

1st Samuel ch 13

Since it's been awhile since we've been here let me remind you that Saul has officially/politically placed into his office as Israel's king. And Israel was reminded by Samuel that even though Saul was their king, it was God who was on the throne and in control. The people had wanted a king like the other nations and so Saul was that choice, a good looking man, head and shoulders taller than everyone else, he just looked the part, but we'll find that he didn't have the heart for the part.

And the fact is, that God didn't ordain them to have a king at this point, but rather He just honored their desire to want someone besides Himself over them, and it was sin on Israel's part to reject the Lord as their King. But I find that we're not all together that much different when it comes to the priorities of our own lives. God show Himself faithful time and time again to us, never lets us down, is always there to look out after us, to provide for us, to tend to our needs, and be our defense. And yet at the drop of a hat, or the moment things don't seem to be going in a direction that we *feel* they should, we have a tendency to begin to doubt God and look to other things or another person to do that for us which we're to be trusting God for.\

But Samuel recounted Israel's history to them, not for the purposes of a history lesson, but rather to demonstrate to them how *in* all of their history, God has been nothing but *good* to them (be it through discipline or deliverance), and he (Samuel) has done nothing that's *bad* to them. And yet they've rebelled over and over again against the Lord, and their rebellion is sort of culminating in their rejecting God as their King, and accepting Saul as their king, (And of course Saul was standing there listening to all of that, no doubt feeling a bit awkward, knowing that he's the result of Israel's sin in rejecting God.)

But again we have such an incredible display of the grace of God in ch 12 because God in His love and in His mercy says to the people through Samuel, and I believe it's a word from the Lord for maybe some of you tonight. But he says to them, (Look at vs 20-22 of ch 12).

Hey, maybe you've messed up royally, maybe you've done countless things wrong, all kinds of things that you shouldn't have, yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but *serve* the Lord with all your heart. Where else are you going to go, everything else that you might turn aside to are empty things that cannot profit or deliver for they are nothing. Yeah, yesterday, or maybe even today you've felt in your heart about as far away from the Lord as you could get, but now God is calling out to you to come home to Him, to serve Him *now*, from this point forward with all your heart. In other words repent and move on, don't be beat up with condemnation, now don't think that God is just winking at your sin and "Hey, it's no big deal" no, no, you do well not to mock the grace of God.

The key there is to "serve" the Lord with all your heart, if you're serving the Lord, you're no longer abiding in sin or rebellion against Him; you've repented.

It's like the woman that was cast at the feet of the Lord having been caught in adultery, whom Jesus ministered to and scattered her accusers saying, "*He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.*" John 8:7 and When they all split, He looked at her and said, "*Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?*" She said, "*No one, Lord.*" And Jesus said to her, "*Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.*" John 8:10-11 In other words, He's the God of new beginnings and we can repent and start over with a fresh clean slate in Christ, but the key is, "sin no more." Don't continue in rebellion against the Lord and His desires in your life, placing other things as priority over Him, allowing something or someone else to become your king, look at vs 25.

Vs1-2

So apparently the 1st year of his reign went relatively smooth, no major out bursts, remained in a demeanor of humility and usability, but when I see this distinction made here in vs 1 I'm immediately alerted to the fact that something's changed. He reigned 1 year, "*and when he had reigned 2 years*" you see, there's a distinction being made here, it's a tip off that things are already beginning to be disrupted in the flow of his monarchy. Now you remember that Saul started off fairly well, but we see here that his humility and usability really didn't last long. Again keep in mind that Saul won the *people's* choice award, he wasn't God's pick. As a matter of fact when he was raised up, he really didn't even know the Lord. And I wouldn't be surprised to learn if Paul the apostle wasn't considering the chronicles of Saul's life, and seeing the folly in placing him in such a position being completely ungrounded in who the Lord even was when the Holy Spirit inspired him to write to us concerning those who are to take positions of leadership in the church. We read in 1 Tim 3:6 regarding those who desire the position of a bishop, or an overseer in the church where Paul says concerning him to us, "*not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.*" In other words to desire that position is an honorable thing, but we're not to establish new believers into such a place, because it can be to their ruin, and we see that lived out in Saul's life, he gets filled with pride and paranoia, and it begins to snowball in an irreversible downhill slide that leads to Saul's destruction.

Now you recall that when Saul rallied Israel together to deliver the men of Jabesh-Gilead that some 330,000 men showed up. Well, after that was all over, apparently he took roughly 1 percent of those men whom he considered to be the best of the best to be his personal army, and the rest he sent home. 2,000 of those men he kept for himself, and 1,000 he delegated to his son, now Jonathon didn't just set around and twiddle his thumbs and bask in his authority and command over a thousand men, he began to move on the offense towards those oppressors of Israel.

Vs 3-4

Now are you seeing what's happening here? Jonathon slew the Philistines, and Saul, blew the trumpet and spread the word that it was his victory. We might say that Saul was blowing his own horn, literally, he was lifting himself up, and taking credit for another mans work.

Maybe since he didn't sanction the attack, he didn't want the people to think that he didn't have command of the situation and so he fashioned a lie and began to spread the word that he was the one who took the victory. But we're beginning to see the cracks in Saul's character here, he's being puffed up with pride, rather than simply humbling himself and giving Jonathon the proper credit, he's blowing his own horn. Prov 27:2 says, "*Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips.*" In other words we're not to be going around blowing our own horns, praising ourselves, spreading good news about what we've done, it's not becoming as a child of God, it wreaks of pride and arrogance.

Saul wanted people to think more highly of him than what he deserved to be thought of, maybe you can relate. But it's a dangerous place to be in, because pride goes before the fall, and the haughty spirit before destruction.

The word was spread that Saul had done a great work, and the credit was given to some great military prowess of his when in reality, Jonathon had done the work and he never said a word about it. He simply walked in humility, didn't need the recognition of man, because God knew the truth. And so God will continue to use Jonathon while Saul slips more and more into oblivion with his reasoning, and lifts himself up in pride, and falls prey to paranoia. But it's been said, and we know it to be true that the branch that bears the most fruit, always hangs the lowest.

If I'm truly a fruitful believer, not just a bunch of hype and fanfare, but if I'm truly fruitful, if you're truly fruitful, there won't be a lifting up, but rather a bending down, why? Because the branch that bears the most fruit will always hang the lowest, Saul wasn't that way, he wasn't walking lowly and in humility, but rather he was standing tall, blowing his own horn, and it marks the beginning of the end for him. Not because there's no room to repent, but because he never did, over all, Saul isn't a repentant fella, he's a proud man, and the bible teaches that pride brings a man low, and such will ultimately be the case with Saul.

And notice that this little escapade caused Israel to become an abomination in the sight of their enemies; the same is true for you and me. Now our battle isn't against flesh and blood, but against powers and principalities, against rulers of darkness and spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. But the point is that as long as you're willing to stay in a sub-servant position, and lead a defeated Christian life, then everything is Ok. But when you're no longer willing to be in that place of defeat and you begin to move on the offense, then you become an abomination to the enemy and he mounts up forces against you, even as we see happening here. But unfortunate to some believers peace with the devil is more important than victory in the Lord, because they don't want the opposition. And I hear this a lot, people don't want to get involved because it's not worth going through the warfare, they'd rather have peace with the enemy, than gain victory in the Lord. But such was not the case with Jonathon, nor should it be with you.

So even though Jonathan was bold enough in the Lord to declare war, the rest of Israel wasn't bold enough to follow his lead. But we see in this the fact that fear and distress has a tendency to pressure us to retreat, now you would think that Saul would do something here but we read that he's still in Gilgal. In other words he hasn't done anything, he's still where he was appointed king, not taking any steps towards liberating Israel, and the people that were still with him were all freaking out.

Vs8-9

Saul was in a panic, he didn't know what to do since all the people were beginning to scatter, Samuel had told him that before he engaged with the Philistines to wait for 7 days for him to get there and then he'd offer burnt offerings to the Lord and give him direction, (we read this back in ch 10:8).

But when it looked like Samuel wasn't coming the people were all leaving, Saul buckled under the pressure and said, "Bring the burnt offerings and the peace offerings to me" he's thinking we can't go into battle until we've made peace with God, or consecrated ourselves to God, Samuel's not here, and something's got to give. It's almost a superstitious act for Saul, much like when the sons of Eli brought the ark into battle, if we do "this", then God will be bound to do "that". And God doesn't work that way, He's not a debtor to us, we're debtors to Him.

But what does Saul do here? He seeks to fulfill the role of a priest, if offering the sacrifices, and that was a no, no. Because he was a king, and kings were strictly forbidden to engage in the role of a priest, and priests weren't to engage in the role of a king, why? Because there's only one Man who is able to adequately perform both the duties of King, and the Great High Priest, and that's the man Christ Jesus.

Vs10-14

Now from the surface this might seem to be a bit harsh, I mean was it really that big of a deal? But the answer is yes, it's huge, because so often this is the way the Lord works. God waited until the last minute to send Samuel in, the pressure was mounting up, the enemy was lining up against them, the people were beginning to scatter and the offerings had to be made, and Saul felt as though he'd waited as long as he could and he panicked, and it cost him big time.

So many times we feel as though we wait, and we wait, and we wait, and something has to give, something has to happen, something has to get done and like Saul we act foolishly.

But if we would only learn the lesson of this event it would save us so much heartache and grief, what's the lesson? "Wait", don't panic, persevere, wait upon the Lord, and know that often times God likes to wait until the last minute, the last second to step in. Why, is it because He's teasing you, or He's teasing me?

No, He's testing me, He's bringing me right down to the wire, testing me so that I might learn what? Endurance, James chapter 1 teaches you and me the necessity of trials, so that we might learn to persevere, because this race that we're in isn't a sprint, you and I know it's a marathon, we're in it for the long haul and we need to learn to persevere, to endure.

And God will often test us, in not showing up until the last minute so that we can learn to endure, not to panic, but to persevere, the tests produce trust, they teach us the faithfulness of God.

But so often people panic, "We've got to do something" "time is running out", but you can give me all kinds of recommendations, and I can give you all sorts of ideas to try, but until God shows up there's not going to be any real solution, and God would have us to learn that.

It's a lesson that Saul didn't get, he said, "I had to do something!" "The people were scattering, you pulled a no show, the enemy was mounting up against me, so I had to do something!" Saul instead of humbling himself and crying out for forgiveness, begins to make excuses, and play the blame game, he blames everyone but himself. And you and I both know that the individual who's good at making excuses is rarely good for anything else, it's always someone else's fault. Saul was driven by emotion, but we're called to walk by faith, he felt compelled to do something, but by faith he should have waited on the Lord.

And Samuel said to him, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God which He commanded you." (Underline that in your bible) God was going to do a great work in your life Saul, but because you won't obey His Word, your kingdom shall not continue. You guys it doesn't matter how we "feel" about a certain situation, if our feelings compel us to take action that doesn't line up with the word of God then we're not to do it.

It's pure foolishness not to heed the word of God, we talked about that Sunday morning. The need that we have to abide in God's Word, because how can we take heed to the Word of God, if we don't know what it says, if we're not spending time in it? It's not sufficient to have a general idea of the precepts of God's Word in our heads, we need detailed instructions in our hearts if we're to walk accordingly, and to get them we need to spend time soaking in the Word of God on a daily basis. And that's how we cleanse our way, by taking heed according to God's Word, Saul didn't take heed, and it's costing him big, God help us to learn the lesson.

Because God doesn't need you, or need me to do His work, He wants to bless us and use us to bring Him glory, but if you won't, or if I won't, than He has someone who will. In this case Samuel is in regards to David, God has commissioned *him*, or commanded him to be over His people because of 2 reasons, #1 because he has a heart that's after God's or a heart after God's understanding, he's in tune with the Lord, and #2 because Saul won't keep God's Word.

These are heavy exhortations, if you or I won't keep the word of God and lead repentant lives, God will strip us of the place that He's called us to, He'll put us on the shelf. That's why Paul said, "*I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*" 1 Cor 9:27 How critical it is that we heed the Word of God, and strive for a heart, pray for a heart, seek to establish a heart by God's grace that's after His own. Saul was a man after Israel's heart, he was all about image, the people's choice, but David was a man after God's heart, about reflecting God's image, God's choice.

You see the issue wasn't simply a matter of sin, though that certainly played a chief part, but David had plenty of sin in his life as well, but it went beyond a simple matter of sin (if we can call it simple) but it was a matter of the heart.

What does it mean to be an individual after God's heart? Well, what we learn about Saul is what kind of man it is that's not after God's heart, or God's understanding. And David Guzik did a wonderful job outlining this particular aspect of things so I hope you don't mind but I'm just going to quote him. #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." So #1 A man after God's heart will honor the Lord. #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). And #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." and He sights 1 Samuel 22:1-2 as a reference to that.

But this is the kind of person that God was and is looking for, a man after His own heart. Again Guzik goes on to say, "When we think of *a man after His own heart*, many of us think that this is a title reserved for a few "super-spiritual" folks. It isn't for *us*. We want these kinds of people around us, but we never think we can be one of them. We aren't spiritual enough. But look at David: a warrior who killed hundreds of men with his own hands, a fugitive, a traitor, a man who had seasons of backsliding, an adulterer, a murderer. Yet he could be called a man after His own heart. If David can have our sins, then we can have his heart. We can love God and pursue Him with the kind of focus and heart David had."

The work that God was doing in Saul's life got cut short because of disobedience in Saul's life, at the end of vs 14 in my bible I wrote, "God help me to keep all that you command of me."

I don't want to panic, I want to persevere, because I know that God's commands are God's equippings. What He commands us to do, He provides the means for us to accomplish them by, Noah obeyed God's command and God blessed him. Moses and the children of Israel obeyed God at Passover at the time of the Exodus and God honored that and delivered them from the bonds of Egypt, God honors obedience, to obey (we'll see later) is better than sacrifice. How could Saul think that God would bless his disobedience?

Vs15

So they've scattered from 2,000 down to 600.

Vs16-23

Interesting, the enemies of God's people disarmed them by taking from them their swords, their prime weapon of warfare, so that they wouldn't be a threat or concern to them any longer.

This is always what Satan seeks to do, "You don't need your sword" he'd say to you, he'd say to me. "I'll give you the various tools you need to succeed in life, go to college, get that information from the internet, I'll give you what you need to make you successful financially or educationally, but I'm going to take away your sword."

Now it's not wrong to go to school or make good money, but when it's at the expense of your sword, when you lay down your sword, the word of God, in order to seek those other things, you've been taken captive, you've been subjected to the enemies oppression in your life.

People's libraries filled with all these books from secular authors, self-help books maybe, or whatever, and they'll spend hours researching a certain subject from an unbelievers point of view, but they won't get into God's word and see what God has to say on the subject.

How many people do we know that neglect the word of God? They use the tools of the world, but have willingly surrendered their sword, and it's a Satanic ploy, it's one of the devices of the enemy.

But now that Israel finds themselves completely overwhelmed and out numbered, the odds are stacked just right for God to do a work, and no one but Him to get the glory, and that's just the way God likes it. He wants the glory in your life, and so often times He allows us to come to such a place where we're in so over our head, that anything less than God will fail, and then He gets the honor, and the glory.