

14. The Beginning of the End

- Part 1 Impatience

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Next three chapters record three sins: "Chapter 13 – Impatience, Chapter 14 – Pride, and Chapter 15 – Disobedience" of king Saul, sins that ultimately cost him the kingdom.

Even though Saul had a great start with humility and a conquest against Ammonites, within a year period he turned to an impatient, prideful and disobedient king who would not regard God's commands over his own desires.

We are going to witness king Saul's beginning of his end in next three chapters. The Lord willing, we may learn from his sins that we may not commit the same kinds of sins against God.

A. SAUL'S UNLAWFUL SACRIFICE

1 Sam 13:1-2 Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose for himself three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in the mountains of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent away, every man to his tent.

This was the first "regular" army for Israel. For the first time, Israel has a professional army.

This also is the first mention of Saul's son Jonathan. He will become a prominent, and wonderful, part of this book of 1 Samuel.

1 Sam 13:3-4 And Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear!" Now all Israel heard it said that Saul had attacked a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel had also become an abomination to the Philistines. And the people were called together to Saul at Gilgal.

Jonathan was a remarkable military leader. He repeatedly demonstrated the ability to lead a successful attack. But as soon as the Israelites show some boldness in the Lord, and are willing to battle against the Lord's enemies, the Philistines consider the Israelites an abomination.

Jonathan's initial attack was like shaking a hornet's nest. As long as we live the way satan wants us to live, he would leave us alone. As a matter of fact, satan helps us to live in carnal ways. In other words, we might have peace with satan but we are living in defeat. But as soon as we try to live for God, satan unleashes his hellish fury against us.

Saul is taking the credit for Jonathan's bold attack on the garrison of the Philistines. This is a bad sign in the heart and character of Saul. His own sense of insecurity will not allow any of his associates (even his own son!) receive credit. The fruit hangs from the lowest branch. Saul starts to show his pride and arrogance.

1 Sam 13:5-7 Then the Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which

is on the seashore in multitude. And they came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth Aven. When the men of Israel saw that they were in danger (for the people were distressed), then the people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes, and in pits. And some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

Probably, many of them had thought, "What we really need is a king. A king would solve our problems." Now they have a king and the problems are still there.

We often think things will "fix" problems when they are not at all. God intended to teach us the vanity of all carnal confidence in men. More often than not, the one we think the solution of the problem becomes the problem itself. Saul is the case in point.

1 Sam 13:8-9 Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. So Saul said, "Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me." And he offered the burnt offering.

Saul felt that the longer he waits for Samuel to come as he told him to do so about a year ago, the more difficult to fight against the Philistines. The troops were losing confidence in Saul as a leader, and beginning to scatter. Saul felt he was in a lot of trouble! As each day passes by, Saul felt that he needed to do something.

Can you relate with Saul's anxiety? Each day passes, the problem seems bigger by day, it seems we have less solutions. We become anxious and we become less spiritual. Why? Because we take our eyes off the Lord our God and focus our eyes on the problem itself.

What is wrong for Saul to offer the sacrifice to the Lord? This was plainly sinful. First, Saul plainly disobeyed Samuel. Second, Saul was a king, not a priest, and only priests were to offer sacrifices. Saul had no business doing what only a priest should do.

History shows how dangerous it is to combine religious and civic authority and God would not allow the kings of Israel to be priests and the priests to be kings. In 2 Chronicles 26, king Uzziah tried to do the work of priest and God struck him with leprosy.

Clearly, out of fear, out of panic, out of not knowing what else to do, Saul does something sinful. He was offering a sacrifice with his disobedience to God.

He didn't offer the sacrifice to seek God's face, but to keep his army in one piece. Saul tragically disobeyed both the law of Moses and the instructions of God's prophet.

Saul tried to fulfill the position of king / priest. There is only one who is a King / Priest, that is Jesus.

B. EXCUSES, EXCUSES

1 Sam 13:10 Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him.

We have tendency to give up right before the time for us. We don't have endurance. Ralph Waldo Emerson said this, "The brave man is not braver than any other. He is simply braver than others ten minutes longer."

Romans 5:3-5 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

The last moments of waiting are usually the most difficult, and tempt us most to take matters into our own hands.

1 Sam 13:11-12 And Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord.' Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering."

Samuel knew Saul had done wrong. There were no valid reasons or excuses. All Samuel wanted to hear was confession and repentance from Saul.

Saul's response is a classic example of excuse making and failure to trust God. He is coming up with the an old excuse, "The devil made me to do it." But if Saul would have obeyed and trusted God, God would have seen him to victory over the Philistines with or without the people. Saul could have great numbers in all the polling data, and if God were not with him, it would all crumble. He should have been more concerned with pleasing God instead of pleasing the people. An excuse has been defined as the skin of reason stuffed with a lie.

The whole manner of Saul's explanation makes it clear that this was no misunderstanding. He didn't ask Samuel, "Would you tell me what I did wrong?" He knew exactly what he was doing, and probably had thought of the excuses ahead of time. This was the beginning of the end. Saul's impatience cost him the kingdom.

Oh, how we should learn from Saul's mistake! We are so concerned about what other people might think about us that we completely forget the most important thing of our existence - that is pleasing God with our lives.

C. A PROPHECY AGAINST SAUL

1 Sam 13:13 And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you.

For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.

Despite all the excuses, all the reasons, all the blaming of someone else, the bottom line is still the bottom line. Samuel puts it plainly, "You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you."

Do we listen and obey our God's voice? When I do counseling, I start with a question to the person, "If I show you what you are supposed to do from the Word of God, would you do it?" If they say, "Yes," then we continue. If they say, "No," I tell them, "Let's not waste each other's time. If you are not going to do what the Lord says from the Bible, there is no reason for me to counsel you."

1 Sam 13:14-15 But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded

him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.” Then Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people present with him, about six hundred men.

We might have expected that Saul would be “impeached” as king right then and there. After all, Samuel uses the word “now.” But Saul will actually reign another 20 years. He will still be on the throne as a king, but it will never be the same, because the end of his kingdom is certain.

We tend to think that God’s postponement as God’s cancellation of His judgement.

Was this an over-reaction to what some might think was a rather small sin? Men see nothing but Saul’s outward act, which seems small. But God saw with how wicked a mind and heart he did this.

Saul was a man after Israel’s heart. He was all about image and prestige and the things men look at. But God will now give Israel a man after His own heart, and raise that man up to be king.

It would be easy to say that the kingdom was taken from Saul because of his sin. But didn’t David sin also? Yet God never took the kingdom from David and his descendants. Because the issue was bigger than an incident of sin, the issue was being a man after God’s own heart. When David sinned, he repented. When Saul sinned, he remorse that he got caught.

D. A MAN AFTER GOD’S OWN HEART

What then does it mean to be a man after His own heart?

1) A man after God’s heart HONORS THE LORD.

Saul was more concerned with his will than God’s will. David was a man after God’s heart in the way that he knew God’s will was most important. Even when David didn’t do God’s will, he still knew God’s will was more important than his own was. All sin is a disregard of God, but David sinned more out of weakness and Saul more out of a disregard for God.

2) A man after God’s heart ENTHRONES GOD AS KING.

For Saul, Saul was king. For David, the Lord God was king. Both David and Saul would have thought sacrifice important before the battle. But David thought it was important because it pleased and honored God. Saul thought it was important because it might help him win a battle. For Saul, God would help him achieve his goals. For David, God Himself was the goal.

3) A man after God’s heart HAS A SOFT, REPENTANT HEART.

When Saul was confronted with his sin, he offered excuses. When David was confronted with his sin, he simply said, *“I have sinned against the Lord.”* (2 Samuel 12:13)

4) A man after God’s heart LOVES OTHER PEOPLE.

Saul became increasingly bitter against people and lived more and more unto himself. David was a man after God’s own heart in the way that he loved people. When David was down and out, he still loved and served those who were even more down and out than himself (1 Samuel 22:1-2).

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Impatience does not come from God.

Impatience drives us to run ahead of our God. Impatience makes us to react without praying and thinking instead of proact faithfully. But patience is one of the character building parts we all need.

One of the Calvary Chapel pastors taught me to wait 48 hours before I decide to make any major decisions. A very wise advice.

2) If we think that we can improve our positions better by disobeying our God's voice, the Word, that is the sure way to go down fast.

God doesn't care about our sacrifices and service to His work. But He cares about our obedient hearts. Our sacrifices and services to Him should be nothing more than expression of our obedience to Him.

3) God wants us to obey Him with all of our hearts and minds and souls.

God wants us to have the best lives on the earth. He wants to show us His full extended relationship between Him and us. The only way we can have that relationship is through obedience.

2 Chr 16:9a For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.