "the wise" are taken in their own craftiness.

And this, beloved brethren, is truly sad and solemn; and I think I can say that I never felt more awed, while meditating on scripture, with thoughts of what man is, than in this meditation on poor wretched miserable Saul. The subject is indeed very solemn. It gives us the way of man, the way of a child of this world, who goes on in self-will, with desperate purpose of heart, to take the world for his portion at all cost. And it is no theory, nor singular thing. It finds its counterpart in our world every day; and would in ourselves, but for the gracious keeping of our God. And I do pray, beloved, that neither my pen nor your eye may travel on through these dreary paths of man, without our heart feeling what a thing it is thus to live and thus to die a lover of this present evil world. "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." (Prov. 29: 1.)

Through the next chapters (1 Sam. 18 - 27.) David becomes the principal object; and all that we see in Saul is only the course of a vexed and disappointed man of the world, who by the goading of his own lusts rushes on to destruction, as a horse to the battle. He feels that he is losing the world, and that is every thing to him. He cared nothing for the kingdom, for its own sake; and he valued its welfare,

only so far as that served the world in his heart and his honour among men. The evil spirit now returns with others more wicked than himself. Before, it was a spirit that troubled him, but now it irritates his lusts, and is too strong for the harp of David. (1 Sam. 16: 14, 1 Sam. 18: 10.) He had now become one of that generation who will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely. (Ps. 58.) The song of the women had, the rather, awakened all the evil passions of his soul; and envy and wounded pride and hatred of the righteous work, and express themselves fearfully through all these scenes. That fatal song was to Saul what Joseph's dream had been to his brethren, and what the tidings of the wise men was afterwards to Herod — it stirred up all his enmity; and David's first successes are, of course, only fresh irritations of his lust (1 Sam. 19: 8, 9); and nothing roots it out. Convictions, disappointments, resolutions all fail. And the ruling passion is strong even in death; for while he confesses that David shall soon have every thing, and he himself be laid in the grave, still he says, "Swear now, therefore, unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house." Truly this is all a solemn warning to us. Saul's eye was set on fire of hell, and he kept it fixed on the righteous as its prey. "Saul eyed David." And it is not in the power of the prospect, or the approach of death, to heal "the evil eye." The spirit of envy and of strife will work in us, even to the very last gasp; and the only divine cure for it is, to learn through the Holy Ghost, with enlarged hearts, to cease looking to our own personal honour or interest, and to take our place in God's interests; to know that we have our honour, our enduring honour, only in that mighty and glorious system to which the ten thousands of others, and our own thousands are all contributing. That will give divine victory over the world. But the world was Saul's end, and he must get it at all cost. He knew nothing beyond "his own," and had never learnt the glorious and enlarging lesson, that all things are our's, if we are Christ's, for Christ is God's.

But Saul would have David fall by the hand of another, rather than by his own, for he had some stings of conscience in the business as it was; and beside that, he saw that David was "accepted in the sight of all the people." He plots against his life first by the Philistines, then by his daughter, and at last solicits even Jonathan to be the executioner. But these failing, and only forcing David out from the court and the camp, he then proclaims him a traitor; and would have his people treat him as an outlaw. But no weapon formed against him can prosper. Every snare of the fowler is broken, no craft can surprise, no strength can overthrow him. When the officers of the Jews came to take Jesus, they had to return, saying, — No man ever spake like this man;" and Saul himself and his officers are turned into prophets, that every hand that would bind this anointed of the Lord might be loosed also.

And David, in the exile and shame of an outlaw, gathers round him a company, in the world's esteem, as dishonoured as himself; but who prove the real strength and the only honour of the nation then, and, who afterwards shine in the brightest ranks of the people, when the kingdom is set up in righteousness. For it is to this David, this exiled David and his band of distressed and discontented ones, that Israel look in their trouble (1 Sam. 23: 1); and the enemy is made to know, that the presence of the God of Israel is with them. The Philistines are routed by them, and the Amalekites spoiled; but they defend and rescue their exposed and threatened brethren. (1 Sam. 22: 25.) Such and other famous deeds are done by them, and the priest and the prophet and the sword of Goliath (the symbol and the spoil of glorious war) are with them. As afterwards with the greater than David, there was another dishonoured company, who still were "the holy seed" of the nation, the publicans and harlots, the Galilean women, and she out of whom He had cast seven devils. Saul and his friends kept court, it is true, and the Scribes and the Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, but these were whited sepulchres; and the only place of real honour was to go without the camp, and there meet David and Christ, and their dishonoured bands. For this is the blessed way of Him who stains the pride of man, and lifts the beggar from the dunghill.

But because David was thus the Lord's chosen, Saul is his enemy, the victim that his enemy lusted after; and the more wisely David carries himself, and shows that God is with him, the more with infatuated heart Saul fears him and hates him and would fain kill him; in all this, going the way of Satan who, knowing the Son of God in his day, trembled before Him, and yet sought to destroy Him. So fully was Saul found to be of "the children of this world," and "the children of the wicked one;" a suitable king for the revolted Israel, his whole course showing us that nothing is too horrid for man, when God gives him up because of his wickedness. Does not the massacre at Nob, by the hand of his Edomite, show us this? Does not the massacre at Bethlehem by another Saul, show us this? And these are but samples of the ways of that "violent man," in the latter day, who doing according "to his will" shall "go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to make away many."

But Saul can weep when he meets David; but so did Esau when he met Jacob. There is, however, no trusting these tears. They may but indicate the stony ground at best, while all the time the heart is not right with God. David could not trust Saul's tears, but turned away from them to his hold in the wilderness, and says, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." (1 Sam. 24, 27.) So with the Son of God; when many were believing in Jesus, beholding the miracles which He did, He would not commit himself to them (John 2); so unworthy is man, though he put forth his best, of the confidence of God.

And Saul can prophesy too. But so have others of the same generation. Balaam the prophet prophesied while loving the wages of unrighteousness. Caiaphas the priest prophesied, while he was thirsting for innocent blood. Judas the apostle wrought miracles while he carried the heart of a traitor. And Baalam the prophet, Saul the king, Caiaphas the priest, and Judas the apostle, are all of one generation. A new heart, or "another heart," as a gift for office, had been imparted to each of them, and in the Spirit they prophesied or wrought miracles. But all this tells us that it is not gifts that make us what we should be, and that nothing will do, if the heart be not with God.

## **1 Samuel 28 - 31.**

My present business I will not forget is with Saul; but I cannot entirely pass by further notices, which these chapters suggest, of David and of Jonathan.

In David we see much that is indeed beautiful and excellent, richly savouring of the Spirit of God. But still we see also the failing of man. Troubles prove temptations to him, and such temptations as are at times too strong for him. He lies to Ahimelech, feigns madness before Achish, purposes vengeance on Nabal, and seeks a refuge among the uncircumcised. For such is man found to be even in this, one of his best samples. But such was not the Lord. He stood faultless, the author and finisher of faith. The faith of David at Nob or at Gath was not what it had been in the valley of Elah, but all was full and equal brightness in Jesus from the manger to the tree.

In Jonathan also we see beautiful faith. His soul was knit to David the moment he saw him, and he empties himself in order to fill David — he strips himself that he may clothe David. For God gives Jonathan clearly to see the divine purpose touching David. But then the question is, this being so, did Jonathan go far enough? ought he not to have more fully left his father, and joined the little outcast band in the cave of Adullam? and is not his inglorious fall at Gilboa the wages of his unbelief? I judge that is so; and thus Jonathan gives us another proof that there is none perfect but the Lord, that none but He has ever gone the walk of faith without some backward step, some error to the right hand or the left.\*

\*Nabal and Abigail I would also, in addition, notice here for a little. Their history is quite in character with that of Saul and David — gentler in its tone, but still of the same general character. It is a scene in which the woman, the weaker vessel, acts, but acts in the same spirit of faith with David, while the same person, "the fool," or "he violent man," shows himself in Nabal as he had done in Saul. And David and Abigail meet at last, while Saul and Nabal alike perish under the hand of God. David leaves the court of the apostate, and Abigail the house of the fool, and they meet, first, "without the camp," and then "on the throne! And so with the Lord and the church. He like David, has the scene of deeper trial to go through, and the more extended field of toil to go over; but the church, the weaker vessel, has to know in her measure, something of the same, and like Abigail to forsake her home in the faith of her beloved, to leave the house of the fool for the Lord's anointed.

And here let me add that nothing but faith could have warranted either Jonathan's or Abigail's conduct. The one would have been a rebellious son, and the other a rebellious wife, had they not both understood and believed God's purposes concerning David. But God's claim upon faith knows no rival, and calls for the sacrifice of the claims either of a father or a husband. Human claims fall before it. And thus the Lord, makes upon us the claims of God himself, when He says, "He that loveth father or mother *more than me*, is not worthy of me." Had He not come with the very authority of God Himself, He could not have claimed thus much from us; and the heart that answers this claim can say nothing less to him than, "my Lord, and my God." — This is one way in which the scripture preaches His divine glory to us.

But I must now hasten to the closing scenes of this solemn and affecting history. For the night of Israel is now setting in with many a dark and heavy cloud. (1 Sam. 28.) Samuel is dead, the Philistines as strong and threatening as ever, David the deliverer of the people forced without the camp, and our poor king, the slave of his lusts, all fear and confusion. He enquires of God, but there is no answer, even as it is written, "because I have called, and ye refused, I will mock. when your fear cometh." The Lord was now building against him, and setting him in dark places — He was hedging him about, and making his chain heavy, and when he now cried, He shut out his prayer. It was indeed a day of darkness and trouble to Israel, as it will be by and by. There was now a forsaking of the living for the dead, and a seeking unto wizards that peep and that mutter, as there will be in the vexation of the latter day. The day of Israel's final iniquity is now anticipated — it is "trouble and darkness and dimness of anguish," as it will be then. (Isa. 8: 20-22.)

At different seasons of the ripening of man's iniquity, there has been a confederacy of kings and their counsellors against the Lord and His Anointed. Thus Pharaoh took council with the magicians to withstand Moses. Balak sent for Balaam to curse Israel. The Jews with Caiaphas their counsellor rage against the Lord, and imagine evil. And so in the latter day, the confederacy of the beast and the false prophet will form itself against the power, and in despite of the glory and worship of God. And thus at the close of the iniquity, whether it be in Egypt, in Midian, in Israel or in Christendom, man puts forth his full strength, forming confederacies between the wise ones and the great ones of the earth "The carpenter encourages the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smites the anvil;" but all that is only made to show forth the greater glory of Him who sits above all water-floods. His patience has then been despised, His waiting to be gracious has then been neglected, and "the grounded staff," the decreed vengeance, has only to take its course.

And now, in our history, we get another instance of the same desperate effort of man of the consummation of his sin. Saul with the witch of Endor is another apostate king in consultation with his evil counsellor for the filling up the measure of his iniquity. (1 Chr. 10.) The cup was now about to be full, and judgment at the doors ready to enter.

Saul, I may here observe, had never set up an idol in the land, though that had been so much the way of Israel both before and after him. He had rather been moved with the desire of setting up himself, thus more clearly marking his brotherhood, as I have before observed, with that wilful one of the last days, who is not to regard any God but to magnify himself above all. And with this desire he had already cleared the land of wizards and witches.

But even this light was darkness in him, for it was himself and not the God of Israel that he would fain bring in instead of the idol. But now that he is losing himself, and the world, as he fears, is departing from him, he will readily enough strike hands with any helper, and form confederacy with even the witch of Endor. The way which the Lord now takes in hand to deal with this confederacy, is very striking, By his prophet Ezekiel he has said, "Every one that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him according to the multitude of his idols." (Ezek. 14: 1-8.) Now this, I judge, was just the sway of the Lord in this case. Saul was a corrupt man, in whose heart, and before whose face, the world, as his idol and stumbling block, was set; and because of this the Lord now answers him Himself. He takes the business out of the hand of the witch altogether, gives Samuel for a moment according to Saul's desire, but it is only in judgment, only "according to the multitudes of his idols," only to tell him of the vengeance that was now at the very doors prepared for him, his house, and his people. The witch is set aside, just indeed as Balaam had been. Balak, like Saul, had consulted the prophet; but the prophet, like the witch, had been overruled and disappointed. He could not go beyond the word of the Lord, but simply speaks as the Lord constrained him; as here the witch is confounded, and cries out in fear, not knowing what she saw, for the Lord had taken the business into His own hand according to the word of the prophet. And thus this appearance and word of Samuel was another hand-writing upon the wall, marking judgment against another profane king with the finger of God Himself.\*

\*See another instance of this in the case of Jeroboam and Abijah, (1 Kings 14.)

The Lord thus in Saul illustrates His own principle of acting as revealed by Ezekiel. It was too late now for any thing but an answer in judgment. Like Esau, Saul might have had God for his portion. The birthright was his, but he sold it. For the honour that cometh from man, he sold it, as Esau did for a mess of pottage. And now there is no place of repentance for him. He beseeches Samuel, but the door was shut, and the master of the house had risen up.

And Saul was no more renewed by all this than God was led to repentance by it. The prophet going from the dead will not persuade, where the living prophet has been refused. Esau might weep at the loss of the blessing, but he still hated his brother. So here Saul for a while is amazed and troubled, lying on the earth and refusing to be comforted; but the trouble and amazement pass by, and he takes of the woman's hand and is refreshed by her dainties. Thus all this is only another stage in his downward path, rather progress than interruption in his dark and evil way. As in Israel His people afterwards, the raising of Lazarus did but strengthen the enmity against the Lord, and carried them onward only the more rapidly to finish their sin at Calvary. (John 11: 47.)

And now we have only to follow our infatuated king to the place of judgment, the "day of visitation." He had rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord had rejected him. His sin had gone before unto judgment — no inquiry after it need now be made. Every passage of his evil reign had declared it, and now he has only to meet the judgment. Accordingly in the strength of that food which he had received at the hand of his evil counsellor, he goes out against the uncircumcised, but it is only to fall before them. (1 Sam. 31.) But not the death of all men does he die. He dies as a fool dies, slain by his own sword; his sons fall with him, and his army is routed by the enemies of the Lord. "Saul died,

and his three sons, and his armour-bearer, and all his men that same day together." For it was the Lord, and not the Philistines, that had a controversy with him. The day was the Lord's, and in the day of the Lord the apostate king and his host fall. "They lie uncircumcised with them that go down to the pit"; and he comes to his end, as another shall do, and there is none to help him. (Dan. 11: 45.)

Thus all ends in the fearful day of Mount Gilboa. Our king has presented us with a fearful pattern of the apostate and his end. He was one indeed who left his first estate. Chosen, anointed, gifted for office, he stood at first in the full title and exercise of the throne; but by transgression he fell, and his office another is to take. Lost, infatuated, child of this world! Here was death the wages of sin again, here was the end of man's and of Israel's way, ruin and confusion and the full power of the enemy, the harvest of whirlwind from the wind which they had sown, the end of that storm of rain and thunder which they had been called to listen to at the beginning of their sin. (1 Sam. 12.)

Our Lord has said, "For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." So is it in these scenes. (1 Sam. 29 - 31.) Here "the lame take the prey," and the stout ones "bow down under the prisoners." The poor outcast David with his little goodly band does mighty deeds which are still to be had in remembrance; but Saul, with the strength of his camp and the glory of his court perishes, the sport and reproach of the uncircumcised. The spoils of Amalek go among David's friend, while Saul's armour hangs in the house of Ashtaroth and his head in the temple of Dagon. "This is David's spoil," was said over Amalek; while the Philistines had to publish every where among their people, that "Saul was dead."

Thus are the bows of the mighty broken, while they that stumbled are girded with strength. Because for judgment has the Lord come into the world that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.

Well, beloved brethren, surely we have reason to remember Saul, as we are charged by our blessed Master to remember Lot's wife. In him we see the man of the earth perishing in his own corruptions; and in his history we read the end of one whose inward thought was that his house should have continued for ever, but whose way proved his folly. "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness."

Can you and I sit down on the ruin of all that which Saul lived for, and still find that we have lost nothing? Can we look at the world failing us, and yet know that our real inheritance is untouched? Has "the God of glory" as yet led us out from the world? Have we as yet cast our anchor within the veil? Is our "good thing" with Jesus? O brethren, is there not a cause to sound the warning of the history of Saul in our ears? does it not show us, that "the friendship of the world is enmity against God?" He sought its honour, and what it had to give; and that he might make sure of that, he gave up God. And are not we pressed and tempted by the same world that ruined him? Oh that our blessed, blessed, Lord may, by His grace set our hearts upon Himself, and our eye upon His glory, so that we may stand on the wreck of all that can be wrecked, and still find that our portion is like the everlasting hills! Amen, Lord Jesus!