

# BIBLE BRIEFING

## “Head Case”

**1 Chronicles 10:1** Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

**1 Chronicles 10:2** Then the Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons. And the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons.

**1 Chronicles 10:3** The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was wounded by the archers.

**1 Chronicles 10:4** Then Saul said to his armorbearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and abuse me." But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it.

**1 Chronicles 10:5** And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died.

**1 Chronicles 10:6** So Saul and his three sons died, and all his house died together.

**1 Chronicles 10:7** And when all the men of Israel who *were* in the valley saw that they had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook their cities and fled; then the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

**1 Chronicles 10:8** So it happened the next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen on Mount Gilboa.

**1 Chronicles 10:9** And they stripped him and took his head and his armor, and sent word *throughout* the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news *in the temple* of their idols and among the people.

**1 Chronicles 10:10** Then they put his armor in the temple of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon.

**1 Chronicles 10:11** And when all Jabesh Gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul,

**1 Chronicles 10:12** all the valiant men arose and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons; and they brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

**1 Chronicles 10:13** So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance.

**1 Chronicles 10:14** But *he* did not inquire of the LORD; therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.

A faithful **armorbearer** and a band of **valiant men** stand out against the pitiful backdrop of Saul's failure. I want to take a look at them.

First let's get a bird's eye view of the book we are starting. The two books of Chronicles cover the same historical era as the books of Samuel and Kings but from quite a different perspective.

Chronicles is more hopeful than Samuel and Kings. Whereas those earlier books speak of rebellion and tragedy, Chronicles sees restoration. The earlier books see man's failings while Chronicles shows God's faithfulness.

The books of Chronicles center around King David and the temple. The first book focuses on the life and reign of David himself; the second book traces the house of David upon the throne of Judah, the southern kingdom. Israel, the northern kingdom, is almost completely ignored in these books. Why? Because the temple is located in Judah and because David, who is seen as God's king, is the king of Judah.

Also, the audience for whom the Chronicles were written were the second and third groups of Jews returning from the Babylonian captivity. They were primarily from the tribe of Judah.

It is evident that First Chronicles was written after the seventy years of Israel's captivity in Babylon. The writer was probably Ezra, the priest, who also wrote the book that bears his name. Ezra was one of the great figures who returned from the Babylonian captivity to reestablish the temple and the worship of God in Jerusalem.

Why are we starting fully nine chapters into it?? The first nine chapters are devoted to a long list of genealogies. They are not so important to us.

These genealogies *are* very important to a full understanding of this book, of the history of Israel, and of the entire Old Testament. They are important for two reasons:

1. First, the genealogies help us to ascertain and understand Bible chronology.
2. Second, the genealogies are carefully selected and constructed to show God's plan in working through human beings to achieve His purposes.

The genealogies go back to the dawn of human history and list the sons and descendants of Adam: Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel. We know Adam had sons named Cain, Abel, and Seth, but here, immediately, Cain and Abel are excluded. They are not mentioned. The whole focus is on the descendants of Seth, for from him eventually came the family of Abraham and the Israelites.

Then the line of Seth is traced down to Enoch and to Noah. The three sons of Noah are given: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. But Ham and Japheth are dismissed with just a brief word and attention is focused on the line of Shem. From Shem we trace on down to Abraham and his family. There is this constant narrowing process that then excludes Ishmael, the son of Abraham, and Esau, the brother of Jacob, and focuses on Isaac's twelve sons, who became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel.

As the genealogy goes on, it selects the tribes of Judah and Levi - the tribes of the king and the priestly line. It traces the tribe of Judah down to David, to Solomon, and then to the kings of the house of David into captivity. The tribe of Levi is traced back to Aaron, the first of the priests, and then to the priests who were prominent in the kingdom at the time of David.

By the way, First Chronicles 4:9-10 is where we encounter Jabez of the (recent) *Prayer of Jabez* fame.

**1 Chronicles 4:9** Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore *him* in pain."

**1 Chronicles 4:10** And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep *me* from evil, that I may not cause pain!" So God granted him what he requested.

The fact that God spotlighted Jabez is significant. It probably wasn't to create a Jabez industry in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century! My concern is that now we have exhausted the well, so to speak, and cannot get any further insight from Jabez.

Here's my thought: Whether it's a good thing or a not-so-good thing, why must we always have something novel to rally around? Why

can't we learn to be content with the verse-by-verse teaching of the Word? Why do we need the hype?

The rest of First Chronicles is about David, the king after God's own heart. The book traces David's life from the moment he is anointed king until his death. David's first act after coming to the place of kingship in Israel is to take over the pagan stronghold of the Jebusites, the city of Jerusalem - God's holy city. This is the place where God chose to put His name among the tribes of Israel.

Immediately following the conquest of Jerusalem comes a flashback to the time of David's exile and to the mighty men gathered around him there. These were men of faith and passion who were attracted to David by the character he demonstrated. These mighty men who gathered about David and shared his exile eventually became the leaders in his kingdom, symbolizing for us the reign of the Lord Jesus with His saints after returning to earth again. Those of us who share His sufferings now will also share His glory when He comes to establish His kingdom of righteousness.

Let's go back now and take a look of some early heroes in the book. Saul was defeated. As king he did not want to be made a spectacle of - maybe blinded and led about being mocked or some worse fate. He ordered his [armorbearer](#) to kill him.

The [armorbearer](#) refused. Why? David had articulated why when he had opportunity to kill Saul. He said,

[1 Samuel 24:6](#) ... "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD."

Though Saul was a miserable failure, his office was still to be respected. Saul's [armorbearer](#) had greater respect for the office than did Saul.

Armorbearers did more than just carry armor. They were usually chosen for their own bravery in battle. They served as bodyguards in that they stood by the king in danger.

What might any of this have to do with us? There is a famous passage in the New Testament book of Ephesians where every one of us who is a believer is commanded to

**Ephesians 6:10** Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

**Ephesians 6:11** Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

**Ephesians 6:12** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

The passage might suggest something I hadn't thought of before. Not only do you have spiritual armor to wear. **Jesus is your armorbearer!** He is a seasoned warrior capable of helping you or of fighting in your place.

Saul disrespected his position. He wanted to take the easy way out. His armorbearer wouldn't let him. We need constantly to be reminded of our position in Christ. There are many exhortations in the Word to remember who we are and what is available to us. Jesus is there holding out resources and reminding us to take our stand.

When we fall the Lord fights for us. We might be wounded but He will not let us be taken.

Saul was a believer but represents the man who walks in the flesh rather than the spirit. We have this warfare between the flesh and the spirit. We sometimes walk in the flesh. When we walk in the flesh it's like we fall on our sword instead of wielding the sword against our enemies.

It's not a perfect analogy. The armorbearer killed himself after Saul killed himself. It's too great a stretch to see it as Jesus dying on the Cross in our place. Be careful you don't take analogies, symbols, and types too far.

As a Christian I have been elevated to a very high position. My closest companion is Jesus and He provides everything necessary for life and godliness. He is my faithful armorbearer. When necessary He fights for me.

Saul's body was discovered. The Philistines cut-off Saul's head and put it on display in the temple of Dagon.

A band of **valiant men** risked their lives to retrieve Saul's body for burial. In another account (First Samuel 31) you learn that they traveled all night and that they retrieved the bodies of his sons as well.

Saul was a disgrace while alive. He died in disgrace. Why risk your life to retrieve his headless corpse?

At the beginning of his reign as king, Saul had come to the aid of Jabesh Gilead when they were attacked by the Ammonites. The account is in First Samuel 11. Saul's valour saved them.

Saul started well. He finished badly. That's the lesson the men of Jabesh Gilead learned. To finish well!

It would have been easy for the men of Jabesh Gilead to justify doing nothing when they heard about Saul and his sons being desecrated. There were any number of plausible excuses they could have given.

The men of Jabesh Gilead determined to finish well. They did not want to end up like Saul!

It wasn't for Saul and his sons that these valiant men risked their lives. It was for the Lord. Your service is always 'as unto the Lord.'

The apostle Paul wrote,

**Acts 20:24** But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Conclusion

First Chronicles is mostly about David. He's the central figure. But we see these 'minor' heroes of faith – an armorbearer and a band of valiant men.

You and I are should be content to be part of God's on-going story as very minor heroes or heroines.

