



DAILY
B I B L E G U I D E

The Book of I Samuel

Days 88-97 of a Yearly Bible Reading Program

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Daily Bible Reading Plan

Day	Passage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Day 88	I Samuel 1-3	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 89	I Samuel 4-7	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 90	I Samuel 8-11	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 91	I Samuel 12-14	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 92	I Samuel 15-16	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 93	I Samuel 17-18	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 94	I Samuel 19-21	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 95	I Samuel 22-24	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 96	I Samuel 25-27	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 97	I Samuel 28-31	<input type="checkbox"/>

Welcome to the Book of I Samuel!

The Book of I (first) Samuel begins a series of six books that tell of the rise and fall of the kings of Israel. I and II Samuel and I and II Kings are one continuous narrative. I and II Chronicles are a parallel account. There is an united kingdom for 120 years before that nation splits into two rival kingdoms.

A few quick facts about I Samuel:

- Possibly written by a combination of prophets, including Samuel, Nathan, and Gad.
- It covers a period of the birth of Samuel in 1160 B.C. to the death of Saul in 1056 B.C.
- The first chapters take place in the time of the Judges. It seems like there is a tremendous gap between these areas, but Samson was only 18 years older than Saul.
- A quick outline:
 - Rise of Samuel – Chapters 1-7
 - Rise of Saul – Chapters 8-15
 - Rise of David – Chapters 16-31
- Key events:
 - Loss and Return of the Ark – Chapters 4-5
 - Saul anointed as first king – Chapter 10
 - David and Goliath – Chapter 17

Chapter 1 Notes

In this chapter we see the birth of Samuel in answer to Hannah's prayer.

vs. 1-8 – Elkanah (“acquired of God”) is a Levite that dwelt in Ephraim. He is a bigamist, sadly common for the time, have both Hannah (“grace”) and Peninnah (“pearl”) as wives. Hannah had no children though she was the favored wife, just like Jacob and Rachel.

vs. 9-18 – Eli (“Jehovah is high”) is the high priest at this time and also a Judge (see 4:18). It is interesting that he is the high priest because he is not of the proper line, being a descendant of Ithamar and not Phineas. He sees Hannah praying a vow to God that if he provided her a son, she would give him back to God. After initial misunderstandings, Eli blesses her and her petition.

vs. 19-20 – Samuel (“heard of God”) is born in answer to his mother's prayer.

vs. 21-28 – Hannah raises Samuel until he is past infancy and then he is presented to the Lord.

Chapter 2 Notes

In this chapter we see the contrasts between Eli's sons and Samuel.

vs. 1-11 – Hannah prayer is really poetry. It is a song she composed for this moment as she raised her beloved son. Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55 reflects this. In vs. 10 there is a great Messianic prophecy. In fact, the word anointed there is the first appearance of the Hebrew word messiah.

vs. 12-17 – Eli's sons Hophni ("pugilist") and Phineas ("brazen-mouthed") are idolators who abuse their position for gain. They took far more than the portions allowed for the priests. The sacrifice in vs. 13-14 appears to be a Peace Offering. Of this offering, only portions of the sacrifice are burned on the Altar (Leviticus 3:4-5,9-10,14-15) and the rest is eaten by the offerer and the priests (Leviticus 7:15-20,29-34). The priest's portion was to be the right shoulder and breast were the priests' portion (Leviticus 7:29-34). The people would then take their portion to eat it. It appears they often would boil it (as a stew perhaps) in large cauldrons. The priest's servant would then come with his tool and take the meat from the people's portion for the corrupt priests. Thus, they were stealing what rightfully belonged to the people. They go further in the sacrifice in vs. 15-16. The portion that was the Lord's (fat, kidneys, etc.) was to be removed first and offered before the portions for the priests and the people were taken. Thus, they were almost certainly taking from the portions for the people and also, far worse, for the Lord. If someone protested the breach of the Mosaic Law, they were bullied into compliance.

vs. 18-21 – Hannah and Elkanah continue to care for Samuel by bringing him clothes. They are also blessed with more children.

vs. 22-26 – The contrast between faithful Samuel and the reprobate Hophni and Phineas are clear. Eli has created the problem with his sons and does nothing to stop it.

vs. 27-36 – An unnamed prophet rebukes Eli and declares the end of his family line. There is a double fulfillment to the prophecy in vs. 35 of a coming faithful priest. Historically this happens when Zadok becomes sole high priest under Solomon, but it ultimately looks ahead to Christ.

Chapter 3 Notes

In this chapter we see the rise of Samuel as prophet and leader in Israel.

vs. 1-9 – The chapter opens with another indictment against the age of the Judges that the word of God as in prophecy was rare. God calls to Samuel early in the morning, but Samuel believes it is Eli.

vs. 10-18 – Eli instructs Samuel to answer the call if it occurred again. God reveals to him the judgment that was soon going to come to the house of Eli. Note in vs. 10 that the Lord “came and stood”, which makes me think this is an actual appearance of God and not just a vision.

vs. 19-21 – God blesses Samuel and even as a young man he is established as the spiritual leader of Israel.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 88

Samuel is the one that will help bring the nation of Israel out of the dark ages of the Judges in many ways, especially in helping reviving them spiritually. Where does that change begin? With a mother's prayer. Never understand the power of prayer and the God who answers it far beyond our expectations.

Hymn for Day 88

Our hymn today is a setting of Hannah's song in 2:1-10 from the 1742 hymnal, "The Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs of the Old and New Testament".

*1 My heart doth in Jehovah joy,
My horn in Jah is lift on high,
My mouth enlarg'd is o'er my foe,
For in thy health rejoyce do I.*

*2 Like to the Lord, there's holy none,
For there is none besides but thee :
And other rock there is not one,
That to our God compar'd may be,*

*3 Speak ye out no presumptuous word,
No harshnefs from your mouth proceed,
For God of knowledge is the Lord,
Also by him are actions weigh'd.*

*4 The strong man's bows are shivered,
And they that slipt are girt with power.*

*5 The full have hir'd themselves for bread,
And hungry ceas'd from wanting more,*

*She that was barren seven bear
The fruitful woman weak is grown.*

*6 The Lord doth kill, and lile doth spare.
He lifts up, and to grave brings down.*

*7 The Lord both poor and rich doth make;
He raiseth up, and bringeth low.*

*8 The poor he up from dust doth take,
He beggar lifts the dunghill fro.*

*To give him place with princely lords.
To fix Him on a glorious throne;
For earth's foundations are the Lord's,
And he hath set the world thereon.
9 His holy ones their feet he will
Preserve so that they shall not fail;
The vile in darkness shall be still,
For no man shall by strength prevail.*

*10 The adversaries of the Lord
Shall broken be to pieces small
And he from heaven shall accord
To thunder forth upon them all.
The borders of the earth the Lord
Shall justly judge, and he likewise
Unto his king shall strength afford,
And make his oynted's horn to rise.*

Chapter 4 Notes

In this chapter Israel is defeated in battle and loses the Ark of the Covenant.

vs. 1-11 – All of Israel know about the prophecy concerning Eli's downfall from chapter 3 and this chapter covers it. The Philistines invade and Israel is defeated at Aphek ("strength"), losing 4,000 men. In desperation, the army calls for the Ark of the Covenant to be brought from Shiloh to carry it into battle. This is not without precedent, as in Numbers 31:6, but here it is completely out of self-will and not from God's command. They are attempting to use the Ark like a talisman or lucky rabbits' foot to get an edge over their enemies. The Philistines attack as the people cheer the arrival of the Ark and 30,000 men die. Both of Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, fall in battle. The Ark is captured by the Philistines.

vs. 12-18 – Eli is now 98 years old and in failing health. He does not care for the loss of his sons, but hearing the Ark is lost causes him to fall from his chair and die.

vs. 19-22 – These verses are an epilogue to the story to show how widespread the panic was in the land. Phinehas's wife goes into premature labor when she hears about the results of the battle. She dies in childbirth, but the child is named Ichabod ("no glory"). I need to add two points to this story. First, it very much appears that the Tabernacle itself was attacked at Shiloh with this Philistine advance, though it is not recorded in Scripture. Second, that Psalm 78:56-64 sheds light on why God allowed this to happen.

Chapter 5 Notes

In this chapter the Ark is in Philistines hands and they face God's judgment.

vs. 1-5 – The Ark remains as a trophy of war among the Philistines for seven months (see 6:1). At first, it was placed in the temple of Dagon, who in pagan mythology was the father of Baal and is often depicted as half-man half-fish. The next morning the statue of Dagon was found fallen on its face before the Ark. The second morning it was found broken in such a way that left no question that God was greater than their idol.

vs. 6-12 – Wherever the Ark was placed, that Philistine city saw God's judgment. People developed tumors, which a very possibly hemorrhoids. No one wanted to the Ark and the Philistines cried out for relief.

Chapter 6 Notes

In this chapter the Philistines return the Ark to Israel.

vs. 1-9 – The remedy the Philistines propose here is not something ordained by God. It is a heathen way to deal with the problem. They are careful to make offerings to appease the angry God. Five golden images are made of tumors/hemorrhoids and mice (hitherto unmentioned, but their inclusion makes some think they were facing the bubonic plague). The Ark is to be placed on a new cart pulled by two milk cows. It is unnatural for milk cows to readily leave their calves.

vs. 10-21 – The cows pull the cart to the nearest city of Levites at Bethshemesh (“house of the sun”). It is early summer during the wheat harvest when they see the cart approaching. They use the cart for wood and offer the cows as a sacrifice to God. The Levites sin against God in opening the Ark, and God judges their town. There is some debate on how to read vs. 19 because it would be highly unlikely for there to be 50,070 people at Bethshemesh. The Hebrew text actually separates this into two numbers, 50,000 and 70. The 50,000 is certainly the total killed in Philistia in the plague and the 70 the total killed at Bethshemesh. The people of Bethshemesh call to the people of Kirjathjearim (“city of woods”) to take the Ark from them.

Chapter 7 Notes

In this chapter Samuel leads in a great revival and God brings victory against the Philistines.

vs. 1-2 – The Ark remains at Kirjathjearim for about 75 years under the care of Eleazar and his family. The “twenty years” of vs. 2 is the space of time between vs. 2 and 3.

vs. 3-4 – TAKE CAREFUL NOTE OF WHAT FOLLOWS IN THIS CHAPTER. Samuel leads the people in a great revival. Israel forsakes the idols of Baal and Ashtaroth for the True God.

vs. 5-6 – The people gather at Mizpeh (“watchtower”), a place a few miles south of Bethel and north of Jerusalem. There the people perform a ceremony of pouring out water, which symbolized their humiliation before the Lord (see II Samuel 14:14).

vs. 7-14 – The Philistines hear that Israel has gathered and assume it is for an attack. They gather their army and advance to Mizpeh. Samuel offers sacrifice and prayers. God frightens the Philistines with thunder (remember that Baal was supposedly the god of the storm). Israel routs the Philistines. Samuel erects a monument stone named Ebenezer (“stone of help”) to be a reminder of God’s aid that day.

vs. 15-17 – A description of Samuel’s judgeship. He traveled a circuit in central Canaan for easy access for all the tribes.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 89

The events at Mizpeh are the turning point that brings Israel out of the era of the Judges. Tomorrow we will see the request for a king, but for now we see the nation united in worship and warfare. It all begins with a revival. So is the great need of our day in our nation, but sadly we want the results without the actual cost of revival.

Hymn for Day 89

Our hymn today is “Come Thou Fount Of Every Blessing”, written by Robert Robinson in 1758. This class hymn famously refers to the stone monument erected by Samuel in Chapter 7. Sadly, this reference is sometimes removed because some fear the meaning is lost on those who do not understand the reference, robbing Christianity of a powerful metaphor.

*Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above;
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
Mount of Thy redeeming love.*

*Here I'll raise my Ebenezer;
Hither by Thy help I'm come;
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wand'ring from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.*

*Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my feeble heart to Thee.
"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,"
Long I cried to be made pure;
"Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Work in me Thy double cure."*

*Hallelujah! I have found it,
The full cleansing I had craved,
And to all the world I'll sound it:
They too may be wholly saved.
I am sealed by Thy sweet Spirit,
Prone no longer now to roam;
And Thy voice, I'll humbly hear it,
For Thy presence is my home.*

Chapter 8 Notes

In this chapter the nation of Israel rejects God's direct rule over them and requests a king to be over them.

vs. 1-3 – Part of the reason the people desire a king is because Samuel's sons went bad just like Eli's. This is the only mark against Samuel, and possibly one he was set up for by being trained by Eli.

vs. 4-9 – The people desire a king and God tell Samuel that He will allow it. Again, the desire for a king was prophesied in Deuteronomy 17 and provisions made for it. Samuel wisely discerns that it is an act of rebellion against God, but it is one that God will work through for His Own glory.

vs. 10-18 – Samuel lays out what a monarchy will look like for the people. It is not a positive one. In fact, I believe it is one of the greatest speeches against rule by monarchy. The people will lose their freedom, their children to royal service, and their wealth will be taxed. The people simply do not understand the dark side of having a king.

vs. 19-22 – The people refuse to listen to Samuel's warning and continue to clamor for a king. Note that again Samuel takes the issue to God. He is deeply a man of prayer. God says He will set up a king, but the people should go home for now. See Hosea 13:9-11 for insight into why God allowed it.

Chapter 9 Notes

In this chapter we meet Saul, the man who will be anointed first king over Israel.

vs. 1-10 – Saul (“desired”) was of the small tribe of Benjamin. He is about 40 years old. He is described as strong, handsome, and tall. The average height around this time would be less than 5 ½ feet tall, so I think Saul is around 6 ½ feet tall. We meet him as he is seeking lost donkeys that belonged to his father Kish (“a bow”). Saul’s servant convinces him to check with the prophet Samuel since he is nearby. It is telling of his spiritual nature that this is a last option for Saul and that he does not know Samuel at all. They have a gift of ¼ shekel of silver, roughly 1/10 of an ounce and about \$7 in value today.

vs. 11-24 – Saul arrives when a feast day is being observed. It is curious why it would be held here and not at the Tabernacle, unless we remember that the Philistines likely damaged or destroyed it earlier. God reveals Saul to Samuel and marks him as the king to be. Samuel tells him that his donkeys have already been found and that they should stay for the feast. Saul is marked before the gathered worshippers by being served the largest portion of meat.

vs. 25-27 – Samuel spends the night speaking with Saul, no doubt laying out what was about to happen. Saul goes to leave early the next morning, and Samuel stops him for private word.

Chapter 10 Notes

In this chapter Saul is proclaimed king over Israel.

vs. 1-16 – Samuel privately anoints Saul as the king of Israel. We note in the various details to this point and even following that Saul seems to have some reluctance to take the role. He reminds us of Gideon who needed convincing that God really did choose him for great work. Here Samuel lays out three detailed encounters that Saul will experience on his way home. First, a messenger will meet him and say that the missing donkeys have been found. Second, three young men will meet him and give him two loaves of bread. Third, he will meet some prophets and join with them in prophesying. Note vs. 6 where the Spirit of the Lord will empower him for the work ahead. Everything happens just as Samuel said. But when Saul arrives home, he does not tell anyone about his anointing.

vs. 17-27 – The people gather at Mizpeh where they had experienced revival and won the great victory in Chapter 7. The leaders of the tribes are presented before the prophet, and Samuel chooses Benjamin and then narrows down to Kish and his family. But Saul is nowhere to be found. God reveals his location, being hidden among the luggage of the gathered people. Why did he hide? It did not seem to bother the people. My best explanation is that he is again reluctant to take up the role of king. In vs. 25 Samuel writes the charter for the kingdom (oh how I wish that document had been preserved!) Some accept God's choice and follow Saul, while some wicked men show no confidence in the choice.

Chapter 11 Notes

In this chapter Saul cements his places as king with his victory over the Ammonites at Jabeshgilead.

vs. 1-11 – Nahash (“serpent”) of Ammon besieges Jabeshgilead east of Jordan. The people offer to submit, but Nahash demands that their right eyes be put out. This would be both a perpetual shame to them and also limit their ability to fight back. The Spirit of God enlivens Saul to meet the need, much like He did in the days of the Judges. He sends out a threatening message to the tribes that if they did not come to battle, he would hack them up like the bits of oxen he sent with the messengers. Crude, but effective. 330,000 men gather ready for battle. The people of Jabeshgilead tell the Ammonites that they will surrender the following day, and so the enemy lets their guard down and celebrates through the night. Saul leads a three-pronged attack that sweeps the enemy from the field in a resounding victory.

vs. 12-15 – The doubters are silenced regarding Saul. The people willingly gather at Gilgal and again proclaim Saul as their king. It is all downhill from this initial victory.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 90

Saul is one of the most fascinating figures in the Bible. He was chosen by God to be the first king, yet his family did not become the royal line. He is inconsistent in his effectiveness, often falling prey to melancholy and jealousy. I do think Saul was a saved man, though many argue against it. I believe he is an example of a believer that works in their own power and not relying on God's grace. Take heed to learn the many lessons from the royal failure of this man's career.

Hymn for Day 90

Our hymn today is "Come, Thou Almighty King," written in 1757 by Charles Wesley. While we may have read about the arrival of Israel's first earthly king, let us not forget that God is the true King of King and Lord of Lords.

*Come, Thou Almighty King,
help us Thy name to sing;
help us to praise:
Father, all glorious,
o'er all victorious,
come, and reign over us,
Ancient of Days.*

*Come, Thou Incarnate Word,
gird on Thy mighty sword,
our pray'r attend:
come, and Thy people bless,
and give Thy Word success:
Spirit of holiness,
on us descend.*

*Come, Holy Comforter,
Thy sacred witness bear
in this glad hour:
Thou who almighty art,
now rule in every heart,
and ne'er from us depart,
Spirit of pow'r.*

*To Thee, great One in Three,
eternal praises be
hence, evermore.
His sov'reign majesty
may we in glory see,
and to eternity
love and adore!*

Chapter 12 Notes

In this chapter Samuel gives a farewell address to the nation as he fades into the background. Saul is now the national leader, for better or worse.

vs. 1-5 – Samuel begins his address by appealing to his testimony among the people. He is blameless. The people absolve him from being the reason they demanded a king.

vs. 6-12 – Samuel gives a history review of Israel’s dealings with God. He reminds them of their failures and God’s faithfulness. In vs. 11 he calls Gideon by his other name, Jerubbaal, and mentions another judge named Bedan (“servile”?). We are not sure who this second judge is. Some speculate it is another name for Barak or Abdon. We may not know who it is, but doubtless the gathered people knew exactly who it was.

vs. 13-15 – Samuel reminds the people that they chose to have a king instead of trusting in God. The same promises apply as before: if Israel serves God, they will enjoy his blessings; but if not, they will face His judgment.

vs. 16-19 – To emphasize his point, Samuel calls on God to send a thunderstorm. The wheat harvest took place in early summer, so this would be a rare occurrence for such a storm to come. But God sent it in answer to Samuel’s prayer. It has the intended effect on the people.

vs. 20-25 – Israel is again challenged to serve the Lord fully. I find vs. 22 especially moving as it says God will not forsake His chosen people. Yes, they may face His purging judgement; but they are still His people, and He will not utterly forsake them.

Chapter 13 Notes

In this chapter Saul leadership fails in battle against the Philistines.

vs. 1-7 – Saul is in the second year of his reign. He has a standing army of 2,000 under his command and 1,000 under his son Jonathan (“the gift of Jehovah”). The Philistines at this time would invade into Israel’s territory and establish strongholds on top of fortified hills to control the area. Saul fails to take the initiative, but Jonathan seizes the opportunity and captures one of these Philistine strongholds. Saul knows the fury of the Philistines was coming so he sounds the trumpets to assemble the full army of Israel. The Israelites see the gathered Philistines and lose hope. They flee to hide in caves or even seek refuge east of Jordan. Saul and his army camp at Gilgal.

vs. 8-14 – in 10:8 Samuel told Saul that he would go to Gilgal and await Samuel to arrive in seven days and offer sacrifices. Saul knows this plan, but his impatience causes him to act before the seven days were up. Saul usurps the role of priest and offers the sacrifices himself. Samuel appears on the seventh day as he had said. Saul makes excuses but the damage is done. In only the second year of his reign, Samuel pronounces that Saul’s kingdom would not last.

vs. 15-23 – The remaining troops that witnessed the exchange between Saul and Samuel mostly melt away. Only 600 remain. The Philistines are so confident that they have won that they send raiding parties to spoil the abandoned territory. We note in vs. 19 that the Philistines enforced a monopoly on blacksmiths, so that there were no metalworkers in Israel. Furthermore, there were not standard weapons. The people at this time are literally fighting with farming tools, except for the two swords that Saul and Jonathan held.

Chapter 14 Notes

In this chapter Jonathan ignites a great victory that Saul's ineptitude squanders.

vs. 1-23 – Saul is safe at home while Jonathan makes a bold move on his own, attacking a Philistine garrison with only himself and his armorbearer. The Philistines make light of the boldness of the two men and allow them to climb to the top of the hill. Once there, Jonathan knocks the enemies down and the armorbearer finishes them off. 20 men fall in this post. God sends an earthquake at this time. The combination of the bold victory of Joshua and the earthquake causes the Philistines to panic. Meanwhile, Saul sits at home surveying the situation. He first seeks the person to blame for whatever has happened and finds Jonathan and his armorbearer are the ones missing. He then calls to the priests to bring the Ark of the Covenant, surely placing trust in it as a talisman for victory. Saul cancels that command and finally joins the fight. It is a complete rout of the Philistines. The Israelites that had gone into hidden find courage and the forces of Israel swell.

vs. 24-30 – Saul makes a very foolish and rash order that no man should stop and refresh themselves with food until nightfall lest they lose the momentum in the battle. The people grow weary because of this. Jonathan did not know about this command and eats some honey, upon which he is informed of Saul's order. He recognizes the terrible error in the order.

vs. 31-34 – The rout continues and the Israelites come upon some livestock. They fall on these like beasts and eat them without removing the blood (Leviticus 3:17 etc.) or cooking them. Saul is informed of this, but instead of recognizing his fault in the matter he blames the people. He sets up a butchering station and the people are fed, properly following the dietary laws.

vs. 35-46 – Note that Saul, some 40 years old and having reigned at least two years finally builds his first altar. Saul wants to continue the fight into the night, but the priests advise asking God. This is undoubtedly using the Urim and Thummim. He is not supposed to carry on the attack and God is silent on what his next move should be. Saul blames the people for sinning and proclaims a death sentence upon whoever was guilty. Lots are cast to determine the blame, whether it was the assembled army or Saul and Jonathan. Saul must be shocked to see it was him and Jonathan indicated in the lot. A second is cast and Jonathan is marked. Jonathan, the hero of the day, confesses to unknowingly breaking the foolish command not to eat. Saul is ready to kill his son, but the people intervene and save him. After this infighting, Saul ceases his pursuit and the two armies retreat to their homes. The chance of the knockout blow against the Philistines is squandered.

vs. 47-48 – Saul was not a completely failure in his reign. He did a few things right, and among those are various campaigns against the Canaanite tribes.

vs. 49-52 – An overview of Saul’s family. There is an intermission here of 15-20 years in the narrative.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 91

If you want a case study in what not to do as a leader, these chapters a great place to look for information. From his lack of initiative to his readiness to blame others, Saul fails almost every test he is given. The root of this I believe is his lack of faith in God. He acts in his own power and wisdom. How many victories has our own lack of faith caused us to miss?

Hymn for Day 91

Our hymn today is “Only an Armor Bearer” by Phillip Bliss. It was written in 1873 for use in Sunday Schools. It challenges us to be like Jonathan’s faithful armorbearer and bravely follow our Captain.

*1 Only an armor-bearer, proudly I stand,
Waiting to follow at the King's command;
Marching if "onward" shall the order be,
Standing by my Captain, serving faithfully.*

Chorus:

*Hear ye the battle cry! "Forward," the call!
See! see the faltering ones! backward they fall!
Surely the Captain may depend on me,
Tho' but an armor-bearer I may be.
Surely the Captain may depend on me,
Tho' but an armor-bearer I may be.*

*2 Only an armor-bearer, now in the field,
Guarding a shining helmet, sword, and shield,
Waiting to hear the thrilling battle-cry,
Ready then to answer, "Master, here am I."*

*3 Only an armor-bearer, yet may I share
Glory immortal, and a bright crown wear;
If, in the battle, to my trust I am true,
Mine shall be the honors in the Grand Review.*

Chapter 15 Notes

In this chapter Saul fails to destroy the Amalekites and is rejected as king.

vs. 1-5 – God instructs Saul to eradicate the Amalekites. This nomadic tribe has been one of Israel’s deadliest enemies, often using what we would term as terrorist tactics. God had already decided on their destruction in Deuteronomy 25:19.

vs. 6-9 – Saul carefully spares the nomadic Kenites from being attacked. The campaign is a success in defeating the Amalekites, but it was not the total destruction that God had commanded. King Agag is kept alive as a prisoner, and the best of the livestock was preserved. It is also clear that some Amalekites escape because we will see them again.

vs. 10-35 – God reveals to Samuel that He has rejected Saul. Samuel confronts Saul who claims that he has been obedient to the Lord’s commands. When pressed he blames the people. Three reasons are given for his rejection as king: (1) he was proud, no longer “little in his own sight” (vs. 17), (2) he disobeyed clear commandments of the Lord (vs. 19), (3) he rejected the word of the Lord (vs. 23). Samuel turns to leave Saul, who grabs hold of and rips Samuel’s robe. Samuel says it is to signify that the kingdom was divided from Saul. Saul is forced to repent incompletely, making a show of worshipping God. Samuel kills Agag. The king and the prophet will briefly interact in I Samuel 19, but no more substantive meetings take place between the two (except at Endor...). Samuel, for his part, is brokenhearted and pours out his lament to the Lord in prayer.

Chapter 16 Notes

In this chapter David is secretly anointed to be the next king of Israel.

vs. 1-13 – God commands Samuel to go and anoint one of Jesse’s sons at Bethlehem to be the king who replaces Saul. Samuel is fearful to go, rightfully recognizing Saul’s growing paranoia. Samuel arrives under the guise of making an offering there, but even the townspeople are afraid of Saul and question Samuel about his intentions. Jesse presents his sons to Samuel, but the Lord tells him that the right one had not come yet. Finally, the youngest son David is called from keeping the sheep and God marks him as the one to be king. Samuel secretly anoints him to be king. David is about 18 It will be 12 years before this comes to pass.

vs. 14-23 – This passage needlessly confuses some who want to place it after Chapter 17. God’s empowering Spirit has been removed from Saul and he is afflicted with an evil spirit. His servants seek out a skilled harp player to help soothe his melancholy. They hear about David and go to take him to Saul. Note the description in vs. 18 of David. He is not a little child and is an experienced soldier. I imagine Jesse’s heart sinking when he finds out that David is being summoned to Saul’s court. David’s playing soothes Saul and David is integrated into the royal court. Sometime between the end of this chapter and the beginning of the next David is sent home as war with the Philistines rages again.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 92

Even from the start we mark just how remarkable David is. He is handsome, a virtuoso on the harp, a songwriter, a shepherd, a warrior, and a courtier. The hand of God's blessing is certainly upon him. But none of these natural talents are what make him so special. We note two things. First, in 16:17 note that God saw his heart and it was the primary reason for him being chosen. Second, in 16:13 note that the Spirit of God empowered him in his endeavors. Natural talents do not always equate to success, but those who trust in the Lord will see Him win great victories.

Hymn for Day 92

Our hymn today, "Hail to the Lord's Anointed" by James Montgomery, looks beyond David to Christ, the Lord's Anointed.

*Hail to the Lord's Anointed!
Great David's greater Son;
Hail in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free;
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.*

*He comes with succour speedy,
To those who suffer wrong;
To help the poor and needy,
And bid the weak be strong;
To give them songs for sighing,
Their darkness turn to light;
Whose souls, condemn'd and dying,
Were precious in His sight.*

*By such shall He be feared,
While sun and moon endure,
Beloved, obey'd, revered;
For He shall judge the poor,
Through changing generations,
With justice, mercy, truth,
While stars maintain their stations
Or moons renew their youth.*

*He shall come down like showers,
Upon the fruitful earth,
And love, joy, hope, like flowers,
Spring in His path to birth:
Before Him, on the mountains,
Shall Peace, the herald, go;
And Righteousness, in fountains,
From hill to valley flow.*

*Arabia's desert-ranger
To Him shall bow the knee,
The Ethiopian stranger
His glory come to see:
With offerings of devotion,
Ships from the Isles shall meet,
To pour the wealth of ocean
In tribute at His feet.*

*Kings shall fall down before Him,
And gold and incense bring,
All nations shall adore Him,
His praise all people sing:
For He shall have dominion
O'er river, sea, and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion
Or dove's light wing can soar.*

*For Him shall prayer unceasing,
And daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing,
A kingdom without end:
The mountain-dews shall nourish
A seed in weakness sown,
Whose fruit shall spread and flourish,
And shake like Lebanon.*

*O'er every foe victorious,
He on His throne shall rest,
From age to age more glorious,
All-blessing and all-blest;
The tide of time shall never
His covenant remove;
His Name shall stand for ever,
That Name to us is--Love.*

Chapter 17 Notes

In this chapter we have the famed battle between David and Goliath.

vs. 1-11 – The armies of the Philistines and the Israelites face each other in the Valley of Elah (“oak” or “strength”). Generally, battles of this era had the two sides try to intimidate each other until charging to meet in violent melee warfare. Instead of engaging in such a battle, the Philistines offer a contest of champions. They send out Goliath (“splendor”) who is about 9 feet 9 inches tall (a cubit is the distance from the tip of the middle finger to the end of the elbow, roughly 18 inches; a span is the distance from the tips of the thumb and pinky when fingers are spread out, roughly 9 inches). I do not think Goliath was simply tall, but rather he was massive. In a day when the average man might be 5 foot six inches at best, all of Israel feared to face the giant. Frankly, Saul should have been the one to fight Goliath. He was both king and the tallest person in Israel. A reward is offered that would give the man who fought Goliath riches, noble status for his family, and marriage into the royal family.

vs. 12-31 – David is not at this battle. The reason is certainly because so many of these brothers are there serving. As the stalemate continues between the two forces, Jesse sends David with provisions for his sons that are serving with the army. David witnesses the challenge of Goliath and the cowering fear of Israel. He speaks boldly, which draws the ire of his brothers and the attention of Saul.

vs. 32-39 – David is brought to stand before Saul. Remember that the two already know each other from the previous chapter. David appeals to his faith in the Lord and his experience dealing with predators that attacked his father’s sheep. Saul allows David to fight Goliath. He offers David his armor, which David does not use as he is unfamiliar with them. Also, it did not fit because Saul was so much taller than David.

vs. 40-54 – David goes to face Goliath with his shepherd’s staff, slingshot, and a pouch with five stones in it. Goliath mocks the David and Israel for sending out such a challenger. David appeals to his faith in God. The two rushed at each other. David fires a stone from his slingshot that hit Goliath in the forehead, making him fall to the ground. David then takes the giant’s own sword and uses it to decapitate him. The men of Israel rally and rout the shocked Philistines. David keeps the head as a trophy and the sword was placed in the Tabernacle.

vs. 55-58 - This last scene confuses some unnecessarily. Saul asks not who David is, but rather who his family is. Practically, this could be about the payment of the promised

reward. In reality, it is Saul's jealousy that is taking hold so that he is carefully watching this new upstart.

Chapter 18 Notes

In this chapter David grows more popular and Saul attempts to kill him multiple times.

vs. 1-4 – David is not fully integrated into Saul’s court. He and Jonathan are men of like heart and valor. Jonathan is probably 20 years older than David. To read anything romantic or erotic into this is perverse and should be dismissed with the utmost disgust.

vs. 5-9 – The flames of Saul’s anger are stirred through is jealousy at hearing the women sing of the victory over the Philistines but giving David the greater honor in it.

vs. 10-16 – This is an odd passage. Saul is influenced by an evil spirit to prophesy. I think it is Saul’s despair speaking, recognizing his rejection and the ascendance of David. Maybe he said something like, “God is through with me and is about to make David king.” It is something of an unintentional prophecy. Saul has a spear that I think he is using like a royal scepter. Twice he hurls it at David and twice David escapes. He puts David in charge of a company of 1,000 men, hoping that he will be killed in battle. Instead, David sees more victories and his popularity increases.

vs. 17-30 – The chapter closes with another trap set by Saul for David. Saul had not kept his word when he promised marriage to his daughter as a reward for fighting Goliath. His oldest daughter is married to another. But Saul learns that his daughter Michal (“who is like God?”) is infatuated with David. I think as the narrative progresses that this is attraction to David’s rising stardom and not to the man himself. Saul tells David that he may marry Michal if he gives a dowry price of killing 100 Philistines and providing their foreskins as proof. The plan here is for David to be killed in battle. But David goes above and beyond, killing 200 Philistines. Saul gives Michal to him to be his wife, and he grows even more wary of David.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 93

Jealousy is a terrible poison. Like its near-cousin bitterness, it rarely injures its object. Instead, it eats away as an acid in the heart of those who welcome it in. It is completely and utterly self-destructive. If we cannot rejoice with those that rejoice and be filled with gladness for others that enjoy God's blessing, we must needs be careful lest jealousy seep into our spirit and its deadly infection begin.

Hymn for Day 93

Our hymn today was printed in 1742 under the title "David and Goliath". It is written by Charles Wesley. It challenges us to defeat the besting sins in our lives, facing them down like David did the giant.

*Who Is This Gigantic Foe
That Proudly Stalks Along,
Overlooks The Crowd Below,
In Brazen Armour Strong?
Loudly Of His Strength He Boasts,
On His Sword And Spear Relies;
Meets The God Of Israel's Hosts,
And All Their Force Defies.*

*Tallest Of The Earth-Born Race,
They Tremble At His Power,
Flee Before The Monster's Face,
And Own Him Conqueror.
Who This Mighty Champion Is,
Nature Answers From Within;
He Is My Own Wickedness,
My Own Besetting Sin.*

*In The Strength Of Jesu's Name,
I With The Monster Fight;
Feeble And Unarmed I Am,
But Jesus Is My Might;
Mindful Of His Mercies Past,
Still I Trust The Same To Prove,
Still My Helpless Soul I Cast
On His Redeeming Love.*

*With My Sling And Stone I Go
To Fight The Philistine;
God Hath Said It Shall Be So,
And I Shall Conquer Sin;
On His Promise I Rely,
Trust In An Almighty Lord,
Sure To Win The Victory,
For He Hath Spoke The Word.*

*In The Strength Of God I Rise,
I Run To Meet My Foe;
Faith The Word Of Power Applies,
And Lays The Giant Low;
Faith In Jesu's Conquering Name
Slings The Sin-Destroying Stone;
Points The Word's Unerring Aim,
And Brings The Monster Down.*

*Rise, Ye Men Of Israel, Rise,
Your Routed Foe Pursue;
Shout His Praises To The Skies
Who Conquers Sin For You;
Jesus Doth For You Appear,
He His Conquering Grace Affords,
Saves You, Not With Sword And Spear,
The Battle Is The Lord's.*

*Every Day The Lord Of Hosts
His Mighty Power Displays;
Stills The Proud Philistine's Boast,
The Threatening Gittite Slays;
Israel's God Let All Below
Conqueror Over Sin Proclaim;
O That All The Earth Might Know
The Power Of Jesu's Name!*

Chapter 19 Notes

In this chapter the tension between Saul and David intensifies.

vs. 1-7 – Jonathan intervenes when Saul speaks publicly about killing David. The threat was strong enough that David was forced to hide while Jonathan interceded for him. He gets his father to swear that he will not kill David (it won't last long).

vs. 8-17 – David again is a military hero and Saul's jealousy rises. He tries for the third time to throw his spear and kill David. David runs home but Saul sends his minions to watch the house and kill him when he leaves. Michal helps David escape by pretending he is sick while David slips out of a window. She lies to Saul when her ruse is discovered, saying that David threatened to kill her.

vs. 18-24 – This is one of the strangest and, dare I say, funniest episodes in the Bible. David made his way to Samuel's home at Ramah. Saul has something like a seminary set up to train prophets. When Saul's men show up to take David, they get caught up in the prophesying at the school and do not capture David. The second group that is sent does the same. Saul comes with the third group, and it happens again. Saul casts off his royal robes and joins in. It is such an unexpected turn that it creates a saying: "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Chapter 20 Notes

In this chapter David is finally convinced that it is time to flee from Saul.

vs. 1-23 – David is not ready to completely forsake his duty and place in the court of Saul. He speaks with Jonathan, and the two come up with a plan to gauge Saul's intent toward David and secretly communicate the findings to him. The Jews used a lunar calendar, and the first day of the month was the first day there was a sliver of the new moon showing. It was custom for Saul to hold a feast on these days. David would remain absent and Jonathan would make an excuse for him, saying he had to return home on family business. How Saul reacted to hearing this was the test. To communicate the findings with David, Jonathan will shoot arrows in a field. If the servant retrieved them, it meant Saul was not planning on killing David. If the servant did not retrieve the arrows, it meant Saul was planning on killing David. Note also the covenant between David and Jonathan in vs. 16-17. Jonathan is aware that David will be king and would willingly have forfeited his own claim to the throne and served him.

vs. 24-34 – Saul flies into a murderous rage when he hears that David has left. Jonathan attempts to intervene, but Saul tries to kill him with his spear. There is no doubt where the intentions of Saul are now.

vs. 35-42 – Jonathan signals to David what had happened using arrows as they had planned. It almost has a tragic turn as the servant does not listen to Jonathan's command to leave the arrows and goes and fetches them anyway. The two friends part amidst many tears. They will meet only once more in this life. David is now officially *persona non grata* in Saul's kingdom.

Chapter 21 Notes

In this chapter David seeks aid and refuge as he goes on the run.

vs. 1-9 – Note that the first place David ran to in the previous chapter was to God’s prophet, Samuel. The first place he runs now is to the Tabernacle at Nob (“high place”) in order to inquire of the Lord what to do. Ahimelech (“brother of the king”) is the High Priest at this time. David lies about what he is doing, saying he is on a secret mission. He asks for food for himself and the few men with him. The Priest replies that that only food they have is the consecrated shewbread, which is reserved for the priests. David receives three things in this visit: the shewbread for food, direction from the Lord, and the sword of Goliath. Saul’s servant Doeg (“fearful”) the Edomite witnesses these things and will report them back to Saul.

vs. 10-15 – David makes a mistake here. He wants to get as far away from Saul as he can, so he goes to Saul’s mortal enemies, the Philistines. He goes to Gath, the former home of Goliath, and meets king Achish (“angry”) there. The people recognize him and David senses the danger he has put himself in. He acts like he is crazy. The Philistines, like many ancient and primitive cultures, shows kindness to those with mental illness. The king is convinced that they have brought an insane man into his presence and David is allowed to leave.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 94

What a contrast we see in Saul and Jonathan. Both men knew that God had appointed David to be the next king. Saul's pride leads him to desperately hold onto his power and attack those that threatened it. Jonathan, from every indication we have, would have gladly forfeited his own royal claims to support the true, Divinely-appointed king. It is an old story that still plays out today, I am sad to say. Too many are so selfish and vain that they will refuse to humble themselves to God's leading. If only we had more men like Jonathan, in whom inhabits that same spirit of John the Baptist, who said, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Hymn for Day 94

I have chosen our hymn today, "God Be With You Till We Meet Again" by Jeremiah Rankin, because it beautifully captures the sentiments of when loved one are parting, as we saw David and Jonathan do. It is my favorite benediction hymn.

*1. God be with you till we meet again;
By His counsels guide, uphold you,
With His sheep securely fold you;
God be with you till we meet again.*

*Refrain
Till we meet, till we meet,
Till we meet at Jesus' feet;
Till we meet, till we meet,
God be with you till we meet again.*

*2. God be with you till we meet again;
Neath His wings protecting hide you;
Daily manna still provide you;
God be with you till we meet again.*

*3. God be with you till we meet again;
With the oil of joy anoint you;
Sacred ministries appoint you;
God be with you till we meet again.*

*4. God be with you till we meet again;
When life's perils thick confound you;
Put His arms unfailing round you;
God be with you till we meet again.*

*5. God be with you till we meet again;
Of His promises remind you;
For life's upper garner bind you;
God be with you till we meet again.*

*6. God be with you till we meet again;
Sicknesses and sorrows taking,
Never leaving or forsaking;
God be with you till we meet again.*

*7. God be with you till we meet again;
Keep love's banner floating o'er you,
Strike death's threatening wave before you;
God be with you till we meet again.*

*8. God be with you till we meet again;
Ended when for you earth's story,
Israel's chariot sweep to glory;
God be with you till we meet again.*

Chapter 22 Notes

In this chapter Saul commits the worst crime of his reign.

vs. 1-2 – David is hiding in Judah. The region is hilly, arid, and sparsely populated. Others that have fallen out with Saul rally to him. This nucleus of 400 men will grow and become the backbone of his army.

vs. 3-5 – David seeks refuge for his parents in Moab. Remember that Jesse is Ruth the Moabitess's grandson. Perhaps there is some family loyalty they are able to rely on. David was told not to stay in a foreign land and he returned to Judah.

vs. 6-19 – Doeg the Edomite tells Saul of the aid the priests gave David. Saul calls the priests to come and defend their actions before him. Ahimelech the High Priest pleads ignorance. This is true since David had lied to him and he did not know of the division between Saul and David. Saul demands the priests be killed but no Israelite will do it. Doeg has no such qualms and murders on the unarmed priests. Though not recorded here, the attack seems to include a raid on the Tabernacle at Nob. This would help explain the death of the Gibeonites mentioned in II Samuel 21.

vs. 20-23 – Abiathar (“father of abundance”) was the son of the High Priest. He did not go with his father to stand before Saul, probably left to tend to the services at the Tabernacle. He escaped Doeg's attack and sought refuge with David. He becomes the High Priest and brings with him the High Priest's ephod, which includes the Urim and Thummim. David can now easily inquire of the Lord for direction.

Chapter 23 Notes

In this chapter David being betrayed twice and narrowly escaping Saul.

vs. 1-14 – David leaves his refuge to aid the people of Keilah (“fortress”) that had been besieged by the Philistines. The people fail to show their gratitude and send word to Saul that David was there. David and his band, now numbering 600, escape and remain on the run from Saul.

vs. 15-18 – It is funny that Saul cannot find David, but Jonathan can. They two meet for the last time.

vs. 19-29 – David is again betrayed, this time by the people of Ziph (“battlement”). Saul pursues David and is on the brink of catching him. They were on opposite sides of a hill, and Saul’s men had almost encircled David. A messenger arrives with a report that the Philistines had invaded. Saul’s absence and distraction had probably prompted the invasion, but he makes the right choice here and leaves his pursuit of David to attack the Philistines. The name of the hill is then known as Sela-Hammahlekoth (“cliff of divisions”). David escapes south to the edge of the Dead Sea at En-gedi (“fount of the kid”).

Chapter 24 Notes

In this chapter David refuses to attack Saul when given the chance.

vs. 1-15 – David is betrayed again and Saul comes with 3,000 men to hunt for him at Engedi. Saul goes into a cave to “cover his feet”. This idiom means refers to a person covering themselves as they sleep. Some try to interpret it to mean going to the bathroom, but the details when the phrase is used do not allow that. Anyway, the cave Saul is in just happens to be the same one that David is hiding in. David refuses to attack Saul, but he does sneak up on him and cut off the bottom of his robe. After Saul wakes and leaves David reveals himself and shows what he has done. It is quite the contrast. Saul would do anything to kill David, but David is remorseful at even embarrassing the king.

vs. 16-22 – Saul is moved by David’s actions and words. He admits in vs. 20 what everyone knows: that David will be the future king. You can tell how much David trusts Saul’s change of attitude because he did not follow Saul home. David goes back on the run.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 95

One of the most wonderful things about studying these passages is that we have insight into David's heart and mind through the psalms that he wrote. The structure of reading the Bible through in a year does not allow for us to jump constantly between books. According to Reese's Chronological Bible, there are 14 psalms written during the events of these chapters: 7, 13, 34, 35, 52, 54, 56, 57, 63, 86, 140, 141, 142, and 143. Some of these are expressions of David's despair, but others are of his utter confidence in the Lord. It is refreshing to be able to see the human side of David as he, like us, questions God's direction. We can gain strength by following his spiritual journey of faith.

Hymn for Day 95

Our hymn today is "All in Debt or In Distress" by John Berridge (1716-1793). It begins with men that sought refuge with David and likens them to our seeking refuge in Christ.

*All in debt, or in distress,
Discontented more or less,
All who would protection have,
Post away to David's cave.*

*All who find their sinful debt
Deep and deeper growing yet;
All who have been Satan's tool –
Much his madman or his fool;*

*All who discontented are,
Full of guilt and full of fear;
Every soul who would not die,
Unto Jesus' cave must fly.*

*Jesus all your debts will pay;
Chase your legal duns away;
Every foe he will subdue –
World, and flesh, and devil too.*

*Haste, and seek the Saviour's face;
Rise, and bless him for his grace;
To his scornèd cave repair;
He will wash and feast you there.*

Chapter 25 Notes

In this chapter Abigail prevents David from attacking Nabal.

vs. 1 – The last Judge of Israel passes from the scene with barely a footnote. Samuel had faded into the background with the anointing of Saul, and the preeminence has been placed on the crown. Because Samuel was one of the only checks on Saul's behavior, David removes himself further south to Paran ("abounding in caverns") to put more space between he and Saul.

vs. 2-13 – Nabal ("fool") is a wealthy man with land and flocks. He is not a good man, but is married to a good woman, Abigail ("source of joy"). David makes a very reasonable request from Nabal. David's men have been providing protection to Nabal's shepherds. David asks for some aid, but Nabal rebuffs the messengers. David loses his temper and orders 400 of his men to prepare to attack Nabal.

vs. 14-35 – David is saved from committing a grievous sin in attacking Nabal by the intervention of Abigail. She arrives with supplies and convinces David to back down.

vs. 36-38 – Abigail reports to Nabal about the close call with David. He has a stroke (?) and dies ten days later.

vs. 39-44 – David takes Abigail to be his wife. His first wife was Michal, the daughter of Saul, who had now been given to another man. His second wife was Ahinoam, making Abigail his third wife.

Chapter 26 Notes

In this chapter David again spares Saul.

vs. 1-4 – The Ziphites once again betray David to Saul, who has forgotten all about his oath to not attack David. Saul arrives with 3,000 men to hunt David.

vs. 5-12 – David scouts Saul's camp at night. Saul is camped in the center by his general, Abner ("father of light"). Abishai ("father of a gift") offers to kill Saul but David will not allow it. He takes Saul's spear (finally someone took that dangerous thing from him!) and his water jar.

vs. 13-25 – After leaving the camp, David yells at Abner and rouses the camp. He chides Abner's diligence to his duties as he produces the spear and water jar. Saul recognizes David's voice and confesses his sin in chasing after David. The two part for the final time.

Chapter 27 Notes

In this chapter David begins working with the Philistines as a mercenary.

vs. 1-4 – David again gives into despair and seeks refuge among the Philistines. Achish welcomes David as an ally, probably because it was now clear that he was Saul's enemy.

vs. 5-7 – David is given the outpost of Ziklag (“winding”) as a home for he and his men.

vs. 8-12 – David and his men acted as mercenaries for Achish. The Philistines believed that David and his men were attacking their fellow Israelites, but instead they were attacking the various enemies of Israel south of Judah. They send the spoils of their battles to Achish and he is convinced David has sided against his own people.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 96

When we speak of David's worst failures, we should also note the case that would be on the list if not for Divine intervention. David was ready to murder Nabal for dishonoring him and refusing to provide supplies. God used Abigail to prevent this, which may have gone down as the darkest day in David's life. When we survey our own lives, give thanks to God for the close calls that He prevented.

Hymn for Day 96

Our hymn today is "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" by John Greenleaf Whittier. This hymn is linked sometimes with David's actions in Chapter 26.

*Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways;
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.*

*In simple trust like theirs who heard,
Beside the Syrian sea,
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word,
Rise up and follow Thee.*

*O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love!*

*With that deep hush subduing all
Our words and works that drown
The tender whisper of Thy call,
As noiseless let Thy blessing fall
As fell Thy manna down.*

*Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.*

*Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm.*

Chapter 28 Notes

In this chapter Saul resorts to using a witch to seek guidance in his desperate hour.

vs. 1-2 – The Philistines prepare for a major offensive campaign into Israel through the valley of Megiddo. David is caught up in this and initially expected to join in the attack.

vs. 3-25 – Saul is desperate as the Philistines advance. Samuel is gone and God is no longer aiding him. To his credit, he had before this worked to eliminate the practice of witchcraft in Israel. But now he panics and seeks to use it as a means of contacting Samuel for counsel. There is much debate about whether it really is Samuel that appears. I believe that it is and that the Lord allowed this to happen to convict Saul. Saul is rejected for the third time here and the doom of he and his family is pronounced.

Chapter 29 Notes

In this chapter David is dismissed from Philistine campaign.

vs. 1-11 - God providentially removes David from the battle that is to come. David has been careful while on the run not to raise his hand against Saul. While Achish trusts David, the other Philistines leaders do not. David is forced to leave and heads back to his base at Ziklag.

Chapter 30 Notes

In this chapter David recovers the lost families and possessions from Ziklag taken by the Amalekites.

vs. 1-2 – Choices, even if not inherently sinful, have consequences. I believe it was a mistake if not a sin for David to seek refuge and partner with the Philistines. Had he not left to go on campaign with them he would not have left his home unguarded. The Amalekites raided Ziklag, burning the city and taking its inhabitants captive.

vs. 3-20 – David's return to Ziklag is one of the lowest points of his life. His men that have faithfully stood by him now mutiny and speak of stoning him. In this desperate hour, He turns to the Lord for encouragement. He seeks the Lord's direction through Abiathar the priest. He and his 600 men leave to pursue the Amalekites. 200 were too weary to continue and remained behind at the brook Besor. David finds an Egyptian that had been left behind by the raiders. He leads them to the Amalekite camp. David leads the attack and all their families and possessions are recovered, plus other spoils.

vs. 21-31 – How the spoils are divided is a very important part of this story. Some wanted to punish the 200 men that were unable to carry on the pursuit until the battle was won, allowing them to take their families and depart in shame. David refused to do this and set a principle that would continue in Israel's rules of warfare. Those that must remain behind are given an equal share as those that went to battle. The spoils they captured that were not from Ziklag are divided and sent to various cities in Judah that had aided David. While this is happening in southern Israel, David is certainly unaware of what is happening northward in the Philistine advance.

Chapter 31 Notes

In this chapter the Philistines deliver a terrible defeat to Israel and Saul is killed.

vs. 1 – The Philistines decisively defeat the forces of Israel. Saul and his men make a stand at Mt. Gilboa, maybe hoping the hillier terrain would slow the Philistine chariots.

vs. 2-6 – It is an ages old practice in warfare to target your opponent's leaders. The Philistines focus their attack on Saul. His sons including Jonathan that are in the battle are killed. Saul is wounded by an arrow. He fears being made a prisoner of the Philistines, likely remembering the treatment of Samson at their hands. Saul commits suicide to avoid this fate. This is the true account of his death.

vs. 7-13 – In the aftermath of the battle, the Philistines discover the bodies of Saul and three of his sons. They desecrate the bodies, cutting off Saul's head as a trophy and displaying the bodies on the wall of Bethshan ("house of ease"). There is a beautiful epilogue to this tragic story. Saul had begun his reign by rescuing the town of Jabeshgilead from the Ammonites in I Samuel 11. Forty years later, the men of that city repay that act by recovering the bodies of Saul and his sons. They burn the remains lest they be defiled again, and bury the ashes at Jabesh.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 97

What a contrast we have in these chapters once again between David and Saul. When Saul was hard pressed, he panicked and sought aid through a witch. When David was hard pressed, he found encouragement and direction in the Lord. Both of these reactions befit the men and their lives. It is obvious which is the better way.

Hymn for Day 97

Our hymn today was written by Anne Steel and published in 1760 under the heading “Hope encouraged in the contemplation of the Divine Perfections”. Like we saw David do at Ziklag, we are encouraged to find encouragement in the greatness of our God.

*Why sinks my weak desponding mind?
Why heaves my heart the anxious sigh?
Can sov'reign Goodness be unkind?
Am I not safe when God is nigh?*

*He holds all nature in his hand;
That gracious hand on which I live,
Does life, and time, and death command,
And has immortal joys to give.*

*'Tis he supports this fainting frame,
On him alone my hopes recline;
The wond'rous glories of his name,
How wide they spread! how bright they shine!*

*Infinite wisdom! boundless pow'r!
Unchanging faithfulness and love!
Here let me trust, while I adore,
Nor from my refuge e'er remove.*

*My God, if thou art mine indeed,
Then I have all my heart can crave;
A present help in times of need,
Still kind to hear, and strong to save.*

*Forgive my doubts, O gracious Lord,
And ease the sorrows of my breast;
Speak to my heart the healing word,
That thou art mine—and I am blest.*