

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of The Chronicles: God's Preservation Of His Davidic And Levitical Covenants

III. Saul's Fall Before David's Rise: A Lesson In Biblical Suicide Prevention

(1 Chronicles 9:35-10:14)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Suicide has become a worldwide epidemic in today's spiritually needy era:

(1) "(T)he World Health Organization" claims "suicide is . . . the third highest cause of death in the . . . world," that "(g)lobally, suicide rates have soared by 60 percent over the past 45 years." (Michael Snyder, "Suicide Epidemic: Why Does The Number Of People Killing Themselves Just Keep Going Up?" February 10, 2016; infowars.com)

(2) "(T)ragedically," the problem affects especially young adults: "(t)he highest prevalence of major depressive disorder is among people 18-25" and "(t)he suicide rate for people 18-19 increased 56% between 2008 and 2017." (Michael Gerson, "Depression's downward spiral can be deadly," Republican-American, September 11, 2019, p. 13A)

(3) The cause? Referring to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report, Nicole Fisher of Forbes noted, "'(M)any suicides happen impulsively in moments of crisis with a breakdown in the ability to deal with life stresses.'" (Nicole Fisher, "Suicide Isn't A U. S. Problem: It's A Global Health Epidemic," June 15, 2018; forbes.com)

Evangelical leader Justin Peters confirms that stress is hitting many people worldwide: in his promotion for Brannon Howse's book, The Coming Religious Reich, 2015, p. iii, he wrote, "That there is much uncertainty in the world and an almost palpable sense of foreboding is beyond dispute . . . International tensions seem to be on a hair trigger . . . and the social and spiritual fabric is being rent."

Need: So, we ask, "What is God's solution to the threat of suicide that affects so many people in our era?!"

I. After giving Saul's genealogy in 1 Chronicles 9:35-44, Ezra essentially repeated the 1 Samuel 31:1-6 record of Saul's tragic suicide, 1 Chronicles 10:1-6 (as follows):

- A. Saul was fighting his last battle against the Philistines and the Philistines were defeating Israel's army, killing Saul's sons and wounding him with arrows shot from the Philistine archers, 1 Chronicles 10:1-3.
- B. To avoid being captured and abused by his foes, Saul fell on his sword, killing himself, 1 Chronicles 10:4-5.

II. Ezra added the news that the Philistines then hung up Saul's head in the temple of their pagan god Dagon (1 Chronicles 10:10) akin to how God in 1 Samuel 5:1-5 had decapitated Dagon's head from his image there to punish the Philistines for trying to debase the Lord by setting His ark in Dagon's temple.

III. God thus punished Saul by letting his tragic suicide occur, what 1 Chronicles 10:13-14 states, clarifying that Saul died for disobeying God's Word and for consulting a medium instead of the Lord. We explain:

- A. Saul had **repeatedly disobeyed** the Word of God regarding various issues in his reign as king:
 1. Though the prophet Samuel in 1 Samuel 10:8 had told Saul to wait for him to arrive to perform a sacrifice, Saul had disobeyed Samuel's command by unbiblically offering the sacrifice himself, 1 Samuel 13:8-14.
 2. Though Samuel in 1 Samuel 15:1-3 had told Saul to destroy the Amalekites and all their possessions in holy war for their abuses of Israel back in Israel's Exodus from Egypt under Moses, Saul saved the Amalekite king and the best of the livestock alive in violation of Samuel's command, 1 Samuel 15:13-23.
 3. Though Leviticus 19:31 and 20:6 forbade one's seeking spiritual counsel from a medium who trafficked in demons as a capital offense, Saul sought the counsel of a medium, 1 Samuel 28:3-35.
- B. God's Holy Spirit in judgment thus left Saul, and God sent a demon to trouble him, leading to his demise:
 1. Following several of Saul's acts of disobedience to God's Word, the Lord rejected him from being king, so God sent His prophet Samuel to anoint David to be Israel's next king, 1 Samuel 16:1, 13a.
 2. Significantly, the Holy Spirit came upon David beginning the day of his anointing while in contrast, the Holy Spirit left Saul and was replaced by God's sending a demon to afflict him, 1 Samuel 16:13b-14.
 3. This change in the spiritual realm led to Saul's catastrophic end in great contrast to his start as Israel's king:
 - a. Early in Saul's reign, the Ammonites had threatened Israel's city of Jabesh-Gilead, and God's Spirit had come upon Saul to equip him to lead Israel to a great victory over the Ammonites, 1 Samuel 11:1-15.
 - b. However, Saul's loss of God's Spirit and his affliction by a demon left him ill-equipped to offer wise, courageous leadership, resulting in Saul's becoming insecure and expressing fits of rage, 1 Sam. 18:6-11.
 - c. Saul finally sought counsel of a medium who trafficked in demons versus seeking God's advice, but God invaded the medium's séance by bringing Samuel back from the dead, (1 Sam. 28:3-12), and when Samuel told Saul he would die the next day for disobeying God's Word, Saul fell down terrified, 1 Sam. 28:13-20.

- d. The next day's traumatic battle with the Philistines thus left an already unstable Saul prone to complete mental collapse. When he was then injured by Philistine arrows, he committed suicide, 1 Samuel 31:1-6.
- C. Ironically, the men of Jabesh-Gilead bravely retrieved the bodies of Saul and his sons from Philistine-held territory to give them an honorable burial (1 Chronicles 10:11-12). The men of Jabaesh-Gilead recalled what Saul had done for them in delivering them from the Ammonites when he was filled with the Holy Spirit. The author of Chronicles thus implied that Saul could have been as courageous as the men of Jabesh-Gilead so as to gain victory over the Philistines had he all along been heeding God's Word and relying on the Holy Spirit!

Lesson: *By disobeying God's Word, resulting in the departure of the Holy Spirit and God's judgment of sending Saul a demon to afflict his inner man, Saul's initially promising career as Israel's king ended in tragic suicide!*

Application: (1) *May we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16.* (2) *The Holy Spirit could come and go on Old Testament believers (Psalm 51:11) where He permanently indwells believers today (John 14:15-17; Ephesians 1:13-14).* However, today's believer can sin, not relying on the Holy Spirit, what leaves him in a state of spiritual frailty, Galatians 5:1, 15. Believers must then rely on the Holy Spirit and heed Scripture for the health of the inner man. (3) *If we sin as believers, may we confess it to God for forgiveness and restoration to a state of power by God's Spirit, 1 John 1:9.* (4) *May we then rely on the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16) to obey Scripture for blessing.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

On Monday, I received an e-mail message from a young adult university student who has attended our Church and who trusted in Christ a year ago. The e-mail is a testimony on how relying on God's Spirit and heeding Scripture keeps one settled amid significant stress even if he belongs to an age group that is at high risk for depressive disorder!

I cite here portions of his e-mail, but omit place names and the names of people involved to protect their privacy since these sermon notes will be posted on our Church web site. Here is his e-mail message (as follows):

"Hi Pastor Shell . . . (A)t the church I'm going to here . . . the pastor is bringing in a 'revivalist' who teaches that in order to be saved you must speak in tongues. He also implicitly denies the Trinity and reduces Scripture to a 'love letter' from God . . . (H)e speaks of getting 'intimate' with Him. Of course, we know that Scripture is more than a love letter. ([2] Timothy 3:16; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 4:6) . . . (W)e know that salvation is not of works lest any man should boast. What scares me about this 'revival' is that the pastor sent multiple invitations to all the other churches in the area, took out ads . . . and is urging the congregation to get as many people to come as possible.

" . . . I live off campus with an older, conservative, non-charismatic . . . Christian couple . . . [The lady of this couple recently] went to a prayer meeting at the church, and felt uncomfortable when the congregation started babbling incoherently, putting their hands on her for 'healing,' and formed a circle around her preventing her from leaving. She recalls one of the lady's eyes actually turning black during this eerie experience.

"I just wanted to let you know that your sermons posted online have been very helpful to [this couple and me] in [our] deciding to find another more biblical church in the area. Thank you for teaching the importance of 'sola scriptura' and making all of your messages available online. In this region of [a certain state], folklore is intertwined with mainline Protestantism in a syncretistic perversion of Christianity. Your sermons remind me [of] the importance of testing extrabiblical beliefs with the authoritative word of God. In Christ," and he finished by writing his name.

[We offer clarifications of this young adult's e-mail message in ***support*** of its statements: (a) Ephesians 2:8-9 claims salvation is by faith, not by works like speaking in tongues; (b) on the Trinity, Matthew 3:16-17 shows God is Three distinct Persons and John 10:29-30 with Matthew 28:19-20 teach God is One in Essence; (c) 2 Timothy 3:16 and Acts 17:11 teach Scripture is God's inspired Word and our final authority on faith and practice, and 1 Corinthians 4:6 explains we are not to go beyond what written Scripture teaches (unlike Charismatics), but stay within its guidelines for faith and practice; (d) Acts 2:1-11 with 1 Corinthians 14:1-25 reveal that today's "tongues-speaking" babbling practice is not of God; (e) Charismatic "healing" practices are not of God either, for they do not produce perfect healing as in Acts 5:12-16 or resurrection from the dead as in Acts 9:36-42 and Acts 20:9-11; (f) 2 Timothy 3:17 teaches "Sola Scriptura," Scripture as our ***only*** final authority on faith and practice and (g) Deuteronomy 13:1-5 puts written Scripture above even miraculous experience for defining God's truth.]

This student has yet to learn that Matthew 13:36-39 predicted Satan would plant unbelievers among believers so that even the best of churches can become spiritually dangerous mine fields! Yet, this student knows he must obey Scripture as his final authority, so he should do well. Regardless, his e-mail is evidence that heeding Scripture and relying on the Holy Spirit equips one who is in a high risk age group for depressive disorder to overcome it.

May we trust in Christ as Savior and then rely on the Holy Spirit by faith to obey the Word of God.