

Saul 2 - Saul's First Failure

We have seen the transition from the time of the Judges to the establishment of the United Kingdom in 1 Samuel. Samuel has challenged Israel to serve God even though they had put themselves in a questionable position by seeking a king like the other nations. After a rocky start, Saul was accepted as the new king. We want to remember that David's reign will represent the saved man struggling in the world. Also, Solomon's reign will represent the glorified state of the saved man in eternal peace. After the establishment of Saul in his reign, it is pretty much downhill for Saul. The failure of Saul's reign is consistent with the carnal state of a lost man.

1. The call to battle -

Saul reigned two years in Israel while he gathered a fighting force to take on the Philistines. After an initial attack on a Philistine garrison, the Philistines were ready for a counter offensive.

1Sam 13:4-5 And all Israel heard say *that* Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and *that* Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.

5And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which *is* on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven.

With 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen on the Philistines' side, the forces of Israel started to fall apart. The people began to hide themselves and those who were left followed Saul trembling.

2. Saul's failure -

Saul had not moved right away in attacking the Philistines because he was supposed to wait for Samuel.

1Sam 13:8 And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel *had appointed*: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

Saul had been successful in his small engagement of the Philistines, but here was his true challenge. It did not take long before Saul's reign would be doomed for failure as we are going to see. Saul was waiting, but not long enough. When it came to offering a sacrifice, Saul most *certainly* should have waited for Samuel, the priest.

1Sam 13:9-10 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.

10And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

Saul's actions might have *seemed* like a good idea. After all, isn't it good to offer a sacrifice and call the people to worship? Samuel's displeasure was immediate and Saul had what seemed like a

rational explanation.

1Sam 13:11-12 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* thou camest not within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

12Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

So many times we have what seems like good reasons for doing things our own way. They might even be related to something we see in the Bible. There are times when we exercise righteous indignation when we should be showing compassion. There are times when we resting when we should be working. There are times when we are working when we should be resting.

If Saul genuinely forced himself to make the sacrifice, then that shows he knew there was something wrong with doing that. There are three grave mistakes that Saul made.

- He did not wait on the Lord.

When any of us are called to wait for anything, eventually we all get frustrated. The Scriptures are filled with admonitions to wait on God and not try to move ahead of Him.

Ps 27:14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

Ps 37:8-9 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.
9For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

Ps 37:34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see *it*.

People have rushed into business relationships, marriage, careers, and decisions of all kinds.

Waiting for God is not laziness. Waiting for God is not going to sleep. Waiting for God is not the abandonment of effort. Waiting for God means, first, activity under command; second, readiness for any new command that may come; third, the ability to do nothing until the command is given.

– G. Campbell Morgan

There is a time to move diligently, but it is after we have waited on the Lord. There can be a danger in what is called the paralysis of analysis, but more often we run the risk of hastiness because we are not in the practice of listening to God. It is interesting that the more times you wait on the Lord, the easier it is to be decisive because we have learned from Him in preparation for the challenges that come upon us.

- He took control of his situation.

This might be admirable in the world, but it is actually not a Christian virtue. Our strength comes not from our own personal ability, but from God. Someone has said, "There is nothing wrong with being a control freak if you are controlling *your* words, actions, and behaviors." Certainly when we act on God's command there is an aspect of taking control. But, the key here is that we are acting in concert with God.

Phil 4:12-13 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.
13I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

1Cor 1:26-31 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*:

27But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29That no flesh should glory in his presence.

...

31That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

- He usurped the role of the priest.

Here is the actual failure that will cost him from having his kingdom outlive him. From here, the search will be for a man after God's heart.

1Sam 13:13-14 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

14But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him *to be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the LORD commanded thee.

The roles of the king and the priest were clearly spelled out in the Scriptures. Making sacrifices was reserved only for the Levitical priesthood, not the kings.

Num 18:1-7 And the LORD said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood.

...

7Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for every thing of the altar, and within the vail; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office *unto you* as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

Also, even the attempt to make a sacrifice had a self-serving aspect to it. Some sacrifices were to be entirely burnt, but this one was possibly the kind that was consumed by the people. At any rate,

Saul had violated the commandment of God concerning the priesthood.

3. Disqualification -

In another message from 1 Samuel, we examined the fact that when we live imprudently, we can still repent and serve God. I referred to how we ought not trivialize or ignore our past, but that there is hope to be able to serve God no matter what state we find ourselves in. This is probably the general way of life. However, we have come to the point in 1 Samuel where we have to recognize that there *are* some decisions we make that *can* disqualify us. If I were to drive wrecklessly, have an accident and lose my legs, I will certainly not be joining Harold in a marathon!

We might be able to serve God within the bounds of our circumstances, but there are some things that limit us and disqualify us from the blessings we could have enjoyed. David is a prime example. He was a man after God's own heart. He was a child of God. His representation of the saved man in his time on earth included the fact that this life is a time of struggle. In his struggle with temptation, he found his reign diminished for the rest of his life after his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. He was forever tagged with the phrase "save only in the matter of Uriah, the Hittite."

1Kgs 15:5 Because David did *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

2Sam 12:9-10 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

10Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

We should be careful to not be obsessed with what it takes to be disqualified. Instead, we should concern ourselves with consistently fearing and serving God.

Heb 10:31 *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Paul was concerned about this.

1Cor 9:25-27 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. [**Self control**] Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Paul was not concerned about losing his salvation, but his possible disqualification from serving God. If Paul was concerned about this, how much more should *we* be watchful and careful? If you are not in the path of God's will, you might miss a very special connection. Nancy shared this devotional recently online:

We recently installed one of those high-tech doorbells that sends a video to our phones of anyone who comes to the door, or so we thought. Despite the specific settings, our phones are now constantly dinging when anyone simply walks past our home. Since our street is one of the most traveled in town, our phones have been in overdrive. At first, we checked our phones each time we heard a ding. But after nearly a week of numerous false alarms, we were annoyed and didn't bother to look anymore. Then we realized if we continued to ignore the dings, we would miss the genuinely true connections.

Yesterday, our church sent out teams for evangelistic outreach. There were many people who would not bother to pause, talk, or even receive Gospel literature. They either kept walking or put their hand up like a stop sign. To them, this was just another annoying ding. They have stopped bothering to look because they have been deceived too many times. Society has been overwhelmed with false messages from cults, humanism, New Age nonsense, and erroneous religious systems that all claim to be that one important connection that will change their lives. In reality they offer nothing. Most folks don't realize that if they stop looking, they will miss the only One who truly can change their lives, their deaths, and their eternal destinies.

There is another disqualification that people need to be very concerned about. As an illustration, you could be a foreign policy expert, a highly credentialed economist, and a military hero. But, if you are not a natural born citizen, you will be disqualified from becoming the President of the United States. Similarly, you could have all kinds of theology degrees, take care of the homeless and the hungry, or hold some high church office. But, if you are not born *again* as a *child of God*, you will be disqualified from entering heaven. Some decisions might hamper us in life while we are still on the way to eternity with Christ, but that is only because Jesus has met the qualifications for heaven for us. The consequences of not turning to Him for salvation are not only long lasting, they are eternal. We must make sure of our citizenship in heaven. If you haven't been born again into God's kingdom, you are disqualified from spending eternity in heaven.

For those who *are* citizens of heaven, there is always a possibility of messing up so bad to be disqualified as Paul feared. It is more likely, though, that we should be watchful to avoid the sins that doth so easily beset us lest our efforts in Christ be foiled at *any* time.

Heb 12:1-2 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

1. The call to battle - 1Sam 13:4-5
2. Saul's failure - 1Sam 13:8-12, Ps 27:14, 37:8-9,34, Phil 4:12-13, 1Cor 1:26-31, 1Sam 13:13-14, Num 18:1-7
3. Disqualification - 1Kgs 15:5, 2Sam 12:9-10, Heb 10:31 , 1Cor 9:25-27, Heb 12:1-2