



... It tolls for thee ...

Part II Anointing of Saul

6 And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. 7 And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee. (1 Sam 10:5-7)

9 And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day. 10 And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them. 11 And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? (1 Sam 10:9-11)

It is a sorrowful occasion to fall from grace, but those who have never received grace to begin with are not subject to so great a fall. It is a fall from the uttermost heights of divine, heavenly favor to the lowest point of the consuming fires of Hell to fall from grace and favor with the Lord - a grace and favor freely given, but never merited!

Saul was changed into a new man, and endowed with a new heart. He was, for the first time, able to hear the whispered appeals of the Holy Ghost. Once heard, the human will cannot resist declaring - just as did the prophets of old times. But, as we have learned before, the new heart is a Garden enclosed. It requires cultivation, guarding, weeding, and water. These labors were neglected by Saul. What an honor to be chosen of God to be King over His people; but what a tragic loss to fall so despairingly from that place of honor! ***So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.*** (Matt 20:16) Many are called by the Lord, as was Saul, but few are FINALLY chosen. The chosen are known by the race they run, and the laurels they wear into the grave. Saul ran a half-hearted race. He was distracted along the way by the magnetism of the world and its desires. He stumbled and found himself deserted by all - but most tragically, by God.

The character of a man is sealed by his last conscious thoughts and actions; by his last conscious breath! We may deceive the whole world until that dire moment when the cold finger of death points us out as his next victim. The greatest terror I have ever witnessed has been in the eyes of bold, strong men who have great courage when they have their strength and health but, when taken away by the advancing specter of death, terror will strike deep into their hearts if they go alone into that dark and eternal night! They need not go alone, for Christ is with all who stand on Jordan Banks if they have called upon Him in faith and conviction. No man I have ever witnessed dying has uttered regrets at not having "sinned more." Without exception, if they have utterance at all, it is regret at not doing more good for others, and not serving God with greater devotion. To those who have placed their trust in God, Death is an Angel to escort them to the bosom of Abraham; to the lost, Death is a Demon to escort them to the dark dungeon of Hell.

Saul's heart later became possessed by jealousy and avarice. He loved David for his courage and for the consoling harp; but he hated David for his beauty of soul and quality of faith. Others admired and respected David for the same reasons that Saul despised him. Saul did his best to murder David. It will not be necessary to enumerate every departure of Saul from the will of the Lord. Be it sufficient to know that a single step from God is enough to part us from Him. In the end, that new heart and new man of Saul sank back to a worse creature than he was before the Lord had called him. Peter gives expression to the nature of the fall of Saul in the following verses: *20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. 21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. 22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.* (2 Peter 2:20-22) The modern church is filled with such tragic souls!

The indictment of Saul comes from the Lord in due course: *14 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.* (1 Sam 16:14) Many of the failings of Saul would pass muster as tolerable in our modern society. But failure to obey the commandments of God, especially of one in such high position (clergy beware), is a great and catastrophic failing. The Spirit of the Lord will not find comfort in a heart that is contrary to its own nature, so it will depart such a Temple.

If our hearts are vacated by the Spirit of the Lord, a terrible substitute will occupy our hearts - an evil spirit! There are no hearts empty of some spirit - either of the Lord, or of demons. *21 When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: 22 But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh*

from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. ²³ *He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.* ²⁴ *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.* ²⁵ *And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.* ²⁶ *Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.* (Luke 11:21-26) Jesus Christ has conquered, once and for all, that old strong man of wickedness that once inhabited the lost heart. He has cast him out and has placed His own Spirit there to guard that heart. Nothing can overcome that latter Strong Man.

Though the Spirit of God is invincible to ward off any evil spirit from the heart of God's Elect, those evil spirits that occupy the reprobate heart are far stronger than any of that man's own will to resist. Once the spirit of God has departed a heart, only a dark and foreboding spirit of wickedness remains to lighten his darkness with only gloom and greater darkness. Saul, in accordance with the decree of God, had rid the land of those who possessed familiar spirits (fortune tellers and sorcerers). *And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.* (Lev 20:6) We see a re-emergence of this evil in our modern society. Wicked men are erecting statues of Satan in our public squares of America alongside those of the Ten Commandments. How do you suppose God will view such a nation who takes such wicked license?

But, now, Saul faces a great and terrible enemy on the battlefield. ⁴ *And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.* ⁵ *And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.* ⁶ *And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.* (1 Sam 28:4-6) Our prayers rise only to a brazen heaven when the Spirit of the Lord has departed our hearts. Of course, Saul had murdered most of the prophets, and the great voice of the Lord's prophet in Israel, Samuel, was stilled in death. The great terror of doom begins to rise over the blighted horizon of Saul's soul. Where can such a one turn when the Lord has abandoned him (or rather, when he has abandoned the Lord)?

⁷ *Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.* ⁸ *And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee.* ⁹ *And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?* ¹⁰ *And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.* (1 Sam 28:7-10) It must be pointed out soothsayers, those with familiar spirits, mediums, or fortune tellers have no power to call up the dead. But it seems that Samuel was called up. If he was, it was God's apparition to Saul and not the power of the witch of Endor. Even that medium was shocked to see the likeness of Samuel: ¹² *And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul.* ¹³ *And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.* ¹⁴ *And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.* (1 Sam 28:12-14) Those who deal in death shall share that prospect.

15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. 16 Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? 17 And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David: 18 Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. 19 Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines. (1 Sam 28:15-19) When one seeks counsel of the dead, a personal meeting may be expected in the grave, and that is precisely what awaits Saul. He was struck with a cold fear to his bones and fell in terror to the ground. Upon insistence of others, Saul had his last meal at the hands of a witch and not a Holy communion with his Lord. 24 And the woman had a fat calf in the house; and she hasted, and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded it, and did bake unleavened bread thereof: 25 And she brought it before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. (1 Sam 28:24-25) When we make our table with the wicked, we shall surely share in their demise.

Our account of King Saul has a sad conclusion. I feel great sorrow for the fall of any man. *'Take no pleasure when your enemy falls lest the sword return to you.'* It is tragic, indeed, to see so much of promise and joy thrust to the ashes of sin and ruin, but thus it was the case with Saul - *a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people. (1 Sam 9:2)*

1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. 2 And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons. 3 And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. 4 Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. 5 And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him. 6 So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together. (1 Sam 31:1-6)

What a sad ending remains for all who turn from God having once known His generous love and grace. Saul died alone among the dead of his own household and army. He died - not at the hands of his enemy - except that of his greatest enemy - HIMSELF. Only was his armor-bearer present to witness the death and, then, he too died in a moment. Beware, friends, the warning given by the clergyman, John Donne. That which happened to Saul can happen to any who turn from God:

*Each man's death diminishes me,
For I am involved in mankind.
Therefore, send not to know
For whom the bell tolls,
It tolls for thee.*