

The Kingdom that Will Not Perish

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[0 : 0 0] All right, good evening. Again. If you want to keep the text open with me, we'll be walking through that together. So why don't we just pray and ask for God's help before we come to his words.

Dear Lord, I thank you so much just for the good news of the gospel that Jesus Christ has died to set us free. Pray, Lord, as we come to your word, that you would help us to hear from you.

I know personally I'm a little bit tired this evening. I'm sure many others are here this evening. Just help us to concentrate. Help us to focus. Pray that, Lord, by the power of your spirit, you might speak to us.

And we would say as we come out from this building, we have met with the living God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So kingdoms come and go.

Governments come and go. People come and go. But there's one kingdom that will never perish and that is above all things.

[1 : 1 1] And that is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Doesn't matter what's happening in our churches. Doesn't matter what's happening in our nation. Doesn't matter what's happening in the world or in our governments.

The Lord reigns. And he's building his kingdom as he gathers a people for himself from every tribe, nation, and tongue. We see this time and time again across the world.

We've seen it in Nidri. They just shared. 20 years ago, the church was about to die. The building was falling apart. There were six members left and apparently a dog as well.

They got hammered by the community. And they were about to close their doors. And yet it came to our church this morning. 20 years later, we had a building packed full as two people were being baptized.

And we're involved now with planting across Scotland. Something to do with us. That's because the Lord is building his kingdom. Think about China. Communism had brutalized that country and the Christians living in it.

[2 : 1 8] All missionaries were booted out. And Mao terrorized the place. What do we see today? Despite the continued persecution, thousands are being converted every week.

Mao thought, I can destroy the church. But God's kingdom cannot be thwarted. Do you know where one of the fastest growing underground church movements is in the world today?

It's in Iran. Iran. People are being converted by the gospel in a staunch Islamic place. A Christian organization called Heart for Iran is getting 30 requests a day by Muslims who want to have access to a Bible.

Sometimes we look at the news, don't we look at the Middle East, we look at particularly the Islamic areas of our world, we think darkness has squashed the gospel there. And yet, there are flickers of light all over the world as God is building his church.

We've come to the book of, the end of the book of 1 Samuel, we come to the end of an earthly kingdom. And it's a tragic, tragic chapter as we read it.

[3 : 39] It looks like the Philistines have got a major victory. That God's people are obliterated and the kingship of Israel is wiped out.

It looks like God's enemies are winning. And it probably felt like that if you were living in that region at the time. But this chapter again shows us that God is working in the background and building his kingdom.

One kingdom is over at the end of 1 Samuel. And yet, a new one is about to begin under the kingship of King David that will last into eternity.

So we're going to walk through the chapter and we basically have four scenes that I want us to look at. We've got a loyal son, a proud king, a faithful God, and a few good men.

A loyal son, a proud king, a faithful God, and a few good men. So firstly, we have a loyal son. The chapter opens in dramatic fashion in verse 1 as we enter straight into the action.

[4 : 52] The writer's not messing around one bit and the whole passage is written in the Hebrew in the present tense. This verse in verse 1 is like a news reader bulletin at 9 who says this, we're now entering into the live action at Israel, Mount Geboah, live footage, some of these scenes might be disturbing.

And this chapter is a continuation straight from chapter 28. If you remember there, Saul goes to see the medium at Endor to find out his fate.

Well, this battle is basically the very next day after that encounter. So what's been happening in the last two chapters in 29 and 30? Well, the last two chapters, exactly the same point, about 100 miles away, have been documenting David's victories in Aphek and Ziklag.

And what the writer is doing skillfully is he's comparing and contrasting the two kingdoms. The Lord is giving his servant David the victory.

David is smashing things all over the place. Meanwhile, Saul and his army are getting a battering. 29 and 30, David smashing things.

[6 : 09] 31, Saul is taking a battering from Israel's enemies. Verse 1 sums it all up. The Philistines were fighting against Israel and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Geboah.

This is a dark, sad, tragic verse. Think of scenes from the First World War when the machine gun mowed down hundreds of bodies across no man's land.

This is the scene we see here. But there's only one winner and that's the Philistines. If you had been at Mount Geboah that day, you would have seen one corpse after another laying strewn across that mountainside.

And it's not just Saul's army that gets killed as well. It's his children. Did you notice in verse 2 that Saul's sons are struck down? Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malkishua.

You see, Saul's rebellion against the Lord that you've been seeing in 1 Samuel doesn't just affect Saul and his army, it's affected his family as well. That's what sin does.

[7 : 26] Sin doesn't just affect one person. You see that all through the Bible. Sin affects your relationship with God, but it also affects those around you.

sin affects everything. Even Jonathan is killed. Did you notice that? I mean, that's a shock if you're reading through the book of 1 Samuel.

I mean, Saul, we can understand him dying. He's disobeyed the Lord time and time again, but Jonathan, does he really deserve to die?

That man was a faithful friend to David, the Lord's anointed, and at the same time a loyal son to Saul.

He managed through his life to walk that really tight, tight rope between honoring his father as God had commanded him to and yet being faithful to the Lord's anointed.

[8 : 25] Do you know how hard that was for him? It must have been really difficult. When David was anointed to be king and the women were shouting those songs of praise about David striking down thousands, Jonathan didn't get jealous.

Jonathan didn't get envious. What did Jonathan do? Here's my cloak. I honor you as the anointed one of the Lord's.

I mean, in the end, he could have said goodbye to Saul and he could have stuck near to David and he would have been safe. His life would have been spared. So why does he have to die?

Isn't it a bit of a waste, this faithful man of God dying? But it's not a waste. You see, Jonathan died doing what he loved, battling for the Lord and for his people.

What better way to die than in the service of the true king? You see, faithful service to the Lord, no matter how it ends, is never a waste because the Lord always remembers what we've done for him and doesn't forget a thing.

[9 : 45] Dale Ralph Davis, one of the commentators I was reading this week, wrote this, he laid aside a kingdom he could not have to enter a kingdom he could not lose.

He laid aside that kingdom he couldn't have that God had given to David to enter a kingdom that couldn't be taken away from him. I was reading that, it reminded me of Jim Elliot.

Well, he died in Ecuador. Do you remember what he said? He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. That was Jonathan. He's not a fool.

His life isn't wasted because he gave up the thing he couldn't have for the thing that he could have. An imperishable crown. You know, sometimes we think, don't we, in a Christian walk?

I don't know about you, but I do anyway. Is it all worth it? Is it all worth it? Why am I giving this all up for the Lord Jesus Christ?

[10 : 53] We have that sinful battle, don't we? Some days. Maybe you're better Christians than I am. We have a battle, don't we? On that day, when Jesus returns, we'll get that pat on the back and he'll say, well done, good and faithful servant.

And it'll be all worth it. All the struggles, all the battles, all the war scars, all the suffering, it'll be worth it because we'll get to praise the name of Jesus for eternity.

Our job, like Jonathan's job was, is to be faithful, to be loyal to our true king, Jesus Christ. This world's going to pass away.

It's all going to pass away one day. But God's kingdom never went. Jonathan dies, the kingdom that he believed in continues on forever.

That's where our confidence is as Christians. Not in this world around us, not in these things that we have today, but in that true kingdom that is to come when Jesus returns. So what a loyal son.

[12 : 07] Second scene we see is a proud king. The writer moves from the army to the sons, quickly narrows it down in verse 3 as the battle begins to rage around Saul.

The battle presses hard around him. The Philistine archers find him. They hit the target and he's mortally wounded. And so, as he's lying there, probably on the mountain, he asks his armour bearer to thrust him through with a sword because he knows that the Philistines get him and he's still alive, he's getting decapitated and tortured and all sorts of evil things will happen to him.

The armour bearer refuses, probably because he doesn't want to strike down the Lord's anointed, a little bit like King David earlier on in the book of 1 Samuel. And so Saul finishes himself off and his armour bearer joins him as well.

And the scene again is tragic, isn't it? Saul dies alone with no reference to God. Doesn't even cry out to God in his last moments in repentance.

And the suicide just shows the tragedy of the situation. The scene actually reminds us, and I think the writer's being intentional here, of Abimelech.

[13 : 25] Do you remember Abimelech in Judges chapter 9? An awful judge, a ruthless judge, killing 70 of his brothers on a stone, rampaging against his own city, he's burning towers to the ground and then a lady drops a stone on his head and he doesn't want anyone to know that the woman has killed him and so he gets his armour bearer to thrust a sword through him as well.

Basically, this is not a good comparison. It's like comparing your death to Hitler's. Wouldn't be a great thing, would it, in your obituary? That's how slow Saul has come from being anointed as God's king, chosen by God's people to be king to having to kill himself as the Philistines come against him.

Look at verse 6. Thus Saul died and his three sons and his armour bearer and all his men on the same day together.

The writer's making a point, isn't he? He's lost everything. Everything that he had his hands on, he has lost, annihilated, wiped out.

And not only that, the following verses tell us the people living in that area see the defeat, they basically leave their houses behind, collect all their belongings and they go off into other parts of Israel and the Philistines come and live in these houses.

[15 : 04] Sons killed, army gone, king killed, territory taken, job done for the Philistines. Tragic.

Here's what we learn from Saul's life. Sin never pays. Sin never pays. It looks good, sometimes tastes good in the moment, but it always leads to death.

That's the life of Saul. We got arrogant. If you remember, he chose sacrifice rather than obedience. obedience. It's led to him being rejected by God and God raising up David.

This led to Saul being envious of David. This led to trying to kill God's anointed one. This led to him not listening to God's voice. This led to him killing a whole host of priests.

This led to him going to a medium to try and discern what God is saying. Basically, the decay of Saul's kingdom mirrors the decay in his own spiritual life.

[16 : 10] The decay of his own kingdom mirrors the decay of his own spiritual life. Here's the thing, when we reject the Lord in the slightest ways, whatever it is, it can have disastrous effects in our lives and in our family's lives and in our church as well.

Sin always looks good for the moment, but it always bites us on the backside. It's not worth it. In particular, we must learn from Saul not to have a proud, proud heart.

That's where it started for Saul. It's the silent killer. Heroin is not the biggest problem that we struggle with in the schemes. It's pride. Pride.

We think we know it all. We think we know better than God. We think we've got the Christian walk sorted. when we think we are something.

That is a very dangerous place to be in. Very dangerous place. We need to remember this as Christians. We are nothing. We are nothing.

[17 : 24] What is Paul? What is Peter? What is Apollos? What am I? What is Graham? What is any of us but servants of the Master, Jesus Christ?

If we remember that we are servants of Jesus Christ who have been saved totally by his grace, it will keep us humble and walking closely with our saviour.

God the other choice is to have a proud heart that leads to death and hell. Saul abandoned the Lord and ended with death.

Same with anyone who turns aside from the Lord and trusts in themselves. The question is are we being faithful to the Lord now and will we be faithful to the Lord in the end?

It's not how we start. That matters. it's how we go on through the rest of our lives to the day that we die. You see as we grow on in the Christian walk we're going to grow in grace aren't we?

[18 : 25] We're going to be sanctified and grow in godliness hopefully. But we never ever outgrow our need of grace. We were damned sinners when we came into Christ saved only by his grace.

Do you know what we are now? Damned sinners saved by his grace. It doesn't matter if you're day one a believer or 50 years a believer. We stay in that same spectrum.

We were heading to hell and we would be heading to hell unless Christ intervened in our lives. That should humble us. Every day we should beat our breast and say have mercy on me Lord I'm a sinner.

But nothing more nothing less than that. Saul got it wrong didn't he? He got proud. Don't make the same mistake. Scene three we have a faithful God.

So King Saul his sons his army are dead. Philistines are buzzing probably can't believe their luck. We read in verse eight that the next day they strip the dead.

[19 : 34] They find Saul's body and his sons. Verse nine says they cut off his head. they put his armour in one temple and they fasten his body to another temple.

They want everyone to know that Saul is dead. So they send word around telling people the defeat. It's like putting a status up on Facebook. You know we usually put good news up on Facebook don't we?

Well this is their good news. Saul's dead. our gods have got the victory. You notice the language in verse nine. In the ESV anyway it says this and he sent messages throughout the land of the Philistines to carry the good news to the house of their idols and the people.

The word behind good news is gospel. Gospel. They're spreading the gospel of the defeat of their enemies and the gospel giving glory to their gods.

Just think if you're a Jew for a moment reading this text. It doesn't mean much to us a couple of thousand years later. But if you're a Jew reading that text you would be livid.

[20 : 47] You would be very very angry. You would be gutted. Your enemies have the upper hand and have taken some of your territories. It was a total humiliation. It's like when Scotland beat England at the football rugby.

As an Englishman it hurts reading that and watching it. But the worst thing about it is when you go to church the next day and everyone rubs your face in it. That's what it's like here for a Jew.

Okay, we've got the defeat. We don't need to hear about it again, over and over and over again. But the worst thing for them is that the name of the Lord has been disgraced in their eyes.

The name of the Lord has been defamed. They think the Philistine gods have got a victory. That's what the Philistines think. That's what Satan rejoices in the most, doesn't he?

When he can disgrace the church, when he can disgrace God's people, when he can get a mini victory or what he thinks is a mini victory over the Lord and bring praise to his own name.

[21 : 53] But we know from the book of Samuel that the Philistines and their gods have not got a victory at all here because they're not in control. Just flick back to 28, keep you on your toes.

Chapter 28, verse 19. Remember this conversation, the medium of Endor?

Moreover, the Lord will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me. the Lord will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines.

See, Samuel leaves us with no doubt who's in charge here. It's not the Philistine gods that are in charge, it's God who is in charge. He's in control of this event as 31 is the fulfillment of his word through Samuel to Saul.

And here's the thing that we learn here. The word of the Lord is always fulfilled. It doesn't matter if it's a divine pronouncement of judgment or if it's a divine pronouncement of blessing.

[23 : 05] God's word is always fulfilled. Do you remember the beginning of 1 Samuel, chapter 2? Flip there with me. It's a summary of the book so I thought I'd give you a little look around it as well.

1 Samuel 2, verse 6. So what Hannah prays, the Lord kills and brings to life. He brings down to Sheol and raises up.

The Lord's the one who's in control here. Not these Philistine gods they've made up. Not the Philistines who think they've got a great victory because of their tactics and their great war efforts. It's because the Lord gave Saul, his sons and his army into the hands of the Philistines.

The word of the Lord is fulfilled here. That's what's happening in chapter 31. And this is a good thing that God's word is fulfilled because it means this for the Christian. We can trust him.

A God who breaks his word is not trustworthy. As Isaiah writes, the grass withers, the flowers fall, but the word of our God will never fail.

[24 : 17] It stands forever. This chapter helps us remember we can't trust our feelings. We can't trust the people around us. We can't trust the government or anything.

They all come and go. The only person that we can trust in this world is the Lord because he is always faithful to his promises and always fulfills his good words.

even in the worst circumstances of our lives, the Lord is working. People think they get a victory of the Lord sometimes, don't they?

See Islamic extremists killing Christians and shouting victory to Allah. The Lord is lost from heaven. He is the one who is in control.

Saul might be defeated. That was God's plan. He is raising another king in King David. Again, Dale Ralph Davis writes this, In darkness or light, what matters is having a God who speaks a true and faithful word.

[25 : 27] In darkness or light, what matters is having a God who speaks a true and a faithful word. Things might be a mess in our country. It's been a mess, hasn't it, with Brexit? A right mess.

A right pig's ear of it. Things might be a mess in our lives today or in our family life. People might have let us down this week or this year.

Our heads might be completely battered with the situations that we're facing in life. But you can be sure of one thing this evening, whatever you're going through, the word of the Lord never fails.

The only thing that stands in this roller coaster of a world is the word of God. That's what you can bank your life on. That's what you can trust in. We'll soon be dead, but God's word never dies.

It never fails. It always remains. In darkness or light, God is always faithful to his people. The Philistines haven't got a victory.

[26 : 29] God is in control. in our last scene we see a few good men and we'll end with this. The chapter ends on a small hideous.

Did you notice that? A few good men from Jabesh Gilead hear what the Philistines have done with the body of Saul. They go on a rescue mission to get the body back. It's like saving Private Ryan.

They go on a 20-mile round trip through enemy territory to come and get that body back. It would have been dangerous.

It would have been tiring. It would have been exhausting. And yet they go for it. Why is that? Why do they go out of their way to help this disobedient king who basically helped lose a whole load of soldiers?

Why the hassle? Why do they go for it? Well, the reason is gratitude. Do you remember the first thing that Saul did as a king? As you went through the series? I don't know who preached on it, Shanks.

[27 : 31] But it was back in 1 Samuel chapter 11. Do you know what Saul did there? He rescued the people of Jabesh Gilead from the Ammonites.

Remember the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon Saul. He gathered 330,000 men and he rescued the people of this region. These men just wanted to honour what the Lord had done through Saul at the time.

Out of respect, they wanted his body to be laid at rest. That's what they did. They never forgot what Saul had done for them. Imagine if you were just at the hands of these people, the Ammonites.

I think they were about to gouge out their eyes. And then someone comes in and rescues you. You'd be forever thankful, wouldn't you? Yeah. Gratitude is an important part of the Christian life, isn't it?

As Christians, we should never forget where we've come from and what God has done for us in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. His death on the cross rescued us from slavery to sin, slavery to Satan, and slavery to death.

[28 : 44] We were heading to hell. No hope. And yet God in Christ rescued us by the power of his Spirit. We've got something to be thankful for. We should never, ever lose the wonder of the cross.

When we forget the wonder of the cross, we go to two extremes. We either take everything for granted or we get bitter about life. A life full of gratitude helps us stick near to Christ, our Saviour.

We should be like that one leper who went back after he was healed, again and again to Christ, saying, thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord, for rescuing me. Thank you, Lord, for that work you've done in my life.

Do you ever think, do you ever sit and think, where would I be without Christ? What would I be doing now? Where would I be? Christ has saved us.

So these men rescue Saul's body. They bury him under the tamarisk tree. Saul's reign began with his deliverance of Jabesh Gilead and ends with Jabesh's deliverance of Saul.

[29 : 49] Saul's kingship started so strongly but ended disastrously. So at the end of the series in 1 Samuel, in chapter 31, probably thinking, where's the hope?

Where's the hope after all that? What a tragic chapter. Well, the hope is this. God has chosen another servant.

God chose another servant in David's. 1 and 2 Samuel are actually one book, so you need to keep preaching. One book in the original. And so you read chapter 31 and go straight into 2 Samuel, chapter 1, where David ascends the throne, unites the empires, and a golden reign begins.

But here's the thing. He's not even the hope, is he? Because he's going to fail. But he's pointing forward to a greater hope, isn't he? The everlasting covenant of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so in these dark days, that is our hope. Jesus Christ. You see, like Saul, Jesus' body was brutalized on the cross.

[31 : 03] But unlike Saul, Jesus was faithful to his heavenly Father. He was obedient to death on the cross. And then he rose three days from the grave, conquering death, sin, and Satan, and establishing a kingdom that will never pass away.

This is what Mary, the angel said to Mary in Luke 1. He will be a great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David.

And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there will be no end. That's the kingdom we're part of.

That is the kingdom that God was pointing forward to in 1 Samuel. And so whatever's happening in our lives, whatever's happening in our countries, we can trust that Jesus is reigning and he's ruling and that he's building his kingdom.

It doesn't matter if secularism is on the rise. Jesus is building his kingdom. It doesn't matter if the laws change and we are persecuted. Because Jesus is on the throne.

[32 : 18] It doesn't matter if it looks like Satan is winning. Because Jesus is on his throne. See, as Christians in the UK, we often panic, don't we? We get quite pessimistic about things in the UK.

You know, they're changing laws on homosexuality. Look at how people are getting aggressive towards Christians. But here's the thing. It's been exactly the same since Jesus died and rose again.

I think if the empire, if the Christian kingdom survived through the Roman Empire, I think you can survive in these times. But here's the thing.

Our job doesn't change. And your job at Brunfield doesn't change. Your job is to continue to be faithful to Jesus and tell others of what he has done for you.

It doesn't change, does it? Kingdoms come and go. Our job as a church never changes. Go into the world. Make disciples of all the nations.

[33 : 16] And baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. And I am with you till the very end of the age. Do you know that was said? That was said on the mountain as well.

1 Samuel 31, Mount Geboa. Everyone's dead. Another mountain. A few years later, Jesus is saying, Go into the world.

Make disciples. I'll build my church. And the gates of hell will never prevail. Amen? Amen. Let me just pray and then I'll hand over to whoever.

Dear Lord, I thank you so much that you are building your church and the gates of hell will not prevail. I pray for Brunfield here. They will continue to be faithful to the gospel and they will continue to preach this glorious message to this city.

And they might continue to see men, women and children saved as you work in this area. I pray for our nation of Scotland that you will continue to do the same.

[34 : 20] Would we be known once again as the land of the book where people from all over Scotland are worshipping and praising Jesus. Whatever happens in our lives this week, help us to trust in him.

In his name we pray. Amen.