

1st Samuel 13:1-15:35
Saul, the Disobedient King

Introduction

1. In our passage last week, we saw the appointment and coronation of Israel's first king, Saul
2. Israel's demand for a king "just like the other nations" was a rejection of God as their King, but even with such an act of rebellion there was still hope for them to experience the blessings and protection of God
3. In the final few verses of chapter 12 Samuel we read Samuel's warning and encouragement to Israel (READ 12:20-35)
4. Today we learn that Saul did not take these words to heart, and as a result was rejected by God as Israel's king
5. In our three chapters today we are going to look at five events in Saul's life that indicate why he was unfit to serve as Israel's king and why God ultimately rejected him

A. Saul's unacceptable sacrifice (13:1-23)

1. Saul and Jonathan attack and defeat a Philistine stronghold at Geba and then head down to Gilgal as Samuel commanded in 10:8)
2. The Philistines regroup with a massive force—"30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance" (13:5)
3. When the Israelite soldiers learned of this all but 600 scatter—some hid in "in caves, in thickets, in cliffs, in cellars, and in pits" (13:6) and others "crossed the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead" (13:7)
4. In a panic, Saul sinned by performing a sacrifice (READ 13:8-14)
 - a. In 1 Samuel 10:8, Samuel commanded Saul that when he got to Gilgal he was to wait seven days for Samuel to come and make the burnt offering and peace offering
 - b. At first glance, it looks like Saul obeyed and waited the seven days before making the sacrifice himself: "Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal" (8)
 - c. The key here is to understand that Saul was to wait for two things—seven days **AND** for Samuel to make the sacrifice
 - d. V. 10 tells us that as soon as Saul finished making the sacrifice, Samuel showed up—and this was still on the seventh day
 - e. Sacrifices were generally made twice a day—and **ONLY by the priests**--once in the morning and again in the evening; it appears Saul anxiously made his sacrifice in the morning instead of waiting the full day for Samuel to arrive
5. When Samuel confronts Saul, he blames everyone else for his sin (13:10-12):
 - a. He blamed the soldiers who scattered
 - b. He blamed Samuel
 - c. He blamed the Philistines
 - d. So, it wasn't his fault he sinned—after all, he "**forced [himself] and offered the burnt offering**" (12)
 - e. But, Samuel called it what it was—a foolish act of not keeping the Lord's commandment

6. As a result, God would not allow Saul's kingdom to endure (13:13b-14):
 - a. Had Saul chosen to obey the Lord (not just here, but generally), God would have "established your kingdom over Israel forever" (13)
 - b. But, because of Saul's disobedience, God would not allow Saul's kingdom to continue after his death
 - c. Instead, He would appoint a new king, one after His own heart, over Israel—an obvious reference to David

B. Saul's foolish oath (14:1-35)

- a. Another battle with the Philistines ensues after Jonathan and his arm bearer single handedly kill 20 Philistine soldiers
- b. After God confuses the Philistines and defeats them, Saul is emboldened and foolishly puts his soldiers under an oath which leads to their sinning against God (**READ 14:24-34**):
 - 1) The text says that the people were "**hard-pressed**" because of Saul's command:
 - a) This is the same word used in Exodus 3:7 to describe the affliction the Hebrews were under when they were told to make bricks when the Egyptians refused to provide them with straw
 - b) They were exhausted and hungry after doing battle, but prohibited from eating anything
 - c) Later on, the text says they were "**weary**" (31)
 - 2) Saul's oath was motivated by his own vengeance and pride (14:24): "**...until I have avenged myself on my enemies**"
 - 3) As a result of this foolish command/oath, after the next battle the soldiers "**rushed greedily upon the spoil, and took sheep and oxen and calves, and slew them on the ground; and the people ate them with the blood.**"
 - 4) Even Saul recognized this sin in this, but fails to see himself as the cause

C. Saul's stubborn pride (READ 14:37-46)

1. Facing yet another battle with the Philistines, Saul asks God whether or not he should go down and attack the Philistines
2. However, God does not answer him
3. Suspecting that God's silence has something to do with someone violating the oath he imposed on his soldiers, he calls for an investigation to find the culprit
4. When he discovers that Jonathan, his own son, had violated the oath by eating honey, he attempts to put him to death
5. Had the people not intervened, Saul would have succeeded

D. Saul's outright disobedience (15:1-23)

1. The Lord sends Saul on a mission, one that has the potential to mend his relationship with the Lord (15:1-3):
 - a. The Lord sets out to punish the Amalekites for attacking Israel during the Exodus
 - b. He commanded Saul to attack them and destroy everything
 - 1) All their possessions
 - 2) All of the people

- 3) All of the livestock
- c. This was a divine act of God's judgment on a wicked people
 - 1) The Hebrew word haram (utterly destroy) is rather interesting
 - 2) It refers to irrevocably surrendering something to God, and generally by destroying it
 - 3) If you remember our study of Joshua, this word is used to refer to things under the ban—items that Israel was forbidden from taking as spoil when they destroyed some of the cities during the conquest
 - 4) This word is used eight times in this chapter and makes it clear that EVERYTHING in Amalek was off limits to Saul and the Israelites:
 - a) Therefore, they could not take it as spoil
 - b) It all belonged to God and He demanded that it be destroyed
2. But Saul failed to fully carry out God's command (**READ 15:4-12**):
 - a. He kills all the people, but spares the King
 - b. He keeps the best of the spoils and only destroys the **"despised and worthless"** stuff
 - c. This led to God regretting making Saul king and Samuel becoming angry and crying out to the Lord all night long (NET: **"I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned away from me and has not done what I told him to do." Samuel became angry and he cried out to the LORD all that night"**)
3. When confronted, Saul attempts to justify himself (**READ 15:13-21**):
 - a. Saul was oblivious to his sin, greets Samuel enthusiastically, and even announces that he carried out the command of the Lord
 - b. Samuel knows otherwise, not just because God told him about Saul's sin, but because he could see and hear the spoils!
 - c. Saul twice tries to justify his actions by claiming that **"they"** (the people had kept the best of the spoils to sacrifice to the Lord—in his second attempt, he stresses that he obeyed but the people took the spoils (15:21)
4. Samuel rebukes Saul with a reminder that God desires obedience above all else (**READ 15:22-23**):
 - a. The LORD did desire offerings and sacrifices but not as much as He desired obeying His voice because obedience is better than sacrifice
 - 1) Hosea 6:6: **"For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."**
 - 2) Isaiah 1:11: **"What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats."**
 - 3) Proverbs 21:3: **"To do righteousness and justice Is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice."**
 - 4) Psalm 51:17: **"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."**
 - b. But, Saul's actions were the result of **"rebellion"** and **"insubordination"** so God rejected him as king (23-24)

E. Saul's superficial confession (READ 15:24-35)
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1. Saul finally admits that he sinned, but it's superficial
2. He is more concerned about his reputation before Israel, than the fact that he offended God
3. He makes three attempts to retain Samuel's favor:
 - a) In the first he asks Samuel to pardon his sin and return home with him so he can worship God (15:24-26); he didn't need Samuel to worship the Lord)
 - b) In the second, he grabs Samuel's robe and ends up tearing it (15:27-29)
 - c) In the third—and this is where his real motives are revealed—he begs Samuel to return with him and **“honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and go back with me, that I may worship the LORD your God.”**

Conclusion

1. There are obviously a number of questions that are probably on most of our minds:
 - a. When God made Saul king, didn't He know what kind of king he would turn out to be?
 - b. Why would God still make him king?
2. The answer to the first question is obviously yes since God is omniscient (all-knowing), but the answer to the second isn't provided in the Bible so we are left to speculation
3. However, a better question might be what are we to learn from our passage today and I have two suggestions:
 - a. First, twice the text says that God regretted making Saul king (v. 11 and 35)
 - 1) The word that's used here implies a sense of sorrow or grief
 - 2) It's the same word used in Genesis 6:6 just prior to God wiping out the earth in the Flood: **“The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.”**
 - 3) What we learn here is not that God was sorry or made a mistake (in creating man or making Saul king), **but rather that God grieves over sin**
 - 4) I need to admit that I often forget this--that my sin not only offends God, **but grieves Him**
 - b. A second thing we can learn from our passage is related: obedience is better than sacrifice:
 - 1) When Saul's army was abandoning him and he sought the Lord's help, he thought he could garner it by offering a sacrifice
 - 2) The Israelites thought they could earn God's favor by worshipping God through the pagan sacrifices of their Canaanite neighbors
 - 3) The Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus's day thought God was please by their strict adherence to their religious practice
 - 4) But, in each of these examples, we learned that God doesn't want dead sacrifices, but LIVING SACRIFICES
 - 5) Paul put it this way in Romans 12:1-2: **“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”**