

REJECTING GOD'S DESIGN FOR LEADERSHIP

- ... Transition from Samuel (Period of Judges / Theocracy)
- ... To Saul (Monarchy / The People's Choice)
- ... To David (the man after God's own heart)

Lessons in I Samuel

by Paul G. Apple, February 2003

For each section:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

"they have rejected Me from being king over them" (Judges 8:7)

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BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF 1 SAMUEL

Jeffries:

The best introduction to the Book of 1 Samuel expresses in one declarative sentence the full impact of the social, political, historical and theological dynamics which characterized God's Chosen People at the time of its writing:

Judges 21:25 [NKJV]

"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

a. Historically, 1 Samuel is the record of Israel's political transformation from a marginal tribal community rendered impotent by the presence of the Philistines to a centralized independent monarchy which became a world-class power.

b. When the narrative begins -- 1100 - 1050 B.C. -- Israel was in moral and spiritual chaos. The terrible civil war against the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 19 - 21) had broken the heart of the already-struggling nation, and years of undisciplined religion -- the refusal to obey Jahweh -- had removed the people from the source of their spiritual power. Having lost all governing authority and the ability to defend themselves, their disobedience had finally removed their one abiding resource. The nation was in danger of complete collapse.

Malick:

"YHWH'S DELIVERANCE OF HIS PEOPLE FROM THE OPPRESSION OF EVIL WILL NOT BE REALIZED THROUGH THOSE LIKE ELI AND SAUL WHO TRUST IN NATURAL STRENGTH BUT THROUGH THOSE LIKE HANNAH, SAMUEL, JONATHAN, AND DAVID WHO IN THEIR WEAKNESS TRUST IN HIM."

Davis:

"Triumph and tragedy are the two words which best describe the content of the books of Samuel. Some of Israel's greatest moments of glory and darkest hours of defeat are retold with simplicity and candor. The stories retold in these books are of significant value didactically for this present age. The faith and the failures of both great and small are viewed in the light of sovereign grace. Historically the books are masterpieces of national record.

The campaigns of Joshua conducted about 1400 B.C. enabled the children of Israel to occupy the hill country and certain sections of the lowlands. However, with that occupancy came the gradual infiltration of Canaanitic social and religious practices. These had a tremendous negative effect on the progress of Israelite colonization. Due to the subtle infiltration of Baalism, the spiritual life of Israel very quickly degenerated into a state of apostasy. The rise of divinely appointed judges during this period provided mainly for military needs. Under many of the judges there was a noticeable spiritual decline, and in many cases, this was either initiated or permitted by the judges themselves. In addition to the internal strife and spiritual weakness there was increasing military pressure upon Israel from the outside. It was in this context that the prophet

Samuel made his appearance, and a most important one it was. He was a very capable physician coming to the aid of Israel at a time when her fever was at the highest.”

Baxter: “In the case of 1 Samuel there is really no need to burden ourselves with a detailed analysis. Fix it well in the mind – and the memory will easily retain it – that 1 Samuel is the book of the transition from the theocracy to the monarchy; and the book of the three remarkable men – Samuel, the last of the Judges, Saul, the first of the Kings, and David, the greatest of the kings.

If we remember this, we can not easily forget the central spiritual message of the book. God had called Israel into a unique relationship with Himself; and God Himself was Israel’s King invisible. Through disobedience the people had brought chastisement upon themselves from time to time, but were willing to attribute much of this, later, to the fact that they had no human and visible king, such as the surrounding nations had; and now, at length, as Samuel ages, and his sons prove perverse, the people make it the occasion to press for a human king. The fateful choice is recorded in chapter viii. which should be read carefully. It was a retrograde step, dictated merely by seeming expedience. It was the way of human wisdom, not of faith in God. It was taking the lower level. It was a refusing of God’s best, for the second best—and there is much difference between the two.”

David Guzik :

“1 and 2 Samuel form one book in the ancient Hebrew manuscripts. They were not divided into two books until the Old Testament was translated into Greek. We don’t know who wrote the books; certainly, Samuel was a major contributor, but much of the book takes place after his death in 1 Samuel 25. They are called the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, not because he wrote all of them, but because they describe his great ministry in Israel and the legacy of it. ”

<http://calvarychapel.com/simivalley/commentaries/0901.htm>

Savidge:

LEADERSHIP: FROM THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE
OVERVIEW OF 1 SAMUEL

I. (1-7) THEOCRACY = GOD'S WAY OF RUNNING A NATION

A. Advantages:

1. God is the only perfect ruler
2. omnipotent
3. has immediate presence

B. Intermediates: priests / judges / prophets -- possibility of compromise

II. (8) TRANSITION = PEOPLE REJECTING GOD'S WAY

A. Request (:1-5)

B. Response they received (:6-18)

C. Result (:19-22) = they got the king they wanted

he was limited in all the 3 areas where God had the advantage

III. (9-31) MONARCHY = THE WORLD'S WAY

A. Saul = King of outward appearance (10:23-24)

B. David = King after God's own heart -- even he made crucial mistakes
(16:7); Acts 13:20-23

TEXT: 1 Samuel 1: 1-18

TITLE: HANNAH'S PRAYER OF DESPERATION

BIG IDEA:

PASSIONATE PRAYER CAN TRANSFORM A ROOT OF BITTERNESS INTO A SEED OF BLESSING

INTRODUCTION:

What are your unfulfilled dreams? When have your expectations of blessing from the Lord been frustrated or delayed?

I. (:1-8) UNFULFILLED DREAMS CAN FOSTER A ROOT OF BITTERNESS

A. (:1-5) The Sovereign Lord Sometimes Frustrates Our Dreams of Fulfillment in Order to Drive Us to Himself

1. (:1-2) The Sad Reality = Hannah had no children
 - a. Significance of Childlessness in Hebrew Culture
 - b. Sadness Compounded by Contrast of Fertility of Rival Peninnah
“Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children”

2. (:3-5a) The Failure of Any Human Consolation
 - a. Godly Husband Consistent in His Pattern of Obedient Worship
“Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh”
 - b. Loving Husband Made Every Effort to Compensate for Unfulfilled Dreams
“but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah”

3. (:5b) The Paradoxical Providence of the Sovereign Lord
“but the Lord had closed her womb”

B. (:6-7) Jealous Rivals Can Distract Us From Finding Contentment in the Lord (Peninnah)

1. Insecurity Can Motivate Provocation from Jealous Rivals
“Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her”

2. Bitterness Can Develop over Time as Dreams Remain Unfulfilled
“And it happened year after year”

3. Emotional Scars Can Lead to Physical Problems
“so she wept and would not eat”

C. (:8) Loving Counselors Cannot Adequately Cure the Bitterness (Elkanah)

1. Problem Addressed by Loving Counselor

“Then Elkanah her husband said to her”

2. Symptoms of Bitterness Exposed

“Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad?”

3. Adequate Compensation Impossible

“Am I not better to you than ten sons?”

II. (:9-16) DESPERATE, PASSIONATE PRAYER SEEKS BLESSING AND FULFILLMENT FROM A COMPASSIONATE, SOVEREIGN GOD

A. (:9-10) Prayer of Desperation and Distress

1. Priority of Prayer

“Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh”

2. Lack of Self-Consciousness

Oblivious to the presence of Eli the priest

“Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the Lord”

3. Spirit of Desperation and Distress

“And she, greatly distressed, prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly”

B. (:11) Vow of Consecration

“then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head”

C. (:12-16) Outpouring of the Soul Easily Misunderstood

1. Wrong Perception: Eli thought she was drunk

2. Explanation: *“I have poured out my soul before the Lord”*

III. (:17-18) ASSURANCE OF A SEED OF BLESSING TRANSFORMS BITTERNESS INTO JOY

A. (:17) Assurance of Answered Prayer

1. Authority of the Priest to speak on God’s behalf

“Then Eli answered and said”

2. Transformation of Spirit

“Go in peace”

3. Assurance of Answered Prayer

“and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him”

B. (:18) Response of Humble Joy

1. Promise Received with Humility

“Let your maidservant find favor in your sight”

2. Behavior and Countenance Transformed from Bitterness to Joy

a. Behavior

“So the woman went her way and ate”

b. Countenance

“and her face was no longer sad”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Have you ever experienced what Bill Gothard describes as: Birth of a Vision / Death of a Vision / Fulfillment of a Vision? What did you learn through this experience? When have you been heartbroken over unfulfilled dreams? How did you respond?

2) If Hannah wanted a child so desperately, why was she willing to make such a vow regarding giving up the child to the service of the Lord?

3) Should Eli have been more sensitive to the distressed spirit of Hannah? What type of priest was Eli?

4) How well do we listen to God? Compare how the different people in this story responded to God. How can we increase the passion and fervency of our prayers?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Davis: “In great bitterness of soul (v. 10; cf. II Kings 4:27) she prayed to the Lord and the essence of this prayer is wrapped up in two words found in verse 11, ‘remember me.’ These words have a familiar ring to them. They represent the prayer of a soul in desperate need. One is reminded of the simplicity of Samson’s prayer recorded in Judges 16:28. In blindness and helplessness he cried out to his God and asked to be ‘remembered.’ This prayer was also found on the lips of a man being crucified at Calvary. One of the malefactors who was hanged with Jesus looked to Him with faith and said, ‘Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom’ (Luke 23:42). The sincerity and the simplicity of this pleas were quickly recognized by the Lord, and He replied, ‘To day shalt thou be with me in paradise (Luke 23:42).”

Falwell:

“Hannah was a mother who properly prepared for her children, and you can learn life - changing lessons from her. This morning I am going to speak of five things that Hannah did:

1. Hannah prayed to have a child.
2. Hannah prayed for her child’s spirituality.
3. Hannah promised her child to God.
4. Hannah prepared her children to serve God.
5. Hannah praised God for her children.

In a day when Planned Parenthood makes the wrong plans for the unborn, let’s look at Hannah who makes the right plans for the unborn. Would to God that every future mother in the world followed the example of Hannah. ”

Wayne Burnett: God’s Purpose in Barrenness

I. BARRENESS

A. A common physical problem among women

B. Barren - unfruitful, unproductive, childless,

C. Barren women in scripture

-Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Minoa’s wife, Hanna, Elizabeth

D. The disgrace of a woman being barren

-It is hard for us to imagine how devastating these events would have been for the childless wife. She was spiritually disturbed, socially disgraced, and psychologically depressed. She was married to a husband who wanted a child to assure the continuation of his family line. That husband might continue to love her, but she felt that was small consolation. It was in fact a great mercy, for a resentful husband could have made her life unbearable. Barrenness was often viewed as an act of God

E. There are many things people would do to cure barrenness

-fertility foods (mandrakes - love apples), fertility figurines, amulets, fertility goddesses, handmaid, adoption

-people use fertility drugs today

III. GOD HAS A PURPOSE IN BARRENESS

A. The word barren could be applied in other ways

-the barren ground -II Ki 2:19 ...the water is naught, and the ground barren.

-spiritual condition -Deut 7:14 Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.

B. God cares about the barren and wants them to bear fruit

-God’s kingdom is not a dead, dry, barren place it is a place of growth and fruitfulness

-2 Pet 1:8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C. God shut up Hannah’s womb (5)

-there are times when God will purposefully allow us to go through barren places

-Hezekiah - 2 Chr 32:31 ...God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.

D. There are many times when we may feel we have crossed into a place of spiritual

barrenness

- we may battle many feelings - discouragement, despair, anger,
- we feel unproductive, unfruitful, nothing is happening
- this leads us to feel that we are no good, have no use, no purpose
- God is wanting to use the experience to accomplish something

III. TO CREATE A SUPERNATURAL HUNGER

- A. The barren want a baby more than anything, barrenness creates hunger
 - Prov 30:15-16 There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough: The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.
- B. Hunger is the key to growth, hunger causes the newborn baby to cry out for food
- C. Those who hunger and thirst shall be filled

IV. CREATE A DESIRE TO SEEK GOD

- A. The barren would spend a lot of time praying and seeking God
- B. The person who served the Lord and put no confidence in other things would begin to cry out to God and seek His blessing and favor
 - Gen 25:21 And Isaac entreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. (KJV)
 - Gen 30:22 And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.
- C. -v10
- D. 2 Chr 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

V. CAUSE US TO BECOME GOD CENTERED IN OUR PRAYING

- A. The barren would seeking God but for their own reasons
 - the barren may have wanted a baby to get rid of their shame and humiliation (6 -7)
- B. Many times we may have a selfish motive behind our prayer
 - James 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.
- C. Hannah began wanting a baby for a higher purpose - (11)
- D. There comes a time when we begin to say, "God, this is not for me but it's for you"

VI. TO BRING ABOUT GOD'S ULTIMATE PLAN

- A. There was a spiritual problem in Israel
- B. God answered her prayer but not just so she could have a baby
- C. God needed someone special He could work through - God needed a prophet
- D. God allowed a time of barrenness in Hannah's life to bring about a greater blessing than she could ever imagine (27 -28)
- E. You may go through a time of barrenness in order for God to bring about the right circumstances and atmosphere for his ultimate plan to come to pass
- F. God said he would never leave us so let those times of barrenness stir up your hunger

Hambry: Conclusion

Lets review the characteristics of a Prayer that will change history.

1. It was a Prayer Born out of Despair and Misery (vv. 1-9)
2. It was a Prayer of Submission (v. 11a)
3. It was a Prayer that Involved Sacrifice (v. 11b)
4. It Was a Prayer of Great Persistence (vv. 12-15)
5. It was a Prayer without Reservation (v. 15)
6. It Was A Prayer That God Could Answer Because It Was A Prayer From A Heart that Is Broken And Sincere (vv. 19-20)

James Dunn:

I. The Woman God Is Concerned About Is Hopeful When She Grieves.

- A. God understands our grief.
- B. God cares about our grief.
- C. God can bring us through our grief.
- D. God will make something beautiful out of our grief.

II. The Woman God Is Concerned About Is Hopeful When She Believes.

A. God is aware of us.

"You (God) keep close watch on everywhere I go." Job 13:27 (NCV)

B. God cares for us.

"The Lord is good. He protects those who trust Him in times of trouble." Nahum 1:7 (CEV)

C. God wants to help us

"Whenever we are in need, we should go bravely before the throne of our merciful God. There we will be treated with kindness, and we will find help." Hebrews 4:16 (CEV)

III. The Woman God Is Concerned About Is Hopeful When She Perceives.

A. God will not ignore us.

B. God will not forget us.

C. God will not abandon us.

IV. The Woman God Is Concerned About Is Hopeful When She Receives.

A. God gives us grace.

B. God gives us comfort.

C. God gives us strength.

Jeffries: Regarding name of God = "O Lord of hosts" in vs. 11

"The name for God which appears in Hannah's vow -- 'Lord of Hosts' or 'Lord Sabaoth' -- appears for the first time in Scripture here. It would have been literally understood in the historical context of 1 Samuel as 'Lord of Warrior Hosts,' the name of Jahweh in the manifestation of His mighty power. Although it shows up only a few times in the Psalms, 'Lord Sabaoth' appears with great frequency in the writings of

some of the prophets who ministered during Israel's period of exile.

- ref: Psalm 24:7-10 [NKJV] (a Davidic Psalm)

Lift up your heads, O you gates!
And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
The Lord mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, O you gates!
Lift up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
He is the King of glory. ”

"As 'Lord of hosts' God is able to marshall all these hosts to fulfill His purposes and to help His people. No wonder the Psalmist derives such confidence from this name. It is the distinctive name of Deity for Israel's help and comfort in the time of her division and failure."

- C.I. Schofield: Notes on 1 Samuel 1:11 in The Schofield Reference Bible

Malick: "The Principle of Raising the Lowly--Hannah:4 YHWH's deliverance of Hannah, in her bareness and ridicule, is realized as she prays, in her weakness, to YHWH for a son leading to a proclamation of YHWH's ways for the nation and its king 1:1--2:11."

David Guzik :

i. Shiloh was the central city of Israel, the religious center, for almost four hundred years. The tabernacle - the majestic tent God command Moses to build when they came out of Egypt, was erected there, and in it sat the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was the symbolic throne of God among Israel, the sacred chest containing the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. At the Ark, once a year, the high priest would make atonement for the sins of the nation. Though it was hidden, it was a powerful and important part of Israel's religious life.

ii. Today, if you visit Shiloh, you can see the bare, ancient outline of ruined walls of stone, walls that had once surrounded Israel's tabernacle for almost 400 years. On the heights you can see desolate, fruitless hills all around; rocky and bare, except for a distant Israeli neighborhood.

iii. Shiloh enjoyed all this glory for hundreds of years, but it came to an end abruptly. Hundreds of years later, through the prophet Jeremiah, God used Shiloh as a lesson. "Go to Shiloh," He says. "Look what happened to a place of spiritual privilege and glory when they forgot about Me. The same will happen to you if you do not turn again

to Me” (a paraphrase of Jeremiah 7:12-14).

<http://calvarychapel.com/simivalley/commentaries/0901.htm>

TEXT: 1 Samuel 1: 19-28

TITLE: SAMUEL DEDICATED TO THE LORD FOR LIFE

BIG IDEA:

OUR LEVEL OF SPIRITUAL CONSECRATION SHOULD MATCH OUR DEPTH OF SPIRITUAL INDEBTEDNESS

I. (:19-20) CONCEPTION AND BIRTH OF SAMUEL -- ANSWERED PRAYER IMPLIES SPIRITUAL INDEBTEDNESS

A. (:19-20a) Conception of Samuel

1. Faith Expressed in Worship

“Then they arose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord”

2. Faith Expressed in Hopeful Expectation Coupled with Responsible Living

“and returned again to their house”

“And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife”

3. Faith Rewarded with Fulfilled Promise

“and the Lord remembered her”

B. (:20b) Birth of Samuel

“named him Samuel, saying, ‘Because I have asked him of the Lord’”

II. (:21-23) NURSING AND WEANING OF SAMUEL –

(Note how the priority and function of the father differ s from that of the Mother when it comes to childcare)

A. Nursing of Samuel

B. Weaning of Samuel

Purposes: To present him before the Lord for a lifetime of dedicated service

I. (:24-28) DEDICATION AND WORSHIP OF SAMUEL -- SPIRITUAL CONSECRATION INVOLVES PAYING A HIGH PRICE

Accompanying Sacrifices

- 3 bulls

- one ephah of flour

- a jug of wine

A. Dedication of Samuel

“So I have also dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to

the Lord.”

No turning back on the part of Hannah; no compromising her vow; no grudging compliance; no reserve on her part; whole -hearted sacrifice

B. Worship of Samuel

“And he worshiped the Lord there.”

Picked up the baton from his faithful parents and continued on the same path of worship and service.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are we surprised by how directly and quickly and specifically God answers our prayers? Are we surprised and confused when God does not so answer our prayers? Why this difference in response from a loving God?
- 2) Is the fabric of worship faithfully woven through our lives as it is in the family of Elkanah and Hannah? What type of financial sacrifices and time commitment were involved for them to maintain such obedience to the Lord’s commands? Do we worship out of a sense of obligation or out of a heart overflowing with gratitude for all that we have received in His grace?
- 3) How important are those first few years when a mother nurtures her newborn infant? What are our expectations of the type of spiritual foundation that we can establish in those years?
- 4) What surrounding circumstances would have made it especially difficult for Hannah to keep her vow of leaving her only son with Eli to serve in the house of the Lord? When are we tempted to renege on our commitments to the Lord?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Blaikie: “Do not treat lightly, O parents, the connection between God and your children! Cherish the thought that they are God’s gifts, God’s heritage to you, committed by Him to you to bring up, but not apart from Him, not in separation from those holy influences which He alone can impart, and which He is willing to impart. What a cruel thing it is to cut this early connection between them and God, and send them drifting through the world like a ship with a forsaken rudder, that flaps hither and thither with every current of the sea! What a blessed thing when, above all things, the grace and blessing of God are sought by parents for their children, when all the earnest lessons of childhood are directed to this end, and before childhood has passed into

youth the grace of God rules the young heart, and the holy purpose is formed to live in His fear through Jesus Christ, and to honour Him for evermore!”

Raymond Perkins: Giving Should be Sacrificial and Purposeful --

“The gift Hannah gave to God was the prophet Samuel. He would become one of the greatest men of God in Old Testament times. He would lead God’s people in righteousness, serve as their last Judge, would be the one to anoint their first king, Saul, and solidify Israel as the nation of God’s people. Hannah’s gift was indeed a tremendous sacrifice, one that she no doubt wept over, yet also one in which she took great comfort. Her gift would also prove to be a great service to her God through righteousness, faithfulness and purpose. Through Hannah’s gift, God was provided the opportunity to do great things among His people. Are you willing to provide Him the same through your sacrificial and purposeful giving?”

MacArthur: “Two things stand out. First of all, she was dedicated to that child... She kept her vow, I'll give that child to the Lord as soon as he's weaned, for a Hebrew mother between two and three years of age, but she said I'm not going up there until this child is recovered so that it can feed itself.

Do you know that's putting the child as a real priority. Some people might say she put the child over worshiping the Lord. No, because she was taking care of the best gift God ever gave her, she was rendering to God the highest service possible. It was more important for that woman to stay there and nurse that child than to go offer sacrifices to God. She knew the priorities. She stayed home with the child in total dedication and commitment, training, loving, instructing and caring for that child. . .

First of all, she was dedicated to the child. That's the right home relationship. Mothers, invest your life in those children. Believe me, it didn't stop there. Then she dedicated the child to the Lord. She was not only dedicated to the child but dedicated the child to the Lord, verse 24 . . .

It's a fabulous thing to think about. A woman gave her child to the Lord keeping a promise and a vow she had made to God. But that doesn't mean she didn't care anymore about the child, not on your life. She cared about that child the rest of that child's life, she never really let go at all. In fact, as they would go back to the temple through the years, they would always go back and express their care and their love to the child. ”

Robert Deffinbaugh: “As Paul makes so clear in his epistles, God’s power is demonstrated at the point of our weaknesses. That is grace. God’s grace does not seek out our strong points and enhance them, so much as His grace seeks out our weakest points so that it may be absolutely clear to all that it is God who accomplishes great things through us. Those things which cause Hannah the greatest sorrow, the greatest pain, are the very things God uses to produce her greatest joys. For those who trust in Him, it will always be this way.”

TEXT: 1 Samuel 2:1-10

TITLE: HANNAH'S PRAISE --REJOICING IN THE LORD

BIG IDEA:

ANSWERED PRAYER CAUSES THE RIGHTEOUS TO REJOICE IN THE LORD – THE SOVEREIGN ONE WHO BOTH EXALTS THE LOWLY AND JUDGES THE WICKED

INTRODUCTION (:1)

- A. A Thankful Heart Overflows in Prayer of Praise
 "Then Hannah prayed and said" – responding to Answered Prayer

- B. Overall Tone = Rejoicing in the Lord
 "My heart exults in the Lord"
 Good place to see example of what it means to Rejoice in the Lord

- C. Outward Circumstances = Prosperity / Exaltation / Answered Prayer / Deliverance
 "My horn is exalted in the Lord"
 Ryrie: Image of invincible strength (cf. Dan. 7:21)
 Young: "a picture of the wild ox with head carried high in the confidence of strength."

 Messianic implications

- D. Victory Means Vindication
 "My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies"

- E. Summary
 "Because I rejoice in Thy salvation"

I. (:2-3) REJOICING IN THE LORD BY REMEMBERING HIS ATTRIBUTES AND BY REBUKING THE ARROGANT

A. (:2) BY REMEMBERING HIS ATTRIBUTES

- 1. His Holiness
 "There is no one holy like the Lord"

- 2. His Uniqueness
 "Indeed, there is no one besides Thee"

- 3. His Unchanging Strength
 "Nor is there any rock like our God"

Fritz: “Hannah praised God because He lifted her up above the chiding and arrogant mocking of Peninnah. When people criticize, misunderstood and doubt us we can be assured that the Rock of our God will shelter us in the time of storm. Hannah knew that God was all knowing and that He will judge all sin and pride in His way and time. Never fear when people attack you because His sovereign power is greater than any one or anything. David wrote, ‘ God is our refuge and strength a very present help in the time of trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.’ (Psa. 46:1,2)”

B. (:3) BY REBUKING THE ARROGANT

1. Arrogance is Short-lived

*“Boast no more so very proudly,
“Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth”*

2. Accountability is Guaranteed

a. God Knows All

“For the Lord is a God of knowledge,”

b. God Judges Fairly

“And with Him actions are weighed.”

Blaikie: “His knowledge gives comfort ... He sees all secret wickedness, and knows how to deal with it. His eye is on every plot hatched in the darkness. He knows His faithful servants, what they aim at, what they suffer, what a strain is often put on their fidelity. And He never can forget them, and never can desert them, for ‘ *the angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.*””

**II. (:4-5) MULTIPLE EXAMPLES OF THE KEY PRINCIPLE:
THE SOVEREIGN LORD EXALTS THE LOWLY AND JUDGES THE
WICKED**

James 4:6 *“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble”*

Prov. 16:18 *“Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.”*

Prov. 18:12 *“Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, But humility goes before honor.”*

A. (:4) Example from the Realm of Warfare: Strong vs. Weak

*“The bows of the mighty are shattered,
But the feeble gird on strength”*

B. (:5a) Example from the Realm of Economics: Full vs. Hungry

*“Those who were full hire themselves out for bread,
But those who were hungry cease to hunger”*

C. (:5b) Example from the Realm of Family: Fruitful / Fertile vs. Barren

“Even the barren gives birth to seven,

But she who has many children languishes.”

III. (:6-8a) MULTIPLE STATEMENTS OF THE KEY PRINCIPLE: THE SOVEREIGN GOD EXALTS ONE AND HUMBLER ANOTHER

A. (:6a) Statements Regarding Death and Life

*“The Lord kills and makes alive;
He brings down to Sheol and raises up.”*

Young: “the issues of life and death are in the hands of God.”

B. (:6b-8a) Statements Regarding Poverty and Riches

*“The Lord makes poor and rich;
He brings low, He also exalts,
He raises the poor from the dust,
He lifts the needy from the ash heap
To make them sit with nobles,
And inherit a seat of honor;”*

IV. (:8b-10) CONCLUSION: THE SOVEREIGN GOD DETERMINES ONE’S ULTIMATE DESTINY

A. (:8b) Sovereign by Virtue of His Authority as Creator

*“For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s,
And He set the world on them.”*

Young: reference to God being in charge of all human government

B. (:9) Preservation vs. Destruction (chiastic structure: A B B A)

1. Preservation of the Godly

“He keeps the feet of His godly ones”

2. Destruction of the Wicked

“But the wicked ones are silenced in darkness”

3. Key Principle: “For not by might shall a man prevail” *****

Chestnut: “The way that God delivered Hannah is characteristic of the way God rules His world.”

C. (:10) Judgment vs. Exaltation

1. Judgment Against the Rebellious

*“Those who contend with the Lord will be shattered;
Against them He will thunder in the heavens,
The Lord will judge the ends of the earth”*

2. Exaltation for the Anointed

*“And He will give strength to His king.
And will exalt the horn of His anointed.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Contrast this prayer with the tone of Hannah’s entreaties in chapter 1. How do you account for such a difference? What types of mood swings do we experience in our sessions of pleading and praising our Lord?
- 2) Contrast this prayer with the prayer of Mary in Luke 1:46 -55.
- 3) How does this almost warrior-like tone harmonize with the characteristic traits of a godly woman of meekness and sweetness and charitableness?
- 4) How have you seen in your own experience God reverse natural human circumstances or bring good out of evil or raise up those who have fallen or bring down the proud and the arrogant?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Fritz: “Hannah praised God because he makes the strong weak and makes the weak strong. He replenishes those who are lacking and strips away wealth from the greedy. He breaks down barriers from those who think they have impregnable castles and He gives freedom to the prisoners. He speaks a word and the bows of mighty men are broken, they are disarmed and run in fear of a shadow.

God lifts up the feeble and give friends to the lonely and companionship to those who are without a sense of family. He feeds the hungry and takes away the appetite of those who are hoarding what they have. He gives strength to the weary and humbles the proud. He works wonders to those who believe His promises and He disappoints those who brag of their great abilities .”

Young: “It is the holiness of the Lord that makes him other than man, transcendent. This transcendence is in terms of degree rather than of remoteness.”

Keil: “The exaltation of the horn of the anointed of Jehovah commenced with the victorious and splendid expansion of the power of David, was repeated with every victory over the enemies of God and His kingdom gained by the successive kings of

David's house, goes on in the advancing spread of the kingdom of Christ, and will eventually attain to its eternal consummation in the judgment of the last day, through which all the enemies of Christ will be made His footstool."

Blaikie: "When we examine the substance of the song more carefully, we find that Hannah derives her joy from four things about God: --

1. His nature (vv. 2-3)
2. His providential government (vv. 4-8)
3. His most gracious treatment of His saints (v. 9)
4. The glorious destiny of the kingdom of His anointed (v. 10)

Blaikie: "The class of qualities that are here marked as offensive to God are pride, self-seeking, self-sufficiency both in ordinary matters and in their spiritual development. Your tyrannical and haughty Pharaohs, your high-vaunting Sennacheribs, your pride-intoxicated Nebuchadnezzars, are objects of special dislike to God. So is your proud Pharisee, who goes up to the temple thanking God that he is not as other men, no, nor like that poor publican, who is smiting on his breast, as well such a sinner may. It is the lowly in heart that God takes pleasure in."

Chestnut: "Hannah's deliverance caused her to look beyond herself to how God was working in the world at large. It prompted her to look to God's final victory! (Closing thought: Luke 12:32)."

TEXT: 1 Samuel 2: 11-26

TITLE: 2 MINISTRY STYLES: SELFISH EXPLOITATION VS DEDICATED SERVICE

BIG IDEA:

**SPIRITUAL MINISTRY CAN BE MARKED BY EITHER SELFISH EXPLOITATION OR DEDICATED SERVICE
(CONTRAST BETWEEN THE 2 EXTREMES OF THE SONS OF ELI AND SAMUEL)**

INTRODUCTION: (:11-12)

- A. (:11) Introduction to Samuel – Finality of His Consecration to Spiritual Ministry
 - 1. Separation from His Family
“Now Elkanah went to his home at Ramah”
 - 2. Single-minded Focus on Spiritual Ministry
“But the boy ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest”
- B. (:12) Introduction to Sons of Eli – Spiritual Vacuum
 - 1. Empty of Spiritual Fruit (despite privileges of heritage)
“Now the sons of Eli were worthless men”
 - 2. Empty of Spiritual Knowledge or Relationship
“they did not know the Lord”

I. SPIRITUAL MINISTRY MARKED BY SELFISH EXPLOITATION – SONS OF ELI

- A. (:13-17) Abuse of Office and Privilege – Stealing from the Lord
 - Lev. 7:34 – “The priest was only allowed to take the breast and right thigh as His share of the sacrifice.” **Davis**
 - 1. (:13-14) Greed: Took more than their fair share
“all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself”
 - 2. (:15) Impropriety – No Fear of God
took raw meat before the fat had been burned off as sacrifice to the Lord
 - 3. (:16) Bullying Tactics (use of Threats and Force)
“you shall give it to me now; and if not, I will take it by force”
 - 4. (:17) Summary of Their Sinful Behavior
“Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for the men despised the offering of the Lord”
- B. (:22-25) Bad Reputation: Shame Before Country and Family

1. (:22) Shame of Gross Immorality
2. (:23-25) Shame of Despising the Counsel of Their Father = the High Priest

II. SPIRITUAL MINISTRY MARKED BY DEDICATED SERVICE -- SAMUEL

A. (:18-21) Faithful Service and Family Blessing – Simplicity of Serving the Lord

1. (:18) Faithful, Unselfish Service by Samuel
“Now Samuel was ministering before the Lord, as a boy wearing a linen ephod”
2. (:19) Faithfulness and Obedient Worship of Parents
 - a. Provision of robe each year
 - b. Participation in Annual Sacrifice
3. (:20-21) Family Blessing
 - a. (:20) Promised by Eli
 - b. (:21) Fulfilled by the Lord

B. (:26) Excellent Reputation: Favor Before God and Men

“Now the boy Samuel was growing in stature and in favor both with the Lord and with men.”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do we selfishly hold on to our children and try to direct their future in a way that offers us the most satisfaction or do we truly dedicate our children to the Lord and seek His direction for their lives and ministry?
- 2) What types of exploitative spiritual ministry have you witnessed? Why do God’s people put up with such abuses? Study the failure of Eli as a father to properly discipline his sons.
- 3) How has the Lord rewarded you for whatever sacrifices and service you have offered up to Him so that your blessing far exceeds your offering?
- 4) Review the verses in Proverbs that speak of the value of a good name and a good reputation. What type of reputation have you earned by virtue of your style of ministry to the Lord?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Blaikie: “First our attention is turned to the gross wickedness and scandalous behaviour of Eli’s sons. There are many dark pictures in the history of Israel in the time of the Judges, -- pictures of idolatry, pictures of lust, pictures of treachery, pictures of bloodshed -- but there is none more awful than the picture of the high priest’s family at Shiloh. In the other cases members of the nation had become grossly wicked; but in this case it is the salt that has lost its savour – it is those who should have led the people in the ways of God that have become the ringleaders of the devil’s army. . . . They are marked by the two prevailing vices of the lowest natures – greed and lechery. Their greed preys upon the worthy men who brought their offerings to God’s sanctuary in obedience to His law; their lechery seduces the very women who, employed in the service of the place (see Revised Version), might have reasonably thought of it as the gate to heaven rather than the avenue of hell. So shameless were they in both kinds of vice that they were at no pains to conceal either the one or the other. It mattered nothing what regulations God had made as to the parts of the offering the priest was to have; down went their fork into the sacrificial caldron, and whatever it drew up became theirs. It mattered not that the fat of certain sacrifices was due to God, and that it ought to have been given off before any other use was made of the flesh; the priests claimed the flesh in its integrity, and if the offerer would not willingly surrender it their servant fell upon him and wrenched it away. It is difficult to say whether the greater hurt was inflicted by such conduct on the cause of religion or on the cause of ordinary morality. As for the cause of religion, it suffered that terrible blow which it always suffers whenever it is dissociated from morality. The very heart and soul is torn out of religion when men are led to believe that their duty consists in merely believing certain dogmas, attending to outward observances, paying dues, and ‘performing’ worship. What kind of conception of God can men have who are encouraged to believe that justice, mercy, and truth have nothing to do with His service? How can they ever think of Him as a Spirit, who requires of them that worship Him that they worship Him in spirit and in truth? How can such religion give men a real veneration for God, or inspire them with that spirit of obedience, trust, and delight of which he ought ever to be the object?.. Under such religion all belief in God’s existence tends to vanish. Though His existence may continue to be acknowledged, it is not a power, it has no influence; it neither stimulates to good nor restrains from evil. Religion becomes a miserable form, without life, without vigour, without beauty – a mere carcass deserving only to be buried out of sight.”

Yap: “Eli’s sin was not having bad children, but raising them inactively, parenting them invisibly, and excusing them meekly. He did not dismiss or ban their service, denounce or report them publicly, or remove and banish them from the temple precincts. He did not even limit who they meet, where they go, or what they do. In the end, when all was said, nothing was done. Too little, too late. Eli’s words were weak, hollow, and ineffectual.

Eli’s sons did not listen to their father’s voice. Eli’s problem was not because he could not discipline them since he was old, but because he did not discipline them when he

was young. The intention of verse 26 was to contrast how Samuel served God and behaved gentlemanly the moment he knew how to walk, talk, or do anything. Eli's sons, on the other hand, did not listen to the heartbroken father. Their father's sadness did not leave them shaken, thinking, or heavyhearted."

Holwick: Is Your Family Dysfunctional?

I. What it means to be dysfunctional.

A. Many families aren't working together well.

- 1) Instead of building each other up, they tear apart.
- 2) Much dissatisfaction and stress.
- 3) Unresolved problems often end up in abuse or divorce.

B. Nothing new - many families in Bible were dysfunctional.

- 1) Adam - sons murdered each other.
- 2) Noah - sons dishonored him.
- 3) Lot - daughters were promiscuous.
- 4) Eli - sons were religious swindlers.
- 5) David - sons plotted to kill him (and each other).

Deffinbaugh: "The doorway of the tent of meeting is the place where God meets with the Levitical priests, the place where God reveals His glory. There Aaron and his sons are consecrated, set apart, for their priestly service. And now, not that many years later, this becomes a very different kind of meeting place, a place where Eli's sons rendezvous with the women with whom they commit sexual immorality. . .

How desperately sinful the priesthood has become. Godly saints like Elkanah and Hannah must grit their teeth as they seek to worship God at Shiloh. Things seem to go from bad to worse. Eli is old and nearing death. His two sons are next in line. The righteous surely shudder at the thought. And yet, in this dark day for Israel, a little boy is growing up. Eli's sons are doomed in God's sight; He has purposed to put them to death (verse 25). They are not highly esteemed by the godly. Then there is Samuel. This young lad finds favor with both God and man -- if men only knew what the future of this lad held for them and their nation. In some of the darkest of days of Israel's history, when everything seems to be falling apart, God raises up the one whom He purposes to use to serve Him faithfully and to serve men as well. Such a one is Samuel. Eli's sons are on their way out; Samuel is on his way up.

This verse sounds strangely familiar, doesn't it? We know that Luke uses very similar words in reference to Jesus of Nazareth, as He is growing up:

'And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men'
(Luke 2:52).

Why such similar words? Why does Luke choose to employ the same description as the author of 1 Samuel to speak of Samuel's development as a child? The days in which our Lord was born were also very dark days in Israel's history. The religious system had departed from the Word of God, just as in Samuel's day. And yet, while things looked very bleak for Israel, a young Lad was growing up, virtually unknown and unnoticed by the nation. This Child was the Messiah. He would save His people from their sins. He would someday sit on the throne of His father, David. And He, like Samuel His prototype, would exercise priesthood in a way that would deliver the people of God from their sins."

TEXT: 1 Samuel 2: 27-36

TITLE: *HOW TO FALL FROM HIGH PRIEST TO NO PRIEST*

BIG IDEA:

THE ABUSE OF THE PRIVILEGES OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP HAS FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES

INTRODUCTION:

Prophecy delivered to Eli by “*a man of God*” --

I. (:27-28) ABUSE MADE MORE TRAGIC AND INEXCUSABLE IN LIGHT OF THE LOFTY PRIVILEGES THAT HAD BEEN GRANTED

A. (:27a) Privilege of Revelation

“*Did I not indeed reveal myself ...*”

B. (:27b) Privilege of Redemption

“*when they were in Egypt in bondage to Pharaoh’s house*”

B. (:28a) Privilege of Election

“*And did I not choose them ...*”

C. (:28b) Privilege of Leadership Function

II. (:30-32) FAILURE HAS TRANSFORMED THE POTENTIAL FOR BLESSING INTO THE BITTERNESS OF DESTRUCTION

A. (:30) Key Principle : The Lord’s Promise of Blessing Hinges on the Human Responsibility of Faithfulness

B. (:31-32) Far-Reaching Consequences of Failure for the House of Eli

III. (:33-36) HUMAN FAILURE CANNOT COMPROMISE GOD’S OVERALL PROGRAM OF REMNANT RESTORATION AND PERMANENT BLESSING

A. (:33) Merciful Promise of Remnant Restoration

B. (:34) Sign to Validate the Certainty of the Prophecy

C. (:35-36) Glorious Promise of Permanent Blessing – “*a faithful High Priest*”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What spiritual privileges have you received that increase your accountability before the Lord in terms of the stewardship of your spiritual gifts and the quality of your ministry?
- 2) Does verse 30 indicate that the Lord changes His mind after He has announced His intention to bless some group of people? How do we determine which blessings are conditional vs unconditional or which group of people will enjoy the benefits of the promised blessing?
- 3) What is the relationship between the “*faithful priest*” and “*My anointed*” as described in verse 35? Try to identify these people as well as the significance of the timeframe mentioned (“*always*”).
- 4) How do selfish ministers in today’s context “*make themselves fat with the choicest of every offering*”?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Blaikie: “One word, in conclusion, respecting that great principle of the kingdom of God announced by the prophet as that on which Jehovah would act in reference to his priests – ‘*Them that honour Me I will honour, but they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.*’ It is the eternal rule of the kingdom of God, not limited to the days of Hophni and Phinehas, but, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, eternal as the ordinances of heaven. It is a law confirmed by all history; every man’s life confirms it, for though this life is but the beginning of our career, and the final clearing up of Divine providence is to be left to the judgment -day, yet when we look back on the world’s history we find that those that have honoured God, God has honoured them, while they that have despised Him have indeed been lightly esteemed. However men may try to get their destiny into their own hands; however they may secure themselves from this trouble and from that; however, like the first Napoleon, they may seem to become omnipotent, and to wield an irresistible power, yet the day of retribution comes at last; having sown to the flesh, of the flesh also they reap corruption. While the men that have honoured God, the men that have made their own interests of no account, but have set themselves resolutely to obey God’s will and do God’s work; the men that have believed in God as the holy Ruler and Judge of the world, and have laboured in private life and in public service to carry out the great rules of His kingdom, -- justice, mercy, the love of God and the love of man, -- these are the men that God has honoured; these are the men whose work abides; these are the men whose names shine with undying honour, and from whose example and achievements young hearts in every following age draw their inspiration and encouragement.”

Sahuarita: “Who is the faithful priest predicted here? He was a great priest, because he did according to what is in God’s heart and in God’s mind. He was a blessed priest, because God said.

(1) This promise was partially fulfilled in Samuel, because he functioned as a godly priest, effectively replacing the ungodly sons of Eli.

(2) The promise was partially fulfilled in Zadok, in the days of Solomon, because he replaced Eli’s family line in the priesthood.

(3) The promise was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, because He is a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:12-17). . .

There are four "S"s that are used by Satan to destroy men and women of God.

Here is the list of the tips for self -destruction:

- Self – God hates our pride.
- Silver --Some ministers have wealth of thought, but some ministers like these two guys only have thoughts of wealth.
- Sex
- Sloth”

<http://www.ccos.org/09-1Sam-02-02-jk-note.html>

Allen Brummel: Background

“Eli was of the priestly house of Aaron (I Samuel 2: 27,28). According to I Chronicles 24:1 Aaron had four sons - Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Nadab and Abihu were killed by the Lord for their offering of strange fire on God's altar. Numbers 3:4 and Leviticus 10 record this incident which occurred in the wilderness of Sinai. Nadab and Abihu were cut off to such a degree that they had no offspring that survived. The line of the priesthood of Aaron was continued through his other two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar.

After the death of Aaron the high priestly office was filled by Eleazar, but later was transferred, for a reason not revealed, to the house of Ithamar. Eli was a descendant of Ithamar. I Chronicles 24:4 records that there were 16 sons of Eleazar and 8 sons of Ithamar. The line of Eleazar continued through Zadok, the faithful priest, unbroken till the birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, according to prophecy, was not a priest after the order of Aaron, but rather a priest after the order of Melchizedek, testifying of Christ's eternal priesthood. God preserved only one line faithful through the generations. . . .

The weakness of the human priesthood pointed to the faithful Priest who would be the eternal God of heaven and earth. Jesus Christ did all that was in the mind of God. He obeyed perfectly. There was nothing within His heart that desired to walk contrary to God's commands. Jesus Christ offered the perfect, unblemished sacrifice that covered Eli's sins and that covers your and my sins of disobedience. The ‘sure house’ is the church for which Jesus Christ laid down His life! Christ made that house secure by His own blood and poured out His Spirit on His people to preserve them in the path of obedience. By His grace we will honor God above our children. We pray for that strength as we seek to raise our children in God's fear.”

<http://www.prca.org/current/Articles/1%20Sam%202%2027-36.htm>

TEXT: 1 Samuel 3:1-21

TITLE: SAMUEL'S CONFIRMATION AS A PROPHET OF THE LORD

BIG IDEA:

**THE FAITHFUL SPOKESMAN FOR GOD COMMUNICATES EVEN THE HARD WORDS OF JUDGMENT
(WHAT IT MEANS TO DECLARE THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD)**

I. (:1-9) THE CALLING OF THE PROPHET – THE SURPRISE OF THE PROPHET (FOR GOD TO SPEAK TO HIM PERSONALLY AND DIRECTLY)

- A. (:1a) The Circumstances of the Calling
God Calls Us as We Faithfully Minister in Our Everyday Responsibilities
“Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli”
- B. (:1b) The Rarity of Direct Revelation in Those Days
“and word from the Lord was rare in those day, visions were infrequent”
- C. (:2-6) The Persistence of the Lord’s Calling – Despite our Failure to Comprehend
Twice both Eli and Samuel missed the message
But the key = Samuel’s Responsiveness:
 - Quick to respond -- *“then he ran to Eli”*
 - Available to obey -- *“Here I am”*(Wouldn’t it be great if our kids always responded in this fashion)
- D. (:7) The Inexperience of the Prophet Did Not Disqualify him
“Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord yet been revealed to him”

Blaikie: “Hitherto Samuel had not known the Lord – that is, he had not been cognizant of His way of communicating with men in a supernatural form – and it had never occurred to him that such a thing could happen in his case.”

- E. (:8-9) The Guidance From Spiritual Mentors in Discerning the Lord’s Calling
“Then Eli discerned that the Lord was calling the boy”

II. (:10-14) THE AVAILABILITY OF THE PROPHET -- THE HARD WORDS OF JUDGMENT

- A. (:10) Attentiveness is Key
“Speak, for Thy servant is listening”
- B. (:11-14) Judgment is Not a Happy Message
The Prophet is often commissioned to deliver an unpopular message

III. (:15-18) THE TESTING OF THE PROPHET -- THE FAITHFUL COMMUNICATION OF THE MESSAGE

A. Fear Did Not Disqualify the Prophet

“Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli”

B. Faithfulness to the Message and Obedience to the Mission are the Keys

“So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him”

C. Godly People Will Surprise Us With Their Positive Reception of Words of Discipline

“It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him”

What will be our response if the Lord chooses to judge America for countless iniquities?

IV. (:19-21) THE CONFIRMATION OF THE PROPHET – CYCLE OF FAITHFULNESS AND BLESSING

A. (:19a) Personal Growth

“Then Samuel grew”

B. (:19b) Spiritual Favor

“and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fail”

C. (:20) Ministry Confirmation (on a national scale)

“And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord”

D. (:21) Further Revelation

“And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, because the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord”

(Note the priority of the Word of the Lord)

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we have the same sense of privilege in serving God in our everyday responsibilities as Samuel did? Do we have the same type of servant heart that Samuel exhibited?

2) Do we have any sense of the Lord’s various callings to us in our life – ways He has gifted us, special missions He has intended for us, etc.?

3) What lessons can we learn from this passage about the necessity of a father taking the initiative to follow thru with consistent discipline for his children?

4) Compare other passages that speak of the Lord being with someone in terms of showing them grace and favor. When have we experienced that special type of blessing that caused us to prosper in every way like the godly man of Psalm 1?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Holwick: Sermon on DOES GOD STILL SPEAK
First Baptist Church (also see Job 33:13 -18...)
Ledgewood, New Jersey
March 9, 1997
Text: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

I. "God told me."

A. Popularity of visions, channeling, spiritual experiences.

- 1) Human desire has always been to contact the divine.
- 2) Strength for evangelicals, especially charismatics.
 - a) Faith is something REAL. God is really there.

B. What would God tell you to do?

Six years ago the "Los Angeles Times" told the story of Bob Haifley.

Spending 2,500 work hours over five years, Bob glued 65,000 toothpicks to build a life-sized Jesus.

It hangs from a wire in his garage against a black backdrop, illuminated by a spotlight.

What made Haifley, a humble water -department supervisor and nonartist, star collecting toothpicks and inviting the ridicule of his neighbors by building California's answer to Noah's Ark?

"God told me to do it," he says.

According to Haifley, God not only commissioned the work one day while he was driving his pickup, but showed him how to do the spiky hair after years of indecision.

Did God REALLY tell him all this?

C. What does it mean to say, "God told me"?

1) What people say:

- a) I saw a heavenly messenger and heard his words.
- b) I heard clear words that seemed to come from God.
- c) God spoke to me in a dream .
- d) I felt a strange pressure from somewhere outside me.
- e) I think I knew what God wanted me to do.

- 2) Room for everyone from Jonah to Jim Jones.
 - a) God speaks to some through burned tortillas.
 - b) He apparently tells others to kill their mothers.

II. Biblical ways God speaks.

A. Theophany - direct encounter.

- 1) The God of the Bible is a God who reveals himself.
 - a) If he doesn't, we cannot know him.
- 2) Moses and burning bush. Exod 3:4f
 - a) Moses hidden in cleft of rock. Exod 33:22
- 3) "Face to face" is ultimate experience. Num 12:8
 - a) This side of heaven, it is normally impossible. 1Jn 4:12
 - b) Any direct encounter is also rare in Bible.

B. Direct vision/voice/dreams.

- 1) Young Samuel in tabernacle and God's voice. 1 Sam 3:1f
 - a) Audible voice.
 - b) Obedient response.
- 2) Paul on road to Damascus.
 - a) Others heard sound, saw light, but no more.
 - b) Given messages on several different occasions.

C. Through religious feelings.

- 1) "Still, small voice." 1 Kings 19:12
 - a) Most revelation is subtle, not dramatic.
 - b) Old Testament uses "hear" and "listen" metaphorically.
 - 1> Pay attention to Bible.
 - 2> "Listen" when you come to church. Eccl 5:1
- 2) Reading Bible.
 - a) Jesus speaks of "hearing" God's Word.
 - b) To hear it, is to do it.
- 3) Our conscience.
 - a) What "seems right," as long as it is biblical. Acts 15:28
 - b) Baptist ministers and "call" to ministry.

III. Does God speak today?

A. Cessationist approach.

- 1) Jesus and his words are God's ultimate revelation. Heb 1:2
- 2) Once the NT was completed, special revelation stopped.
 - a) Nothing can be added or taken away from it. Rev 22:18
- 3) Prophecies, special revelation will cease. 1 Cor 13:8

B. Continuationist approach.

- 1) Joel's Pentecost prophecy only partially fulfilled. Acts 2:17
 - a) Church age is period of universal Spirit.
 - b) "Two Witnesses" of Tribulation. Rev 11:3

- 2) Visions were common in typical NT churches. 1 Cor 14
 - a) Apostles and others received visions often.
 - b) Spirit-tradition continued after NT finished.
- 3) No hint in NT of cessation of Spirit.
 - a) 1 Cor 13:8 speaks of glorification, not canon.
 - b) Removal of Spirit at Rapture? People still saved.

C. WORD vs. word.

- 1) Inspired messages for all time (Bible).
 - a) Conclusion of Church is that this is completed.
 - b) No need for more revelation: Mormons, Muslims ...
- 2) Daily guidance.
 - a) Paul and Agabus. Acts 21:10
 - 1> (Paul goes against prophecy for a higher goal.)
 - b) God can guide us in every detail of our lives. Ps 32:8

IV. The need for discernment.

- A. Not all messages are from God. Jer 23:21 -31
 - 1) Satanic messages.
- B. Cultural dimension.
 - 1) New Age emphasis on channeling, etc.
 - 2) Catholics and visions of Mary, Pentecostals and 800 ft. Jesus.

V. Signs of God's true word.

- A. Can only be heard by those who are receptive.
 - 1) Spiritual insight required. 1 Cor 2:14
 - 2) Is person a genuine Christian?
 - 3) Do other spiritual Christians give agreement?
- B. Consistent with past revelation.
 - 1) God does not contradict himself or his Bible.
 - a) In NT, all visions of Jesus have him in heaven.
 - 2) Voices and visions should be rare. Skepticism called for.
- C. Calls us back to God and morality.
 - 1) God is not telling you to cheat on taxes.
 - 2) God is not telling you to cheat on spouse.

VI. Clearest way God speaks.

- A. Better than prophets - Jesus himself. Heb 1:2
 - 1) His words should cut us to the heart.
- B. Study the Bible...
- C. Listen to God when you come into his house. Eccl 5:1
- D. When you hear, obey.

William Baeta :

God is always testing us and determines our passing grade based on our performance in dealing with the various trials and frustrations we face. When we have passed one course, we move on to the next course, which is more difficult and more challenging. Just as we are rewarded after completing school with many good opportunities, so great blessings come to those who pass the tests of life. And just as the teacher is pleased with his successful students so God is pleased with those who prove themselves faithful. We can only pass these tests when we listen carefully. God will only speak to those He knows are prepared to listen, those who are faithful. 'Speak Lord your servant is listening' is the only way we can approach God when we want to hear Him speak to us. God speaks to us in many ways. We either refuse to listen to Him or we allow sin or greed to get in the way of any communication with Him. Listening to God and responding to Him is vital to a relationship with God. Although God does not always use the sound of a human voice, He always speaks clearly through His Word . . .

I believe that each one of us is being called into a ministry and needs to listen to the Lord speaking to us. We may not hear an audible voice but God is also speaking clearly to us through the Scriptures. Hearing God speak to us through the Scriptures means more than just reading the Scriptures. We need to hear by the Spirit as we read the Bible. It is the Spirit that brings the written words alive to us. The Pharisees had the Old Testament and loved it but did not see Jesus in its pages. They had the Scriptures but did not have the Spirit to reveal it to them. The Scriptures can only come alive to us when we first have a relationship with Christ and desire that He speak to us through them. When God speaks to us we need to press on and ask Him to say more. Sometimes He tells us a little bit and then waits for us to seek Him to get more, to say 'speak Lord your servant is listening'. God called Samuel by name and then waited for Samuel to respond. We still go through the same process today. God is calling out to you by name but are you listening. It has been said that too often our relationship to the Lord is expressed in the words "Listen, Lord! Your servant is speaking!" instead of the words "Speak, Lord! Your servant is listening!"

David Washburn: "An amazing story, which still holds important truths for us today, the first of which deals with God's call. God's call, God's voice, God's direction. It doesn't always come when we're expecting it, and sometimes, God's call is not always what we want to do. Samuel certainly wasn't expecting this call from God, it didn't really come at a convenient time, and he certainly didn't relish telling Eli what was going to happen to his family. This message from God came during a time of national uncertainty and a time of spiritual waywardness, but many times the most exciting possibilities are presented to us during turbulent times. Too often, we allow the turbulence to overwhelm us and it interferes with our ability to hear God and seek His direction. The key is in our ability to tune in, listen, and obey as Samuel did. "

Blaikie: "Samuel's entire devotion to God's service, so beautiful in one of such tender years, is the sign of a character well adapted to become the medium of God's habitual communications with His people. Young though he is, his very youth in one sense will

prove an advantage. It will show that what he speaks is not the mere fruit of his own thinking, but is the message of God. It will show that the spiritual power that goes forth with his words is not his own native force, but the force of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. It will thus be made apparent to all that God has not forsaken His people, corrupt and lamentably wicked though the young priests are. . .

And by-and-by other oracles came to him, by which all men might have known that he was the recognized channel of communication between God and the people. We shall see in our next chapter into what trouble the nation was brought by disregarding his prophetic office, and recklessly determining to drag the ark of God into the battlefield. Meanwhile we cannot but remark what a dangerous position, in a mere human point of view, Samuel now occupied. The danger was that which a young man encounters when suddenly or early raised to the possession of high spiritual power. Samuel, though little more than a boy, was now virtually the chief man in Israel. Set so high, his natural danger was great. But God, who placed him there, sustained in him the spirit of humble dependence. After all he was but God's servant.. Humble obedience was still his duty."

TEXT: 1 Samuel 4:1-22

TITLE: *ICHABOD – THE GLORY IS GONE / GOD IS NO RABBIT’S FOOT*

BIG IDEA:

WHEN SUPERSTITION AND SELF-WILL REPLACE GENUINE WORSHIP AND OBEDIENT FAITH THE GLORY OF THE LORD DEPARTS FROM HIS PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION: (:1a) THE REJECTION OF THE WORD OF THE LORD

“Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel”

Significance: People knew that Samuel was a confirmed prophet of the Lord; they did not seek out his counsel ... or worse, they rejected his counsel and did what seemed right in their own eyes. That is why we don’t see Samuel play any role in this chapter.

Must ask the question: Why were the Israelites choosing to go out to battle without first inquiring of the Lord and making sure their spiritual condition was in the proper state of preparation?

Significance of the Glory of the Lord – symbolized by the Ark of the Covenant

- His Presence
- His Power
- His Favor

Exod. 25:10-22

I. (:1b-11) DISASTROUS DEFEAT RESULTS FROM SUPERSTITION AND SELF-WILL

A. (:1b-2) Defeat Should be No Surprise When Self Will Presumes to Fight Battles Without Dependence Upon the Spirit of God

4000 killed in first battle; wrong response and lack of repentance will lead to 30,000 being killed in the next battle – this is a huge number ... don’t just gloss over it

B. (:3-9) Superstition Supplies the Wrong Answers to the Right Questions

1. (:3) Right Question: *“Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?”*

Correct recognition of the sovereignty of God working behind the affairs of human governments and conflicts.

2. (:4) Wrong Answer: Reliance Upon Superstition or Past Successes

“the ark of the covenant of the Lord . . . will deliver us from the power of our enemies”

Confusing the symbol for the reality.

3. (:5-7) Initial Emotional Reinforcement
 - a. (:5) Stirred Courage in the hearts of the Israelites
“all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth resounded”
 - b. (:6-7) Stirred Fear in the hearts of the Philistines
“And the Philistines were afraid”

Blaikie: “The Philistines were too wise a people to yield to panic. If the Hebrew God, that did such wonders in the wilderness, was present with their opponents, there was all the more need for their bestirring themselves and quitting them like men. The elders of Israel had not reckoned on this wise plan. It teaches us, even from a heathen point of view, never to yield to panic. Even when everything looks desperate, there may be some untried resource to fall back on.”

4. (:8-9) Battle Reduced to Strictly a Test of Manhood Rather Than of Gods
“be men and fight”

C. (:10-11) Disastrous Defeat Bursts the Bubble of Superstition and Self Will and Exposes the Harsh Reality of Spiritual Power Failure

1. Bottom Line Summary
“So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated”
2. Extent of the Devastation
“every man fled to his tent”
“and the slaughter was very great”
“for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers”
3. Crowning Blow
“And the ark of God was taken”
4. Fitting Justice
“and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died”

I. (:12-18) DISILLUSIONED SPIRITUAL LEADERS REAP THE TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR MINISTRY FAILURES

A. Spiritual Leaders Become Disillusioned Over Time as Their Repeated Compromises Render Their Ministry Ineffective

1. Compromise in the Area of Family Discipline
Eli was not a good father to Hophni and Phinehas
2. Compromise in the Area of Personal Discipline
Eli was *“old and heavy”* – ate more than his fair share

3. Compromise in the Area of Obedience to God's Regulations
allowed the ark of the covenant to be viewed and handled in the wrong way

B. Tragic Consequences of Ministry Failures Make for an Ignominious Legacy

1. National Disgrace: Israel slaughtered by the Philistines
"Israel has fled before the Philistines and there has also been a great slaughter among the people"
2. Family Tragedy: *"your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead"*
3. Spiritual Disaster: *"the ark of God has been taken"*
4. Personal Demise: *"his neck was broken and he died"*
5. Ministry Wipeout: *"Thus he judged Israel forty years"*

I. (:19-22) THE DEPARTURE OF THE GLORY OF THE LORD PLUNGES GOD'S PEOPLE INTO HOPELESSNESS AND DESPAIR

"And she called the boy Ichabod, saying, 'The glory has departed from Israel,' because the ark of God was taken and because of her father-in-law and her husband."

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where is Samuel when all these events are taking place? Why aren't the people seeking the word of the Lord from him? Are we taking direction and leadership from the right people?
- 2) In what areas are Christians today tempted to be superstitious (bordering on idolatry) and self-willed?
- 3) Trace the history of the ark of the covenant in earlier OT references. (Numbers 10:33-35; Joshua 6:6-21) What types of prior successes bore some connection to the presence of the ark of the covenant? After a spiritual victory in some area do we approach the next similar incident with a measure of our confidence rooted in our past success as opposed to directly being dependent upon God?
- 4) Why is emotion alone not a good indicator of the Lord's leading in a given situation?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Jeffries: “Christian missionaries to certain ‘less -civilized’ cultures have long had to battle the strong tendency among indigenous peoples to, rather than replace their religion with faith in Christ, merely ‘add’ elements of Christianity to their old religious traditions. The result is a belief system which is decidedly non-Christian, yet, in the eyes of those who have adapted it, one which is so ‘compatible’ with Christianity that no further changes are deemed necessary.

Unfortunately, many ‘civilized’ Christians today have similarly added to their faith. True, we may not worship graven images or cast magic spells, but we sometimes treat our relationship with God in Christ as some sort of a ‘charm,’ do we not? Have you ever had a sense that, if you missed too many Sunday services in a row, something ‘bad’ might happen to you? Do you worry that, if Christ suddenly returned and found you reading the ‘wrong’ kind of novel or watching the ‘wrong’ kind of TV show, He’ll be so upset that He might call the whole eternal life thing off? The professional baseball players who automatically ‘cross’ themselves before every at-bat and the pilgrims who travel to various places in order to climb stairs on their knees and the Christians who are quietly afraid that God’s grace won’t be sufficient to protect them from the wiles of the Devil all have at least one thing in common: they’ve added non-Biblical traditions to their faith in Christ. And, in some cases, these traditions have taken precedence in their thinking and have, therefore, diminished their faith. This doesn’t leave them ‘less saved,’ but it certainly hampers their relationship with the Lord. They have forgotten that truth that nothing can be added to the complete work of salvation done by Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary. They have been robbed of the joy that comes from the ‘by -faith’ Christian life and, in the process -- without ever meaning to -- they have ‘trivialized’ God.”

Jeffries Quoting **Kenneth L. Chafin** :

"This story reminds us that the temptation to exploit the paraphernalia of worship is very old. No mistake is older or more attractive than the desire to control or manipulate God into doing our bidding. While we are far too sophisticated in this day to think that we can capture God in a magic box, we still make the same efforts to create a God whose presence we can control and use for our own interests."

Raymond Perkins : “Paul Harvey tells a story about an attractive airline stewardess who was being hounded by two flirts – one at the front of the plane, the other at the back. She was obviously very put-off by the very forward advances being made by the two men, but she kept right on doing her job. Near the end of the flight one of the men became particularly bold and as the plane was about to land he handed her a key to his apartment and the address and said, ‘See you tonight.’ So she took them, then she walked to the back of the plane, handed them to the other flirt, winked and said, ‘Don’t be late.’ Later on that evening I bet there were two very disappointed men in some apartment somewhere. Have you ever been disappointed when someone you were

looking for didn't show up? Maybe it was the way they were invited. That's one reason God doesn't show up. Sometimes God doesn't come because He doesn't appreciate the way He is invited. Revival isn't going to happen as long as we want to God to come so that we can use Him rather than serve Him. That is the underlying principle of our lesson today as we study the revival under the prophet Samuel...

The Israelites were living however they thought best – idols, etc. Yet they thought that so long as they had the Ark of the Covenant they had God. They kept Him in a box.

1. So when they ran into trouble they went and got the box. Prior in their history when the Ark went with them they won – God was with them. Joshua 3 – when they crossed the Jordan, Joshua 6 – when they marched around Jericho, and throughout the rest of the Conquest when the Ark went with them they were victorious.

2. So they were not accustomed to this, to defeat. Yet because of their disregard for God and His ways and their selfish reasons for asking for God's help God did not show up. He did not accept their invitation. Israel did not understand that they had lost God's presence long before they lost the Ark. The glory of the Lord leaves when people try to box God up for their own selfish agendas

I believe the journey from Ichabod to Ebenezer, from the absence of God's presence to the Help of His hand, can happen today. But the only way it will happen is when we stop playing church and make our lives a temple for God to dwell in. ”

John Hamby: “Notice with me that the text reveals three wrong ways in which people try to interact with God.

1. God Refuses to Be used As A Good Luck Charm (4:4 -7) . . .

The ark was about 4 ft long by 2 ft high and 2 ft. wide. The ark was made of wood and overlaid with pure gold. On the top of the ark was a solid slab of gold called the mercy seat and in the ark was the tables of God's law. Out of the mercy seat were the Cherubim with their wings outstretched. The ark was the most sacred piece of furniture in the temple and it was kept in the holy of holies. It was so holy that it was kept behind a veil and only the high priest was allowed to look upon it once each year when he offered the sacrifice for the atonement for Israel's sins (Lev. 16).

Now they sent for the ark and wanted it present with them. It was not that they wanted the ark that they may serve God or worship God or reverence God – they wanted the presence of God for their own purposes. They were not seeking the will of God, they were not walking by faith and they certainly were not seeking to glorify God. Even worse, the two wicked sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas would be carrying the ark of God.

It was significant for Israel to learn that they could not manipulate God by means of His Ark to give them victory when their hearts were not right with Him. A modern form of this is to see the promises of God as some kind of magical formula, ‘ If I do this, this and this, then God must do this...’ Christians need to learn that God is not like a mop or

a dish rag that we call upon just to clean up our messes. He would not allow Israel to use Him, and he won't let us either! The question remains, 'Are we putting God first in our lives or summoning God when all else has failed us?'

2. God Refuses to Be Displayed As a Trophy (5:1 -5) . . .

3. God Refuses to be Treated With Distain (6:13 -15, 19-21). . .”

James Davis : “We are in a battle today. We need to disabuse ourselves of the idea that God will bless us in- spite of our disobedience. If we bring God into the picture while we are disobeying Him, He will engineer our failure. God gets more glory in the defeat of His carnal people, than He does in their victories. God is interested in not covering sin, but exposing sin. . .

In this revival we must make sure that we do not try to manipulate the power of God. God will use us; we will not use Him. He must be first in all our battle plans. We must not presume upon the power of God. If there is to be spiritual victory in America, God will have to give it to us. . .

God can not be captured. We can not use somebody else's God or someone else's spirituality. We can not use someone's prayer life to obtain victory. We can not use someone else's Bible knowledge of God. We can not use someone else's anointing of the Holy Spirit. We can not capture someone else's power with God. We can not have someone else's revival. We must make up our mind to have our own personal and corporate revival from God. ”

Blaikie : “The history is silent about the Philistines from the days of Samson. The last we have heard of them was the fearful tragedy at the death of that great Judge of Israel, when the house fell upon the lords and the people, and such a prodigious slaughter of their great men took place. From that calamity they seem now to have revived . They would naturally be desirous to revenge that unexampled catastrophe, and as Ebenezer and Aphek are situated in the land of Israel, it would seem that the philistines were the aggressors. . .

Since the ark was carried off Eli must have had a miserable time of it, reproaching himself for his weakness if he gave even a reluctant assent to the plan, and feeling that uncertainty of conscience which keeps one even from prayer, because it makes one doubtful if God will listen. Poor old man of ninety-eight years, he could be tremble for the ark! . . .

What an awful impression these scenes convey to us of the overpowering desolation that comes to believing souls with the feeling that God has taken His departure. Tell us that the sun is no longer to shine; tell us that neither dew nor rain shall ever fall again to refresh the earth; tell us that a cruel and savage nation is to reign unchecked and unchallenged over all the families of a people once free and happy; you convey no such image of desolation as when you tell pious hearts that God has departed from their community. Let us learn the obvious lesson, to do nothing to provoke such a calamity.

It is only when resisted and dishonored that the Spirit of God departs – only when He is driven away.”

TEXT: 1 Samuel 5:1 – 7:2

TITLE: *DON'T MESS WITH THE HOLINESS OF GOD!*

BIG IDEA:

GOD PROTECTS HIS HOLINESS BY CURSING THOSE WHO FAIL TO APPROACH HIM WITH THE PROPER FEAR AND CAREFULNESS

REVIEW:

Remember what the ark of God symbolizes:

His Presence

His Power

His Favor – but only when approached with fear and carefulness

I. (5:1-12) THE PHILISTINES LEARN NOT TO MESS WITH THE ARK OF THE HOLY GOD

A. (5:1-7) God's Curse on Ashdod and the House of Dagon

1. (:1-2) The Philistines tried to put the Ark on Display as a Trophy of Victory
Initial celebration of their possession of this important trophy

2. (:3-5) Idols Cannot Stand Before a Holy God

a. The destruction of Dagon

b. The humiliation of the priesthood of Dagon

3. (:6-7) The Philistines Paid a Heavy Price for Profaning the Sacred

B. (:5:8-9) God's Curse on Gath

1. (:8) Decision to Try a Different Approach = switching cities

Key decision makers in the land wrestling with the tough question:
"What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?"

Conclusion: bad karma in Ashdod; we should have better luck in Gath

2. (:9) Same Curse from God

Philistines were not very bright ... but they were starting to wake up and get the message. No waiting for council decision this time; just send it away and let the problem rest on the next city. No attempt at a solution

C. (5:10-12) God's Curse on Ekron

1. Fear of God much more immediate

Did not even want to receive the ark; wanted to get rid of it as soon as possible

2. Same Curse from God
3. Attempt at a Solution – Return the ark to Israel

II. (6:1-12) THE PHILISTINES TAKE CARE TO RETURN THE ARK TO ISRAEL IN A RESPECTFUL MANNER

Transition (:1) Seven Month Problem

“Now the ark of the Lord had been in the country of the Philistines seven months.”

- A. (:2-3) Proposed Solution: Try to Appease the God of Israel
- B. (:4-9) Details of Preparation: Demonstrate a Softened Heart of Repentance
 1. (:4-5a) Details of the Guilt Offering

“five golden tumors and five golden mice according to the number of the lords of the Philistines”

Blaikie: “The idea of presenting offerings to the gods corresponding with the object in connection with which they were presented was often given effect to by heathen nations.”

Appleby: “Presumably the mice are seen as the cause of the plague they’ve been experiencing. There may have been a plague of mice that accompanied the outbreak of tumors. In fact it could have been that this plague was something like bubonic plague that we now know is carried by rodents and that shows itself in tumours or boils. ”

2. (:5b-6) Intent and Spirit of the Guilt Offering
 - a. Designed to Give God Glory

“you shall give glory to the God of Israel”
 - b. Designed to Appease God and Remove the Curse

“perhaps He will ease His hand from you, your gods, and your land”
 - c. Designed to Demonstrate a Softened Heart of Repentance
Warning against Hardening their Hearts

Cf. how the language and ideas hearken back to the plagues inflicted against the Egyptians and to God’s hardening of the heart of the unrepentant Pharaoh.

3. (:7-8) Details of Transportation – Logistics

Keil: “The new cart and the young cows, which had never worn a yoke, corresponded to the holiness of the ark of God. To place it upon an old cart, which had already been used for all kinds of earthly purposes, would have been an offence against the holy thing.”

4. (:9) Testing the Root Cause – Chance vs. Sovereign Judgment

Wanted to know whether or not they had guessed correctly that their problems were a result of direct judgment from the God of Israel in connection with their possession of the ark

Appleby: “They want to check whether in fact it is God who’s behind this disaster. They figure that if it isn’t God who’s done this, then, being milk cows, they’ll simply turn around and go looking for their calves. But if God is behind it then he’ll lead them back to Israel. Well, the cows head straight up the road to Israel leaving their hungry calves behind. The ark is on its way home. ”

C. (:10-12) Execution of the Plan / Verification of Their Strategy

III. (6:13 – 7:2) THE ISRAELITES LEARN NOT TO MESS WITH THE ARK OF THE HOLY GOD

A. (6:13-18) Joyful Reception of the Returned Ark (Witnessed by the Philistines)

1. (:13) Surprised by Joy
2. (:14-15) Burnt Offerings and Sacrifices to the Lord
3. (:16) Mission Completed for the Philistine envoys
4. (:17-18a) Symbolism of the Five Tumors and Mice
5. (:18b) Memorial

“The large stone on which they set the ark of the Lord is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite.”

B. (6:19 – 7:2) The Israelites Learn a Painful Lesson

1. (:19) Judgment Against Profane, Presumptuous Curiosity

(Note: it would seem that the text has an error here with respect to the number slaughtered. **Ryrie:** The number in the LXX (Greek O.T.) and the writings of Josephus (Anti q. 6.1.4) is 70.”

Hamby: “But once the ark arrived in Beth-Shemesh it should have been covered, it was not suppose to be seen by anyone except the high priest. The people did not do this even though they knew and for the cost for this error of judgment will be high .”

Young: “In Jo sh 15:60 it is called Kirjath-baal, indicating possibly the presence of a sanctuary there. Earlier it was a city in the Gibeonite league.”

2. (:20) Reawakening of the Fear of God
 - Understanding of His Holiness
 “Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God?”
 - Understanding of His Transcendence
 “And to whom shall He go up from us?”
 - Understanding of our own Sinfulness and Brokenness
 creating the need for Reformation under leadership of Samuel

3. (6:21 – 7:2) Preparation for Reformation – 20 year transition period
 - a. Assumption of Responsibility
 City of Kiriathjearim willing to receive the ark along with solemn responsibility to care for it in appropriate fashion.

 - b. Re-establishment of Priestly Role

 - c. Broken-hearted Seeking after the Lord
 “and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can God’s domination over the idol Dagon give us a sense of confidence and realized victory as we face the foes of wickedness and idolatry? Contrast the shame and humiliation experienced by the priests of Dagon with the rejoicing that should characterize the priests of the living God.

- 2) What superstitions abound in Christendom that are not rooted in heart-felt repentance and obedient dependence upon a holy God? Do we ever treat God as a rabbit’s foot or a good luck charm?

- 3) How do we go about rekindling our fear of God and respect for His holiness? Where have we crossed the line and introduced presumption and carelessness into how we approach God?

- 4) What types of preparation for reformation do you think Samuel was making during this difficult time period – both in his own personal life and in his public ministry?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Davis: “It is doubtful that the number ‘50,000’ belongs in the text. In the first place, the syntax is irregular in that there is an absence of the conjunction and the small number comes first. Second, three reputable manuscripts omit that number. Third, it is highly improbable that 50,000 people lived in that small community. Fourth, Josephus states that 70 died and does not mention the 50,000 (Antiquities 6:1.4).”

Blaikie: “At last the ark leaves the land of the Philistines... It is a solemn truth that there are aspects of the Savior’s character, in which He is only a terror and a trouble... Yet it is the aspect in which God usually appears to the sinner. It is the aspect in which our consciences present Him when we are conscious of having incurred His displeasure. And while man remains a sinner and in love with his sin, he may try to disguise the solemn fact to his own mind, but it is nevertheless true that the secret desire is to get rid of God. As the apostle puts it, he does not like to retain God in his knowledge (Rom. I. 28). He says to God, ‘Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways’ (Job xxx. 14). Nay, he goes a step further – ‘The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God’ (Ps. xiv. 1). Where he still makes some acknowledgment of Him, he may try to propitiate Him by offerings, and to make up for the transgressions he commits in some things by act of will-worship, or voluntary humiliation in other things. But alas! Of how large a portion even of men in Christian lands is it true that they do not love God. Their hearts have no yearning for Him. The thought of Him is a disturbing, uncomfortable element. Heart communion with Him is a difficulty not to be overcome. Forms of worship that leave the heart unexercised are a great relief. Worship performed by choirs and instruments and aesthetic rules comes welcome as a substitute for the intercourse and homage of the soul.”

Appleby: “The people of Beth-shemesh have made the appropriate response of worship. Yet there are some in Israel who either don’t understand the significance of this day, or simply don’t have any respect for the Lord. The text isn’t quite clear what happens exactly. Some suggest that these 70 men looked inside the ark. Others simply refer to them as not rejoicing when the ark returned. Perhaps they were afraid they might suffer the same illnesses as the Philistines. Perhaps they simply didn’t care that the Lord was back in their midst. But whatever their sin, their lack of respect for the Lord, their lack of piety, was serious enough that 70 of them died. Again we discover just how dangerous it is to mess with the living God. He has to be taken seriously. You can’t just ignore him and you certainly can’t afford to oppose him.”

Keil: “The longer the Philistines resisted and refused to recognize the chastening hand of the living God in the plagues inflicted upon them, the more severely would they be punished, that they might be brought at last to see that the God of Israel, whose sanctuary they still wanted to keep as a trophy of their victory over that nation, was the omnipotent God, who was able to destroy His foes.”

TEXT: 1 Samuel 7:3-17

TITLE: SECRET TO SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP

BIG IDEA:

STRONG SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (SAMUEL) USES THE GIFT OF EXHORTATION AND THE WEAPON OF PRAYER TO ACCOMPLISH THE MINISTRY GOALS OF SPIRITUAL REVIVAL, DELIVERANCE FROM ENEMIES, PEACEFUL EXISTENCE, AND RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION:

A strong spiritual leader needs to know how to motivate people and how to intercede on their behalf to the Lord of hosts. That is the secret to accomplishing ministry objectives.

I. (:3-6a) SPIRITUAL REVIVAL BASED ON REPENTANCE AND FASTING

A. (:3-4) Gift of Exhortation and the Response of Revival

1. (:3) Exhortation to Turn from Idols to Wholeheartedly Serve God Alone

“If you return to the Lord with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to the Lord and serve Him alone . . .”

2. (:4) Response of Revival

“So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroth and served the Lord alone.”

B. (:5-6) Weapon of Intercessory Prayer and the Response of Revival

1. (:5) Intercessory Prayer of Samuel

“Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you”

Davis: Samuel was well-known for his emphasis upon prayer (8:6; 12:19, 23)

2. (:6a) Response of Revival

a. Repentance

“And they gathered to Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the Lord”

“We have sinned against the Lord”

b. Fasting

“and fasted on that day”

(:6b) Transition: People Submitted to God’s Appointed Spiritual Leadership

“And Samuel judged the sons of Israel at Mizpah”

II. (:6b-11) DELIVERANCE FROM ENEMIES BASED ON PERSISTENT INTERCESSION

- A. (:6b) Gift of Exhortation – Ongoing Pattern of Exhortation
“And Samuel judged the sons of Israel at Mizpah”

- B. (:7) Fear of Enemies Creates Need for Deliverance
“And when the sons of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.”

- C. (:8-9) Weapon of Intercessory Prayer
 - 1. (:8) Pleading for Prayer
“Do not cease to cry to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.”

 - 2. (:9a) Preparing for Prayer
“And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it for a whole burnt offering to the Lord”

 - 3. (:9b) Passion for Prayer
“and Samuel cried to the Lord for Israel and the Lord answered him.”

- D. (:10-11) Victory Through Prayer

III. (:12-14) PEACEFUL EXISTENCE BASED ON PROVIDENTIAL PROTECTION

- A. (:12) Gift of Exhortation Expressed by Way of Memorial
“Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, saying, ‘Thus far the Lord has helped us.’”

(Illustration of buying new Camry)

- B. (:13) Providential Protection
“So the Philistines were subdued, and they did not come anymore within the border of Israel. And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.”

- C. (:14a) Providential Restoration
“And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even to Gath; and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines.”

- D. (:14b) Providential Peace
“So there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.”

IV. (:15-17) RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS BASED ON FAITHFULNESS IN WORSHIP AND SERVICE

A. (:15) Righteous Judgments

“Now Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.”

B. (:16-17a) Faithfulness in Service

“And he used to go annually on circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places. “Then his return was to Ramah, for his house was there, and there he judged Israel”

C. (:17b) Faithfulness in Worship

“and he built there an altar to the Lord.”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How are we using our spiritual gifts to encourage and motivate other believers?
- 2) What principles can we glean from this passage to guide us in praying for revival in our own country?
- 3) Contrast the great power of the *hand of the Lord* compared to the limited and constrained power of the *hand of the Philistines*. Do we have confidence in the power of God working on our behalf to subdue our enemies?
- 4) What have been some of the famous circuit rider preachers down through church history who can look back to the pattern of the faithful service of Samuel throughout the land of Israel?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Blaikie: “It must have been with feelings very different from those of their last encounter, when the ark of God was carried into the battle, that the host of Israel now faced the Philistine army near Mizpah. Then they had only the symbol of God’s gracious presence, now they had the reality. Then their spiritual guides were the wicked Hophni and Phinehas; now their guide was ho ly Samuel. Then they had rushed into the fight in thoughtless unconcern about their sins; now they had confessed them, and through the blood of sprinkling they had obtained a sense of forgiveness. Then they were puffed up by a vain presumption; now they were animated by a calm but confident hope. Then their advance was hallowed by no prayer; now the cry of needy children had gone up from God’s faithful servant. In fact, the battle with the Philistines had already been fought by Samuel on his knees. There can be no more sure token of

success than this. Are we engaged in conflict with our own besetting sins? Or are we contending against scandalous transgression in the world around us? Let us first fight the battle on our knees. If we are victorious there we need have little fear of victory in the other battle.”

Davis: “One would expect a continued revival and spiritual growth among the people who had experienced such a reversal in political and military trends; however, such was not the case. As the Philistines and Ammonites began to apply additional pressure on the borders of Israel, rather than turning to God, the children of Israel sought out a human leader to provide military victory.”

TEXT: 1 Samuel 8:1-22

TITLE: *I WANNA BE LIKE MIKE! THE SUPERSTAR SYNDROME IN SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP*

BIG IDEA:

GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE A TRAGIC HISTORY OF REJECTING GOD'S LEADERSHIP MODEL FOR A PRAGMATIC, WORLDLY MODEL OF THEIR OWN CHOOSING

INTRODUCTION:

Everybody loves a superstar. Nothing wrong with Michael Jordan ... greatest basketball player of all time. Spawned a whole series of TV commercials – Nike, Gatorade ... you name it ... a whole generation of kids growing up with the mentality: “I wanna be like Mike!” The problem comes when we take a Superstar paradigm and apply it to the realm of spiritual leadership with no regard for God’s revealed model.

- We are going to look at the will of the people back in the days of Samuel when Israel rejected God’s design for theocratic rule and demanded a king like all the other nations around them.

- Then we are going to make application to God’s people today in the context of the local church where God’s clearly revealed pattern of plurality of elder government has been replaced by the Superstar Syndrome of a Senior Pastor model with helper elders.

My thesis will be that these 2 situations (which in both instances became the norm rather than the exception for God’s people) are remarkably parallel. For some reason, God’s people are incredibly blind to the warnings and the exhortations which God provides in this crucial area.

However, God is gracious to continue to work and bless in a program that at best can be called “Second Best.” Deviation in this one area is not a fatal flaw for either the nation of Israel or the local church. There are many other criteria for God’s favor and blessing. However, that doesn’t excuse us from seeking God’s best in this area as well and expecting that despite our natural pragmatic thinking to the contrary, God’s way will actually turn out to be most fruitful when judged from God’s perspective.

I. (:1-3) GOD'S LEADERSHIP MODEL CANNOT BE ESTABLISHED ON THE BASIS OF NATURAL SUCCESSION

A. (:1-2) Samuel’s Transition Plan for Leadership Continuity: Appoint His Sons as Judges

1. (:1) Insufficient Preparation

Samuel waited too long to do the necessary discipling work with his sons
“And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel.”

2. (:2) Mechanical Attempt at Implementation
No appointment by God; no divine calling

Same problem that Eli experienced – his sons lacked the character for the job

B. (:3) Failure of That Plan: Corrupt Leadership

1. Summary: Did not emulate the godly example of their father Samuel
“His sons, however, did not walk in his ways”
2. Root Problem: Rebellion / Disobedience
“but turned aside”
3. Motivation: Selfish gain
“dishonest gain”
“took bribes”
4. Result: No righteousness in the land
“perverted justice”

II. (:4-9) GOD’S LEADERSHIP MODEL CANNOT BE ESTABLISHED ON THE BASIS OF THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

A. (:4-5) The Voice of the People Present a Plan that Sounds Reasonable and Pragmatic

1. (:4) Proper Approach to Appeal to Authority
“Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah”

But inherent danger of democratic type of representative government:

The will of the majority can be at great odds with the will of God!

We need safeguards in a structure where the voice of the people can become More powerful than the voice of God.

What happens when you have the inmates running the insane asylum?

Deffinbaugh: “At first glance, it seems as though only the elders of Israel are demanding a king. As the chapter unfolds, it is very clear that all of the people of Israel are behind this movement to have a king. This indicates to me that Israel is functioning here somewhat as a democracy. Their elders are not leading, as much as they are representing the people.”

2. (:5a) Accurate Assessment of the Situation
“Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways”
3. (:5b) Logical Conclusion Based on Worldly, Pragmatic Model
“Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.”

- A sense that under theocratic rule they were missing out on something;
- A preference for the visible and the impressive over the invisible and the spiritual
- A lack of discernment over the dangers of monarchy
- A denial of their mission to be a holy people ruled directly by God

B. (:6) The Discerning Ear of the Prophet of God Immediately Recognizes Deviation from God's Program

1. (:6a) Immediate Reaction on the Part of Samuel

"But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel ..."

2. (:6b) Mature Reaction on the Part of Samuel

Did not react defensively, but sought counsel from God

"And Samuel prayed to the Lord"

Victor Yap: "Samuel was feeling deeply hurt, backed into a corner, and disrespected in the worst way. No one came to his defense, all elders had the same thinking, and options were not on the table. He did not threaten to quit or call it quits, announce or take an early retirement, or leave without a word or trace. He didn't think it was necessary, time, or wise, but Samuel did what his mother did, what he saw his mother do, and what he had learned to do all his life -- when he led the revival early in his ministry (1 Sam 7:5), when he underwent this crisis midway in his ministry (1 Sam 8:6), and when he bid them farewell in his twilight years (1 Sam 12:19, 23) -; he prayed. Samuel was attested by prophet Jeremiah as a great man of prayer (Jer 15:1). "

C. (:7-9) Sometimes God Has Had Enough of Rebellion and Stubbornness

1. (:7) Sad Reality of Rejection

"they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them" (Luke 10:16)

2. (:8) Sad Pattern of History of Rebellion

"Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day—in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also."

3. (:9) Acquiescence of the Lord / Yet Graciousness of Warning

a. Acquiescence of the Lord

"Now then, listen to their voice"

b. Graciousness of Warning

"however, you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them."

III. (:10-18) GOD'S WARNINGS ABOUT LEADERSHIP ABUSE FALL ON DEAF EARS – THE HIGH COST OF KINGSHIP

Deffinbaugh: “The ‘principle of proportion’ is always an important clue to the meaning and interpretation of a text. In our chapter, we know that Israel’s demand for a king is idolatry, idolatry of the same kind Israel has practiced since the exodus (8:7 -9). We know that when Samuel speaks to the people, he tells them ‘all the words of the LORD’ (verse 10), but what is written and preserved for us is the content of verses 10 -18, which is a detailed description of the costs of a kingship. The cost of kingship is the emphasis of Samuel’s words in this chapter.”

A. (:10) The Complete Disclosure by God’s Prophet

“So Samuel spoke all the words of the Lord to the people who had asked of him a king.”

B. (:11-17) The High Cost of Leadership Abuse

1. (:11a) Government characterized by Dominion Rather than Servanthood

“This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you”

Jesus had to warn the disciples that His pattern for spiritual leadership was completely opposed to the pattern of the Gentile world
Matt. 20:25-28; cf. 3 John

2. (:11b-13) Drafting people into positions of service to benefit the king (including military service)

3. (:14-17a) Taxation to support the administration of the leader Appropriation of Personal Property (land, animals, etc.)

4. (:17b) Summary: Servitude rather than Empowerment and Personal Liberty *“and you yourselves will become his servants”*

Interesting that the Messiah would come to present Himself as the rightful King of the Jews but would be rejected by His own people. He would have none of these negative qualities of monarchy and yet would not be recognized as legitimate.

C. (:18) The Deaf Ear of God When You Realize Your Plight

(the pain of being stuck with your bad decision)

you will have to sleep in the bed which you have made

Don’t put yourself in the position of God saying “I told you so”

1. Cry for Deliverance

“Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves”

Hindsight is always 20/20; Monday morning quarterbacking won’t win any games

2. Deaf Ear of God

“but the Lord will not answer you in that day”

The time to listen and respond is when God is speaking

IV. (:19-22) SOMETIMES GOD GIVES IN TO OUR STUBBORNNESS AND ALLOWS US TO CHOOSE SECOND BEST

A. (:19a) Stubborn Refusal to Follow God’s Plan

“Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel”

B. (:19b) Insistent Demand that the People Know Best

“No, but there shall be a king over us”

C. (:20) Pragmatic Motivation to Trust in the Visible Superstar

“that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.”

When someone asks? “Who’s the pastor at your church?” We like to say: “Pastor X -- who is very impressive in XYZ” rather than try to explain: “In reality the Lord Jesus Christ is our Shepherd. He is working through a number of undershepherds (pastors, bishops, overseers, elders) who operate under His designated authority and who use their manifold spiritual gifts to provide the leadership and direction we need.”

Cf. modern day statements of justification for Senior Pastor model:

- Any organization needs 1 person at the top of the command hierarchy or nothing will get done
- You cannot have doctrinal unity unless you have one main leader pointing the way
- How can so many churches be wrong? They all have this same setup ... I don’t know of any functioning plurality where anything is really happening ...

D. (:21-22) Closing of the Window of Opportunity

Samuel went back to the Lord to make sure of his marching orders.

The Lord told him to give in to the demands of the people and allow them to settle for second best (which really is a misnomer).

Guzik: “God told Samuel to fulfill the people’s request. This was not because their request was good or right, but because God was going to teach Israel through this. Sometimes, when we insist of having something bad, God will allow us to have it, and then learn the consequences.”

Very sad watershed in the history of Israel. Theocratic rule was never again even an option until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Sometimes do we pray with perseverance and persistence for the wrong things? Has God ever given you what you asked for and then you were distressed with the consequences? Are we careful to pray: “Thy will be done?” Do our children sometimes nag us and try to break down our resistance so that we will just give in? Why did God relent here and let the people have their own stubborn way?
- 2) How does God in His sovereignty bring good even out of our bad decisions and our stubbornness and rebellion?
- 3) What type of tyranny have you been experiencing in your life? Tyranny of leadership of some type... tyranny of your own sinfulness ... tyranny of some form of addiction ... How does God offer deliverance from such tyranny?
- 4) Do you see the same parallel application that I do to church government issues?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Baxter: “So then, the people claimed and exercised what in these days is called ‘the right of self-determination.’ The change -over from theocracy to monarchy was of themselves. God gave them a king and constituted a kingship. The fact would seem to be that Israel had wearied of a theocratic form of government which made their well - being dependent on their right conduct. Perhaps they vaguely supposed that a government under a human king would relieve them somewhat of this responsibility, inasmuch as their well-being would rest more with the character of the government and the qualities of the king himself.”

Davis: “The people persisted in their demands, desiring political compatibility and jurisprudence which would be similar to that of their neighbors. They also wanted a warrior who would lead them against the encroachments of the Ammonites to the east (v. 20; cf. 12:12). Samuel was commanded to listen to the voice of the people and to give them a king (v. 22).”

David Guzik: “Samuel was one of the most godly men in the entire Bible. He is never specifically said to sin. Yet, this may be a sin on his part. We never have the pattern of judges being appointed by men, or of the office of judge being passed from father to son. Samuel was not right in appointing his sons judges over Israel. . .

What was the difference between a king and a judge? A judge was a leader raised up by God, usually to meet a specific need in a time of crisis. When the crisis was over, usually the judge just went back to doing what he was doing before. A king not only

held his office as king as long as he lived; he also passed his throne down to his descendants.

In addition, a judge would not have a 'government.' He was there to meet a specific need in a time of crisis. A king would establish a standing government, with a bureaucracy, which is both a blessing and a curse to any people.

In Judges 8, Gideon was offered the throne over Israel. He refused it, saying 'I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you.' (Judges 8:23) This was the heart of all the judges, and why Israel went some 400 years in the Promised Land without a king."

Deffinbaugh: "Israel is demanding a very expensive kind of government. Samuel seeks to spell out the cost of kingship, and it is amazingly expensive. In order for us to appreciate the high cost of having a king, we must first refresh our memories on how things worked under the rule of judges. In the Book of Judges we see that there is no king, no palace, no standing army. When Israel is attacked, a volunteer army is assembled. In part, this army is supplied by the families of those who fight (see 1 Samuel 17:17-22). There is no 'administration' of counselors, advisors, servants and staff, who support and facilitate the king's reign. In short, the system is informal, ad hoc, and very inexpensive. With God as their King, it works, as we can see in the Book of Judges and in 1 Samuel 7, for example.

In contrast to a 'low budget' system as a means of ruling a nation, what the Israelites are demanding is very costly. To have a king who will go before them and lead them to war is to have a standing army. Once Israel is ruled by a king, life on the farm will never be the same. The king will draft their sons into military service, driving his chariots or serving as a horseman, or as one of the infantry. Some will be drafted as officers. A standing army must also have supplies. Israelite sons will be used to plant and harvest crops and build and maintain military equipment (not to mention all of the non-military supplies required). It is not just the young men whom the king will draft into his service. The Israelites' daughters, who once sat or served at their fathers' table, will now serve the king's table. They will be perfumers, cooks, and bakers."

Victor Yap:

A joke on the management of cows has been circulating for many years under the subject "World Economics," "World Politics," or "World Ideologies?"

Communism: You have two cows. The government takes both, milks them, keeps the milk, and gives you a pint.

Socialism: The government takes one of your cows and gives it to a neighbor.

Fascism: The government takes both your cows and shoots one of them.

Nazism: The government takes both cows and shoots you.

Capitalism: You milk both cows, sell one of the cows, and buy a bull.

Bureaucracy: The government takes both cows, milks them, and pours the milk down the drain.

Frank Gallagher: Christian “Celebrities” - Christians sometimes have a tendency to treat certain believers as “celebrities.” These men might be evangelists, pastors, Bible teachers, writers, and musicians. They sometimes are the leaders of Christian organizations. We can respect such men for the job they are doing, but shouldn’t view them or treat them better than we might treat other believers.

Gordon Runyon: Webster’s dictionary defines “tyranny” as arbitrary or unrestrained exercise of power. We don’t use the word “tyranny” a lot in our own day. We don’t routinely hear people in positions over us referred to as tyrants. (They may in fact be tyrants, but we don’t use the word.)

But the word “tyranny” was pretty common in the political discourse of the day when our nation was founded. In fact, one of the flags that was flown by colonial patriots in the American Revolution said this, “Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God.” Or, maybe you’ve heard that quote by Thomas Paine, a professional fomenter of revolution, “The tree of liberty must from time to time be refreshed with the blood of patriots and tyrants.” The Mel Gibson movie, *The Patriot*, set in that era, had his character, a reluctant warrior, say something like, “It remains to be seen whether it is better to be ruled by one tyrant a thousand miles away, or by a thousand tyrants one mile away.” . . .

What I want to tell you is this. We’ve been looking at a pretty sad story, a sad story that is made all the worse in that mankind has repeated it over and over again and suffered for it. But it doesn’t end here. Eventually, God says enough is enough and He does away with the king of rejection, and installs the king of God’s own choosing, David. That is the pattern. Rejection of God leads to tyranny, leads to extreme human suffering, leads to God being moved with compassion to bring deliverance, to bring in the King He Himself has chosen. Tyranny and bondage are the darkest and blackest of nights. But morning comes. With the dawn of God’s mercy, the sun rises and the light shines again. I’m wondering where you are in that pattern. Rejection, tyranny, suffering, the deliverance of God through a new King. I firmly believe that our own nation is moving from rejection into tyranny. Minus a wondrous outpouring of the Spirit in revival and reformation, the night is almost upon us .

TEXT: 1 Samuel 9:1-27

TITLE: GOD GIVES THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT

BIG IDEA:

**GOD SOVEREIGNLY GUIDES IN THE SELECTION OF SAUL TO BE KING
– GIVING THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY HAD DEMANDED**

(:1-2) INTRODUCTION: THE IMPRESSIVE NATURE OF THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

A. (:1-2a) Saul's Impressive Pedigree

Son of Kish – “*a mighty man of valor*”

But the house of Benjamin would not have been the first place to look for a king.

The people wanted a warrior who could lead them in battle.

B. (:2b) Saul's Impressive Physical Appearance

Very handsome and strong

Extremely tall

The people wanted someone who looked impressive.

Important Principle: Man looks at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart. Saul had a lot going for him; so much potential; yet such a bad ending.

Hamby: “When we choose less than God’s best he still does not abandon us. It grieved God and his prophet Samuel that Israel demanded a king. Samuel was sent to reason with Israel but they replied, ‘No, we want a king like all the other nations.’ They thought that they knew what was best, they took counsel of their own hearts and having chosen a course independent of God, they proceeded at once to follow it up. Sometimes the severest judgment God can give us is to let us have our own way. And yet even when we reject God’s best he does not forsake his people. Most of us are painfully aware that things would be far better in our lives if they had made wiser decisions. I believe that it is especially frustrating to realize what they are going through now is the result of poor past decision in our lives, times when we settled for less than God’s best. ”

Mathew: “Let me make an application right here to you who are not yet married. I know what you are looking for --someone who is tall, blond, slender, athletic, blue-eyed, and tanned. The modern Christian has no interest in the heart. There is a fluttering and a rush, but whether an individual fears God and obeys him implicitly --the divine qualification--is not what most people are using as criteria for a spouse. Most people judge by outward appearances.”

**I. (:3-10) SEARCHING FOR DONKEYS – OCCASION FOR SEEKING OUT THE MAN OF GOD --
GOD SOVEREIGNLY GUIDES OUR EVERYDAY RESPONSIBILITIES TO FULFILL HIS WILL**

Amazing that Saul had occasion to seek out Samuel.

Faithfulness of Saul to follow out his father's instructions and give this mission his best effort (:3).

Concern not to alarm his father by extending the search more than was prudent (:5).

Respect for the man of God (:6).

Concern over the proper protocol to approach the man of God with the appropriate gifts, etc. (:7).

Willingness to accept wise counsel from subordinates (:10).

**I. (:11-14) SEARCHING FOR SAMUEL – ASKING AND FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS
GOD SOVEREIGNLY GUIDES OUR APPOINTMENTS TO FULFILL HIS WILL**

Amazing that Saul could hook up with Samuel – even though he was seeking him out.

Men have not always been unwilling to ask for directions!

Providential to find him at home in the city since he traveled all over in his capacity as judge.

**I. (:15-21) SURPRISE AT SAMUEL'S WARM RECEPTION --
GOD SOVEREIGNLY REVEALS HIS PURPOSES IN HIS TIMING**

Deffinbaugh: "Samuel, Saul, and his servant make their way up to the high place, where he gives them the place of honor at the head of all the invited guests. Samuel is a man of faith. When God informs him that the king will come on the following day (9:16), Samuel makes reservations for him as the honored guest of the sacrificial meal (9:23 - 24). He has the cook set apart the choicest portion, telling him to serve it when instructed to do so (when the promised king appears). When Saul and his servant are seated, Samuel instructs the cook to bring out the portion which has been set aside in expectation of his arrival. The man who appears to be an unexpected drop-in is in fact, expected and none other than the guest of honor. "

Guzik: "We might imagine that Samuel was very interested to see how Saul would react when he was honored this way. Often, the way one reacts when they are honored shows

what kind of person they really are. If they receive the honor humbly, without regarding it too much or becoming proud about it, it says something good about them. But if they show a false humility or a proud heart in the way they receive the honor, it shows something bad in their character.”

**I. (:22-27) SAMUEL PREPARES SAUL FOR THE CORONATION
ANNOUNCEMENT --
GOD SOVEREIGNLY PREPARES OUR HEARTS TO RECEIVE THE
APPROPRIATE WORD OF GOD FOR OUR CIRCUMSTANCES**

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do we view all the details of our life as part of the tightly woven fabric of God’s Providential leading and guidance? Do we respond to our chance encounters with others as though they were divine appointments?
- 2) What does this passage teach us about the compassion and patience of God in dealing with our stubbornness and poor decisions? How gracious was God to Samuel to provide such clear revelation and confirmation of how the transition in leadership should take place?
- 3) Are we flexible and open enough in our thinking to accept the advice of others – especially when those individuals are clearly in some type of subordinate role?
- 4) Do you think Samuel would have found it difficult to accept God’s verdict of replacing his sons in a position of leadership with this unknown Benjaminite?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hamby: “God had a plan for the life of his nation Israel, but Israel thought they understood better what they needed than God did. They wanted a king, and they wanted one for all the wrong reasons. They wanted to be like the other nations. When we as God’s people desire more than anything else to be like the other people of this world we are in trouble. When we know what God wants in our lives and yet chose to go another direction we are very best, choosing second best. We need to recognize tonight that God’s will for our lives, is what we would choose if we could see clearly. God’s will is not to make our lives miserable but to make our lives fulfilled.”

Deffinbaugh: “Saul’s father, Kish, is a Benjamite of some reputation. Our text informs us that he is a ‘mighty man of valor’ (9:1). This expression can be understood to refer to a man’s courage, his military skill and success, or even his wealth. He is, for one reason or many, a man of renown. Saul comes from good stock. And while Saul has not yet established a reputation for himself, he has all the physical attributes which will stand him in good stead with the people. In short, he is what our teenage daughters would call a ‘hunk.’ He is tall (taller than any other Israelite), dark (people in that part of the world usually are – and since he works out in the fields, he would have an awesome tan), and handsome. It will take much more than this, however, for Saul to fulfill his calling as king.”

Guzik: “There are two mistakes people make regarding God’s guidance through circumstances. One mistake is to think every event of our lives is heavy with meaning from God. This is wrong, because though nothing happens by accident, not everything happens for a great purpose. The second mistake is to ignore the moving of God in our lives through circumstances. God wanted to use this situation to guide Saul, and God will often use circumstances in our lives the same way. We need to trust in God’s goodness and in His ability to make all things work together for good (Romans 8:28).”

Blaikie: “God’s providence is a wonderful scheme; a web of many threads, woven with marvelous skill; a network composed of all kinds of materials, great and small, but so arranged that the very smallest of them is as essential as the largest to the completeness of the fabric.

One would suppose that many of the dramas of the Old Testament were planned on very purpose to show how intimately things secular and things sacred, as we call them, are connected together; how entirely the minutest events are controlled by God, and at the same time how thoroughly the freedom of man is preserved. The meeting of two convicts in an Egyptian prison is a vital link in the chain of events that makes Joseph governor of Egypt; a young lady coming to bathe in the river preserves the life of Moses, and secures the escape of the Israelites; the thoughtful regard of a father for the comfort of his sons in the army brings David into contact with Goliath, and prepares the way for his elevation to the throne; the beauty of a Hebrew girl fascinating a Persian king saves the whole Hebrew race from massacre and extermination.

So in the passage now before us. The straying of some asses from the pastures of a Hebrew farmer brings together the two men, of whom the one was the old ruler, and the other was to be the new ruler of Israel. That these two should meet, and that the older of them should have the opportunity of instructing and influencing the younger, was of the greatest consequence for the future welfare of the nation. And the meeting is brought about in that casual way that at first sight seems to indicate that all things happen without plan or purpose. Yet we find, on more careful examination, that every event has been planned to fit in to every other, as carefully as the pieces of a dissected map, or the fragments of a fine mosaic. But of all the actors in the drama, not one ever feels that his freedom is in any way interfered with. All of them are at perfect liberty to follow the course that commends itself to their own minds.”

TEXT: 1 Samuel 10:1-27

TITLE: *THE CORONATION OF SAUL*

BIG IDEA:

THE ANOINTING OF GOD'S CHOSEN LEADER WAS A MIXED BLESSING IN MANY RESPECTS – YET CLEARLY A DIVINE APPOINTMENT

(:1) INTRODUCTION: PRIVATE ANOINTING

A. Significance of the Anointing

1. Significance of use of oil

Roper: “Prior to this there were only two occasions when anointings took place. Priests were anointed, and the sanctuary was anointed. Anointing with oil is a symbol of the pouring out of the Spirit of God upon someone. It is a sign of God's approval. It is a seal that a person is pleasing to him, and that therefore he is pouring himself out upon that person. And now God, in this very picturesque way, is showing Saul that his pleasure rests upon him, that he is instituting the monarchy, establishing Saul as the king. Then there follow three signs which Samuel gives Saul which are confirmatory of his anointing.”

2. Significance of the pouring

Reference to the activity of the Holy Spirit

3. Significance of the kiss from Samuel

Blaikie: “The kiss which he gave him was the kiss of homage, a very old way of recognizing sovereignty (Ps. ii. 12), and still kept up in the custom of kissing the sovereign's hand after elevation to office or dignity.”

B. Proclamation of Divine Coronation

“Has not the Lord anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?”

I. (:2-8) PROPHECY OF CONFIRMING SIGNS

Ryrie: “Saul was promised three signs, which would serve to authenticate Samuel's authority to anoint him king and to confirm God's will in the matter.”

A. (:2) Confirming Sign #1 – God Can Solve Our Problems

The donkeys have been found!

B. (:3-4) Confirming Sign #2 – God Can Provide Our Daily Bread (Material Needs)

Gift of 2 loaves of bread

C. (:5-6) Confirming Sign #3 – God Can Transform and Empower for Service

Saul joins the ranks of the prophets

D. (:7-8) Final Instructions / Pivotal Test

1. (:7) Final Instructions

Bank on the promise that “*God is with you*” – this should free you to take the appropriate action in any situation

2. (:8) Pivotal Test

Exhibit patience (even in times of extreme pressure) and dependence up on the Lord; do not act presumptuously

II. (:9-13) FULFILLMENT OF CONFIRMING SIGNS

A. (:9) Summary of Fulfillment – Divine Empowerment – A Changed Heart

“Then it happened when he turned his back to leave Samuel, God changed his heart; and all those signs came about on that day.”

B. (:10) Fulfillment of Final Sign – Prophesying by the Spirit of God

C. (:11-12) Reaction of Surprise from His Neighbors

D. (:13) Transition –

“When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place.”

III. (:14-16) ASIDE: LEADERS MUST BE ADEPT AT KEEPING CONFIDENCES AND EXERCISING DISCRETION

Samuel is grilled by his uncle who was curious as to the details of his conversation with Samuel; but Saul only shared what was appropriate for public knowledge at the time. There would have been a potential for chaos and disruption if he had let the cat out of the bag before the public coronation.

IV. (:17-27) PUBLIC CORONATION AND DEDICATION

Gordon: “To this point Saul’s appointment has been kept secret; now, in response to the earlier demand of the tribal elders (8:4 -22), Samuel convenes a public assembly at which Saul can be presented as God’s choice as king. But the new ruler will not necessarily be welcomed on Samuel’s say-so, and the process of election by lot will have to be undergone so that there will be no doubt as to whom God favours. Even with this precaution there will be some who will question the appropriateness of the choice (v. 27).”

A. (:17) Convocation at Mizpah Introduced

“Thereafter Samuel called the people together to the Lord at Mizpah.”

B. (:18-19a) Condemnation of the People’s Rejection of the Theocracy

1. Historical examples of Redemption and Deliverance
“But you today rejected your God, who delivers you from all your calamities and your distresses”

2. Granting of Their Stubborn Demand
“set a king over us”

- C. (:19b-21) Confirmation of God’s Choice by the Process of Lot Casting

- D. (:22) Cowardice of Saul in Trying to Hide from His New Responsibilities
 Found *“hiding himself by the baggage”*

- E. (:23-24) Coronation of Saul Before the People
 1. Physically impressive
“he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward”

 2. Divinely selected
“Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen?”

 3. Charismatic presence
“Surely there is no one like him among all the people”

 4. Well-received by the masses
“Long live the king!” – phrase still used in England

- F. (:25) Constitution of the Kingdom Ratified and Preserved
“Then Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in the book and placed it before the Lord.”
 Corresponding privileges and responsibilities of the king and of the people

- G. (:26-27) Contrasting Reactions
 1. Reception by Many
“and the valiant men whose hearts God had touched went with him.”

 2. Rejection by a Few
“But certain worthless men said, ‘How can this one deliver us?’ And they despised him and did not bring him any present.”

 3. Reserve on the part of Saul
“But he kept silent.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do we have a sense of how precious we are to the Lord? Note how in vs. 1, God's people are called "*His inheritance*" and God's anointed leaders must show respect and consideration for their responsibility over such a precious group of people.
- 2) Why did God choose to focus on the function of prophesying as such a prominent role for the third and final confirming sign? What is so special about prophesying?
- 3) What is the significance of the proverb in vs. 12 – "*Is Saul also among the prophets?*"
- 4) Note how Saul responded to criticism and opposition. Do we get defensive in those types of situations? Are we able to "*hold our peace*" and take matters up with the Lord?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Davis: Re changed heart in vs. 9

"This expression should not be regarded as the act of regeneration, but rather a work of the Spirit of God by which he was prepared for kingship. Regarding this change E. J. Young notes the following:

'It would, however, be a change of degree rather than of kind. Saul was to become a different man, in that he would now have the ability to act as a king should act. He would have a wider vision of the duties that were required of a king, and he would receive the capacity to carry out those duties.'

Blaikie: "The event was a very important one, as showing the pains that were taken to impress him with the solemnity of the office, and his obligation to undertake it in full accord with God's sacred purpose in connection with His people Israel. Everything was planned to impress on Saul that his elevation to the royal dignity was not to be viewed by him as a mere piece of good fortune, and to induce him to enter on the office with a solemn sense of responsibility, and in a spirit entirely different from that of the neighboring kings, who thought only of their royal position as enabling them to gratify the desires of their own hearts. Both Saul and the people must see the hand of God very plainly in Saul's elevation, and the king must enter on his duties with a profound sense of the supernatural influences through which he has been elevated, and his obligation to rule the people in the fear, and according to the will, of God."

Jeffries:

"The Israelites chose their first king by casting lots or by using the Urim and Thummim, two plates or flat stones carried by the high priest. The fact that Saul was chosen may seem like luck, but it was really the opposite. God had instructed the Israelites to make the Urim and Thummim for the specific purpose of

consulting Him in times such as this (Exodus 28:30; Numbers 27:12 -21). By using the Urim and Thummim, the Israelites were taking the decision out of their own hands and turning it over to God."

- Notes on I Samuel 10:20, New Geneva Study Bible

Roper: "Do you see what God promised? Here was a young man who had been anointed as king over Israel, and God promised him three things. First, his peace of mind - freedom from all the little things which would keep him from being a king, information which would give him quietness of heart, which would settle him down and calm his spirit so that he would be able to occupy himself with things which were really significant - the peace of God. The second thing was daily provision, bread to meet his needs when he needed it - perhaps at the moment of extremity, but yet adequate resources in time of need. And third, a supernatural endowment, power from on high which would enable him to do things which were extraordinary, for which he was not qualified. He would become a prophet in Israel. He was well qualified for the task, but his sufficiency came not from himself but from God, 'who has made us sufficient,' as Paul said. It wasn't his size, it wasn't his strength, it wasn't his natural capabilities which qualified him. He was just a vessel to be filled and flooded with God, given God's peace, God's provision, God's power. And God said, 'Whatever you have to do, Saul, do it! whatever the occasion demands, I am with you, whether it is a small thing or a great thing.'

We too are anointed as kings. God has intended us to reign over life - over our bodies, over our passions, over our environment, over every aspect of life. And we too are given these three things. We are given the peace of God - information from God's word and God's Spirit which sets us at ease, gives us peaceful, quiet hearts, so that we are not being enervated and drained by thinking about all the worrisome little things that occur in our life. We are free from worrying so that we can get on with our kingly task. Secondly, we are given provision. Paul says, 'My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.' Whatever you need, there is provision for it. And third, there is power, power to do the extraordinary, power to act contrary to your nature, power to face any foe - even the garrison of Philistines which is located right there in your hometown - adequate power. And God says, 'Whatever you have to do, do it, and I will be with you. '"

Roe: "If God commits himself to Saul, fills him with the Spirit 'mightily', allows him to prophesy, to become a prophet of God and changes his heart, who, then, is responsible for the failure of Saul? It cannot be God. So, do not ever accuse God of causing you to fail. We are going to see that Saul does exactly that. Whatever God calls you to do, God equips you to do. Saul understands where the power lies to do the job. Saul, who does not come from a school of prophets, [in fact the people question what he is doing when he prophesies] is allowed to experience the indwelling power of God in a way he has never experienced in his whole life. He gets a taste of what could be his if he obeys. God really wants Saul to succeed. He does not like for Christians to fail. He is a loving father. Therefore, before He does anything with regard to Saul's kingship, he lets Saul understand all the power of God is at his disposal if he chooses. "

Kapteyn:

“Samuel wants to present their first king to the people. But there is a problem. Saul is missing, he is not to be found. Where is he? Did he not show up? The Lord knows where Saul is. And He tells the people ‘ He has hidden himself among the baggage.’

As we will see Samuel knew that He had been chosen by God to be king, but he hid hoping that he could avoid this task that God had given him.

This morning I have a question that each one of you must answer, to God and to yourselves. Are you hiding among the baggage? As individuals and therefore together as a church?

As we look at Saul, let us ask ourselves, ‘ Can I can see any similarities between Saul and myself?’ ‘ Am I hiding among the baggage?’ ”

[Kapteyn goes on to list the type of baggage which Saul possessed that kept him from stepping to the plate in faith and showing himself ready to tackle the responsibility to which God had called him and for which he had been equipped.]

Baxter: “Young Saul showed certain highly commendable qualities of disposition. We note his modesty (ix. 21; x. 22). We note his discreetness (x. 27). We mark his generous spirit (xi. 13). And there were other fine qualities too – his considerateness of his father (ix. 5), his dash and courage (xi. 6, 11), his capacity for strong love (xvi. 21), his energetic antagonism to such evils as spiritism (xxviii. 3), and his evident moral purity in social relationships.”

Young: Re vs. 25 – “As Moses had written the law for the community of Israel, so Samuel now wrote the constitution of the theocratic kingdom. This constitution has never been located. It would be interesting to read the rules and regulations set forth by Samuel.”

TEXT: 1 Samuel 11:1-15

TITLE: *THE EYE OF THE STORM – LEADERSHIP PROVING GROUND*

BIG IDEA:

KING SAUL WINS OVER HIS CRITICS BY PROVING HIS MILITARY LEADERSHIP WITH A SPIRIT-INSPIRED RESCUE OPERATION

INTRODUCTION:

How does a leader gain the respect of his people and prove his mettle? It has to be by performance under pressure – not by appointment or decree. There will always be an element of opposition – a band of critics who are waiting to pounce on perceived weakness and mistakes. Crushing victories are an opportunity to silence those critics – at least for a season – and galvanize the support of the people. How a leader responds to the thrill of victory and the enthusiastic support of his followers tells a lot about his character.

I. (:1-3) REQUESTING RESCUE: GOD’S PEOPLE DESPERATE FOR DELIVERANCE

A. The Siege

The Ammonites under Nahash “*besieged Jabesh-gilead*”

B. The Negotiations for Surrender and Servitude

God’s people had already given up. The only question was defining the terms of surrender and servitude.

“*Make a covenant with us and we will serve you*”

Why not humble themselves before God and repent of their sins and seek His deliverance? Why cave so quickly?

Blaikie: “Yet how often do men virtually give themselves over to serve a vile master, to lead evil or at least careless lives, to indulge in sinful habits which they know they should overcome, but which they are too indolent and self-indulged to resist! Men and women, with strong proclivities to sin, may for a time resist, but they get tired of the battle; they long for an easier life ... They surrender to the enemy, they are willing to serve sin, because they will not surrender the ease and the pleasures of sin.”

C. The Barbaric Stipulation

“*I will make it with you on this condition, that I will gouge out the right eye of every one of you, thus I will make it a reproach on Israel.*”

D. The Last Ditch Plea for Deliverance

“*Let us alone for seven days, that we may send messengers throughout the*

territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to deliver us, we will come out to you.”

Why would the enemy agree to such a waiting period?

Davis: “The Ammonites were evidently sure of victory as evidenced by the nature of their proposal... This concession illustrated the contemptuous regard which he had for the fighting strength of Israel.”

Guzik: “Why did Nahash let the messengers go? It seems strange that he allowed them to leave, and to see if Israel could muster up the troops to come and defeat him. But Nahash had two reasons. First, he was confident of Israel’s disunity, and figured they would be unable to find anyone to save them. Second, by allowing the messengers to go through all Israel, he was making his name big and his reputation fearsome throughout the whole nation.”

II. (:4-10) RALLYING THE TROOPS – LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

A. (:4) Initial Response of Despair and Helplessness on the Part of the People

“and all the people lifted up their voices and wept”

B. (:5-7) The Spirit-Inspired Response of Anger and Action on the Part of Saul

1. (:5a) The Patience of Saul

“Now behold, Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen”

Blaikie: “We are hardly prepared to find Saul following the herd in the field after his election as king of Israel. We are compelled to conclude that the opposition to him was far from contemptible in number and in influence, and that he found it expedient in the meantime to make no demonstration of royalty, but continue his old way of life.”

2. (:5b) The Concern of Saul

“What is the matter with the people that they weep?”

3. (:6) Spirit-Inspired Anger

“Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily when he heard these words, and he became angry.”

4. (:7) Spirit-Inspired Action – Rallying the Troops / Instilling the Fear of God

Result: *“they came out as one man”*

That is always the goal of any leader – to get your troops to perform as one man

C. (:8-10) Staging the Troops and Promising Rescue

1. (:8) Numbering the Troops and Staging them for Battle

2. (:9) Encouraging the City to Hang in there one more day

3. (:10) Buying Time by Deceiving the Enemy

III. (:11) ROUTING THE ENEMY – GOD ALWAYS WINS BIG

Note: Only 1 verse devoted to this important subject – shows that the Spirit-inspired preparation was the key; with God fighting the battle, the conflict was never in doubt. It was over in a hurry and the victory was total domination – no cliff-hangers when God is on your side.

Complete Rout! *“And it came about that those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.”*

IV. (:12-13) RESPONDING TO THE CRITICS – DEFLECTING PRAISE TO THE REAL SAVIOR

Issue: Who is going to take the credit and get to execute vengeance on the opposition?

A. (:12) Opportunity for Revenge

B. (:13) Recognition that the Day Belongs to the Lord

V. (:14-15) RENEWING THE KINGDOM COMMITMENT – CEREMONIES AT GILGAL

A. (:14) Final Public Leadership of Samuel – Cementing the Transition

“Then Samuel said to the people, ‘Come and let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there.’”

B. (:15a) Confirmation of Saul as Leader of the New Kingdom

“there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal”

C. (15b) Renewal of Worship and Commitment to the Lord

“There they also offered sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord”

D. (:15c) Unity of Joy

“and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How strong is your resolve to fight against the tyranny of sin and enslavement? How quick are you to draw upon the resources of God rather than just throwing in the towel? Do you really understand the power of the Spirit-filled life?

2) When have you seen the Lord stir you up to righteous anger so that you took action against some particular sin or injustice?

3) How do you respond to your critics? Are you out for revenge and vengeance? Do you want to make them pay and see them humiliated? Do you have self control in how you respond to them? Do you look to the Lord to exalt you in His timing?

4) How do you use the leadership quality of exhortation to motivate people to a spirit of unity and action against our spiritual enemies so that we accomplish the task ahead of us?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Davis: “The Ammonites, descendants of Lot (Gen. 19:38), continued their belligerency toward the tribes settled in the eastern territories of Israel. It was the Ammonite military threat under the leadership of Nahash, among other things, that caused Israel to demand a king (cf. I Sam. 12:12). Nahash gave the people of Jabesh-gilead seven days to agree to his terms of surrender which involved the thrusting out of the right eye of the inhabitants of that city (11:2-3). The savagery of these peoples is elsewhere seen in Amos 1:13. The loss of the right eye had military implications, for it would disable the men of that city for military duty since the left eye was usually covered by the shield in battle and the right eye used to spot the enemy. This practice has also been attested in Ugaritic literature.”

Deffinbaugh: At this very moment, Samuel summons the people to Gilgal, where they will “renew the kingdom” (11:14). Saul is made king, sacrifices are made before the Lord, and the “men of Israel rejoiced greatly” (11:15). But what is this matter of “renewing the kingdom”? If Saul is Israel’s first king, then he is their “new” king. How then can they “renew the kingdom” by making Saul king?

I have concluded that Samuel is not speaking of “renewing” the new kingdom, which had been inaugurated with the installation of Saul as king, but rather of “renewing” God’s kingdom, with God as King, as first established at the exodus. There are two strong reasons for this. First, there is the overall message and emphasis of chapter 12, which we will consider momentarily. Second, the “renewal” is to take place at Gilgal, and not at Mizpah (see 7:5ff.). Gilgal is the city located just across (west of) the Jordan River. It is the place where the Israelites first crossed the Jordan and entered into the promised land, the place where the memorial of 12 stones was built. It is the place where the (second-generation) Israelites were circumcised and where Israel renewed her covenant with God (see Joshua 4 and 5). Gilgal is the place from which the “angel of the Lord” came to remind the Israelites of their deliverance at the exodus, their covenant with God, and the reason for their struggle with the nations surrounding them (Judges 2:1-5). It is also one of the cities on Samuel’s circuit (1 Samuel 7:16) and the place where Samuel instructs Saul to wait for him (1 Samuel 10:8). Gilgal is a city closely related to God’s covenant with Israel.

Carr:

A TIME OF VICTORY

We tend to think of Saul's reign as King of Israel a total failure. However, there were a few times of precious victory. Here is a time when Saul did what was right, and God blessed.

URGENCY OF THE MOMENT - Vss. 1-4

UNCTION OF THE LEADER - Vss. 5-6

UNITY OF THE PEOPLE - Vss. 7-10

UNLEASHING OF GOD'S POWER - Vs. 11

UNDERSTANDING THE VICTORY - Vss. 12-13

Some wanted Saul's enemies put to death. Saul understood that the day was not a day of vengeance, but a day of rejoicing in what God had done.

Terry Sisney:

There are 3 classes of people in this message this morning:

#1 Those who are willing to give up their right eyes

#2 Those who are hopelessly and helplessly weeping over the sad condition of losing their right eye.

#3 Those who are filled with holy hatred and anger against sin and Satan, and move to bring deliverance to the oppressed, because they have not given up their right eye, and they have a covenant with God, and God's power flows through their lives.

Guzik:

We can see in this account a similarity between Satan, our spiritual enemy, and Nahash, the enemy of Israel.

- i. Satan attacks us, but cannot do anything against us without our agreement. He asks for, and requires our surrender.
- ii. Satan wants us to serve him, and will attempt to intimidate us into giving in to him.
- iii. Satan wants to humiliate us, and exalt himself over us. Through humiliating one saint, Satan wants to bring reproach on all God's people.
- iv. Satan wants to take away our ability to effectively fight against him.
- v. Satan wants to blind us, and if he cannot blind us completely, he will blind us partially.
- vi. The name Nahash means serpent or snake!

TEXT: 1 Samuel 12:1-25

TITLE: PRESENT OBEDIENCE CAN OUTWEIGH PAST TRANSGRESSION

BIG IDEA:

FORMER TRANSGRESSIONS DO NOT DOOM YOU TO PRESENT FAILURE AS LONG AS YOU CHOOSE TO FEAR THE LORD AND SERVE HIM RIGHT NOW

INTRODUCTION:

How does my past affect my potential for God's blessing in the present? That is a common question. People feel that they have blown it so badly in the past that there is no way that God can ever bless them again. So why even try to fear God and walk in faith and obedience? Sense of hopelessness and despair ... No people frustrated God more than His chosen nation of Israel. Their history documents the consistent pattern of God's blessing and protection followed by the people's idolatry and departure from His ways. Samuel addresses that situation here as he provides hope for a fickle nation and yet warns them at the same time.

Piper: "Then in chapter 12 comes Samuel's inauguration speech, and it was not exactly what the people wanted to hear! He does have some astonishingly good news for them. But before he tells them he wants to make sure that they know and feel the magnitude of the evil they have done in wanting to be like the other nations and being dissatisfied with God as their king."

I. (:1-5) THE INTEGRITY OF SAMUEL LEAVES GOD'S PEOPLE WITH NO ROOM FOR EXCUSES – REVIEW OF SAMUEL'S RIGHTEOUS DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL

A. (:1a) He Responded to the Requests of the People

"Behold, I have listened to your voice in all that you said to me"

Accessible Leader

Good Listener

Responsive

Proactive

B. (:1b-2a) He Provided the King Which the People Wanted – Transfer of Political Leadership

"I have appointed a king over you. And now, here is the king walking before you."

Difficult thing for a leader to transfer power.

C. (:2b-3) He Maintained a Consistent Track Record of Integrity and Righteousness

"Here I am; bear witness against me before the Lord and His anointed"

Speak now, or forever hold your peace.

Samuel has come to the end of the line and he challenges the people to point out

any type of misconduct or extortion or oppression.
He appeals to his age and his experience and his wisdom to give him a credible hearing now on this important subject.

- D. (:4-5) He Received the Stamp of Approval from the People (Witnessed by God)
“You have not defrauded us, or oppressed us, or taken anything from any man’s hand”
(in contrast to the ministry of Eli’s sons or even his own sons)

Guzik: “Why does Samuel do what seems to be a purely self-justifying and self-glorifying thing? From what we know of the character of Samuel in other passages, we have to believe this is more than him saying, ‘Look at how good I am.’ Instead, it seems that Samuel wants the nation to know that he has passed a good legacy of leadership to the new king Saul. He wants Israel to recognize that he hasn’t handed Saul a mess that he has to clean up. If Saul should prove to be a poor leader, no one could say it was because of the bad example set by Samuel.”

I. (:6-13) THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD LEAVES GOD’S PEOPLE WITH NO ROOM FOR EXCUSES – REVIEW OF GOD’S RIGHTEOUS DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL – CYCLE OF FAILURE

“So now, take your stand, that I may plead with you before the Lord concerning all the righteous acts of the Lord which He did for you and your fathers.”

Blaikie: “Their existence as a people and their settlement in Canaan were due to the special mercy of the Lord. If ever a nation owed everything to the power above, Israel owed everything to Jehovah.”

- A. (:6-9) Cycle 1: Early History of the Nation:
Cry for Help / the Lord’s Response / People’s Failure / God’s Judgment
1. (:8a) Starting with the Cries for Help from Jacob
 2. The Lord’s Response: Moses and Aaron and Redemption from Egypt
 3. (:9a) People’s Failure: *“But they forgot the Lord their God”*
 4. (:9b) God’s Judgment : people oppressed by foreign powers
- B. (:10-13) Cycle 2: Period of the Judges
Cry for Help / the Lord’s Response / People’s Failure / God’s Judgment
1. (:10) Repeated Cries for Help
“We have sinned because we have forsaken the Lord and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroth; but now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve Thee.”

2. (:11) Repeated Response from the Lord : Sent Various Judges
“Then the Lord sent Jerubbaal and Bedan and Jephthah and Samuel, and delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around, so that you lived in security.”

Guzik: “Youngblood feels that one reason Gideon is mentioned is ‘ because he specifically refused to establish dynastic as opposed to divine rule over his countrymen . . . for which refusal he must surely have been one of Samuel’s heroes.”

3. (:12) People’s Failure: Rejection of the Theocracy
“When you saw that Nahash the king of the sons of Ammon came against you, you said to me, ‘No but a king shall reign over us.’ Although the Lord your God was your king.”

4. (:13) God’s Judgment: Gave the People What they Wanted
“Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen, whom you have asked for, and behold, the Lord has set a king over you.”

I. (:14-18) THE KEY PRINCIPLE FOR GOD’S BLESSING IS PRESENT OBEDIENCE: FEAR HIM AND SERVE HIM RIGHT NOW

- A. (:14) Statement of the Key Principle
“If you will fear the Lord and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the Lord, then both you and also the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God.”
- B. (:15) Corresponding Warning
“And if you will not listen to the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the command of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you, as it was against your fathers.”
- C. (:16-18) Confirming Sign: Was rejecting the theocracy really such a bad thing in the eyes of God?
“Then you will know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the Lord by asking for yourselves a king.”

Guzik: “Because it was the wheat harvest, the sign displayed not only God’s power, but His judgment also. Heavy rain during the harvest could destroy all their crops. The sign was a warning. ‘ In that part of the world not only is *rain in harvest . . . not fitting* (Prov. 26:1), it is so totally unexpected that it could easily be interpreted as a sign of divine displeasure.’ (Youngblood)”

Davis: “A special sign was given to confirm the validity of this message. Thunder and rain came during the time of the wheat harvest, which was most unusual since the wheat harvest came about the end of May and early June, long after the latter rain.”

People ask the same thing today: Is this plurality of elder thing really such a big deal? Can't we just set up any form of church government which makes sense to us and which we feel has the best chance for success?

Deffinbaugh: "The Israelites look upon their king as their deliverer. In their minds, this king is the key to success. They believe he will deliver them from their oppressors, and he will bring the nation into prosperity. God reminds Israel that, ultimately, He is both the source of their distress, and He is the source of their blessings. Calamity comes upon the nation because of their sin. Blessing does not come upon the nation for its righteousness, but because of God's mercy and grace. Their prosperity is not due to Israel's doing good, but because in Israel's suffering, she cries out to God for deliverance. Israel's devotion to God and her serving Him is the outgrowth of God's grace, not the source of God's blessings. . .

The Israelites have placed too much stock in their new king, and Samuel's words and deeds put this into its proper perspective . . ."

I. (:19-25) REINFORCEMENT OF THE KEY PRINCIPLE AND CORRESPONDING WARNING

A. (:19) Fear of the Lord Stirred Up

"Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, so that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil by asking for ourselves a king."

B. (:20-21) Reinforcement of the Key Principle and Corresponding Warning

C. (:22) The Lord Will Not Abandon You

D. (:23) Samuel Will Not Abandon You

E. (:24-25) Reinforcement of the Key Principle and Corresponding Warning

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can the power of Samuel's ministry be traced back to his consistent pattern of fervent prayer? To what extent has prayer been minimized in our time with the resulting lack of power in various ministries? Do we consider prayerlessness a sin as Samuel did (vs. 23)?

2) Compare Samuel's concern with his own reputation in ministry with the Lord's concern for the reputation of His name. Why is a good reputation so essential? How

does it give Samuel a solid foundation on which to challenge the people to godliness?
Are we being careful to walk in integrity and protect our good name?

3) What does this passage contribute to our theology of divine election, of the grace and mercy of God, of His readiness to forgive and yet His holiness and righteousness to execute judgment as required?

4) How can we stir God's people up to a greater fear of Him in this day when God is spoken of so casually and sin is redefined in more palatable terms?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Davis: "The judges listed in verse 11 present special difficulties. Jerubbaal is, of course, identified with Gideon (Judg. 6:25-32). The name 'Bedan' is problematic because this name does not appear in the book of Judges. It has been supposed by some that this is a reference to a lesser judge whose deeds were not officially recorded. This view, however, appears to be unlikely in view of the nature of Samuel's argument. The others listed are rather imposing personalities connected with specific and important events. What purpose would the name of an unknown judge serve in his argument? Perhaps the best explanation for the appearance of this name is that it represents a copyist's error in the text for the name Barak. The Syriac, Septuagint and Arabic versions have all adopted the latter name."

Blaikie: "Samuel, moreover, reminds them that it was not they that had chosen God; it was God that had chosen them... This was a great ground of comfort for Israel. The eternal God had chosen them and made them His people for great purposes of His own. It was involved in this very choice and purpose of God that he would keep His hand on them, and preserve them from all such calamities as would prevent them from fulfilling His purpose. Fickle and changeable, they might easily be induced to break away from Him; but, strong and unchangeable, He could never be induced to abandon His purpose in them. And if this was a comfort to Israel then, there is a corresponding comfort to the spiritual Israel now. If my heart is in any measure turned to God, to value His favour and seek to do His will, it is God that has effected the change. And this shows that God has a purpose with me."

Piper: "But that is not the deepest foundation of hope and fearlessness in this verse. Why will God not cast away his people? The deepest reason given is in the phrase, 'For his great name's sake.' The rock bottom foundation of our forgiveness and our fearlessness and our joy is the commitment that God has to his own great name. First, he is committed to act for his own name's sake. And then, for that reason, he is committed to act for his people . . .

In other words, when every other hope was gone and the people lay under the judgment of God himself because of their own sin, one hope remained -- and it will

always remain -- that God has an indomitable delight in the worth of his own reputation and will not suffer it to be trodden down for long. . .

At the bottom of all our hope, when everything else has given way, we stand on this great reality: the everlasting, all-sufficient God is infinitely, unwaveringly and eternally committed to his great and holy name. For the sake of his own great name he will act. It will not be profaned for ever. The mission of the church will be victorious. He will vindicate his people and his cause in all the earth. ”

Deffinbaugh: “Our text stands as a word of caution to those who seem to be successful. It certainly puts the apparent ‘success’ of Saul into perspective. The people are jubilant after Israel’s victory over the Ammonites, but they tend to look upon this ‘success’ as the result of Saul’s leadership. In fact, this deliverance, like all others before it, is a reflection of God’s grace, and not the evidence of magnificent leadership. Those who seem to be successful must be careful of their definition of success, being sure to regard every human success as the result of divine grace, not human skillfulness and wisdom.

Our text offers a word of hope and encouragement to those devastated by their sin and failures to live up to God’s standard. Many are those who think they have failed irreversibly, and that there is no future hope for them, so that they are tempted to give up in their Christian life. ‘All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God’ (Romans 3:23). By God’s standard, no man is successful, and all men are failures, deserving of God’s eternal wrath. Our hope of salvation is not based upon our performance, but upon God’s grace. It is ultimately not our choice of Him, but His choice of us, not our faithfulness, but His. God is faithful. God is merciful. God is gracious. God is our salvation. Jesus Christ came not to minister to the righteous, but to save sinners. Let all who believe they are failures ponder the wonder of this. ”

TEXT: 1 Samuel 13:1-23

TITLE: CAN YOU JUSTIFY EXPEDIENCY?

BIG IDEA:

LEADERSHIP OPERATING ON THE BASIS OF EXPEDIENCY RATHER THAN OBEDIENCE CAN WIN SOME IMPRESSIVE BATTLES BUT STILL FORFEIT THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE

(:1-2) INRODUCTION: BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF SAUL

Attempts to unify the nation and defeat the Philistines

Objective: Establishing the kingdom which God had entrusted to Saul. Looking for long-term success and the blessing of God.

A. (:1) Timing and Extent of Saul's Reign

"forty years old when he began to reign"

"and he reigned thirty-two years over Israel"

B. (2) Preparation for Battle – Selection of Dependable Troops

1. Those Selected

"chose for himself 3,000 men of Israel"

- *"of which 2,000 were with Saul in Michmash, and in the hill country of Bethel"*

- *"while 1,000 were with Jonathan at Gibeah of Benjamin"*

2. Those Rejected

"But he sent away the rest of the people, each to his tent"

Gordon: "Prior to the monarchy, the Israelites looked to their citizen militia in times of crisis, but Saul's establishment of a cadre of three thousand men ... provides Israel with a standing army (cf. 14:52). The immediate concern was the expulsion of Philistine forces from the very heart of Saul's kingdom, for all the places mentioned here were in Benjaminite territory. Michmash lay a few miles to the south -east of Bethel."

I. (:3-7) WAKING A SLEEPING DOG – BOLD ATTACK BY JONATHAN -- ISOLATED SUCCESSFUL ATTACK ON GEBE PROVOKES THE PHILISTINES TO MARSHAL ALL THEIR TROOPS TO ROUT THE ISRAELITES AT MICHMASH

(Principle of counting the cost when you go into battle so that you are sure you are prepared with the necessary resources to finish the job. Cf. the man building a tower ... you don't want to end up with it half built; need to plan ahead)

A. Jonathan's Surprise Attack on Geba –

“And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba”

1) 1 Possibility: Doing the Right Thing at the Wrong Time –

Possibly this impulsive attack was launched without consulting the Lord and waiting on Him for counsel as to the proper timing.

2) More Likely: Commendable Bold Faith on Jonathan's Part

But faith must be followed up by faith ... Saul did not follow up Properly

Blaikie: “No doubt there were faint-hearted persons in the host of Israel who would bring hard accusations against Jonathan for disturbing the equilibrium between Israel and the Philistines. They would shake their heads and utter solemn truisms on the rashness of youth, and would ask if it was not a shame to entrust a stripling with such power and responsibility. But Jonathan's stroke was the beginning of a movement which might have ended in the final expulsion of the Philistines from the territories of Israel if Saul had not acted foolishly at Gilgal. In this case, it was not the young man, but the old, that was rash and reckless. Jonathan had acted with courage and vigour, probably also with faith; it was Saul that brought disturbance and disaster to the host.”

A. The Reaction of the Philistines – Anger and Revenge

“and the Philistines heard of it”

“Israel had become odious to the Philistines”

vs. 5 – Philistines marshal all their resources to attack at Michmash

B. The Reaction of the Israelites – Fear and Hiding

1. Initially Saul was Proud of His Son's Bold Victory

“Let the Hebrews hear”

“And all Israel heard the news that Saul had smitten the garrison of the Philistines”

2. Boasting soon Turned to Desperation

“The people were then summoned to Saul at Gilgal”

3. (:6-7a) Desperation Turned to Panic and Fear -- Many of the troops Ran or Hid

4. (:7b) Saul was nervously waiting for Samuel at Gilgal – He had been given instructions previously

“But as for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.”

II. (:8-12) SOME FAST TALKING AND POOR EXCUSES -- CHOOSING EXPEDIENCY RATHER THAN OBEDIENCE

A. (:8-10) Taking Matters Into Your Own Hands

1. (:8) Saul Tried to Wait for Samuel but the Pressure Got to Him
2. (:9) Saul Minimized the Severity of His Disobedience and Took Action
3. (:10) Saul Knew Immediately That He Had Blown it Big Time

B. (:11-12) 3 Rationalizations for Choosing Expediency Rather Than Obedience

1. (:8-12) UNITY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN TRUTH

"the people were scattering from me"

A Problem with the People of God

The ship is falling apart. No one will be left. Therefore, I can sacrifice truth to do what I think will best preserve and promote unity. Unity is a good goal, but it can never be made an end in itself to justify not obeying God's instructions in other areas.

As a Christian virtue, love is greater than faith and hope (1 Cor. 13:13), but it is not greater than doctrine and truth. In fact, true Christian love cannot thrive apart from an atmosphere of Christian truth. God is only glorified by unity in the truth just as Christ and the Father are one (John 17:21).

Saul would have been much better off if all of the people had fled while he alone stood firm for the truth. Instead he gave in to the pressure and tried to rally the troops by an act of disobedience. It is interesting to note that he did not achieve the result he intended -- for at the end he only had 600 men left anyway. But even if 4000 had stood with him, this would not have justified his sin.

2. GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS NO LONGER APPLY BECAUSE OF MY CIRCUMSTANCES

"you did not come within the appointed days"

A Problem with the Word of God

Are God's instructions trustworthy, serious, imperative to follow regardless of my circumstances? We don't have to understand the reasons behind God's commands to obey them.

3. THE CONSEQUENCES OF OBEDIENCE WILL BE TOO SEVERE

"the Philistines were assembling at Michmash"

A Problem with the Enemies of God

Defeat seemed to be imminent from a natural perspective

Guzik: “The whole manner of Saul’s explanation makes it clear that this was no misunderstanding. He didn’t say to Samuel, “Did I do something wrong?” He knew exactly what he was doing, and probably had thought of the excuses ahead of time. ”

III. (:13-14) LOSING THE VERY THING YOU COMPROMISED TO SAVE

A. (:13a) Disobedience is Always a Foolish Decision

“You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you”

B. (:13b) Compromise is Always a Violation of Faith

“for now the Lord would have established your kingdom forever”

Trying to grab God’s promises by our own schemes rather than relying on His grace and providential care;

Surprising how quickly Saul falls. (Even though **Gordon** notes that “an interval of many years separates the events of this chapter from the occasion of Saul’s anointing in ch. 10.”)

C. (:14) Disobedience Cost Saul the Kingdom

“But now your kingdom shall not endure”

“because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you”

Sounds harsh and excessive to us ... wasn’t Saul just trying to do his best in difficult circumstances?? Apparently not – for this was a test that God had designed to show the shortcomings of Saul’s character and pave the way for the transfer of the kingdom to David.

D. (14) Disobedience Never Annuls the Plan of God

“The Lord has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has appointed him as ruler over His people”

Never forget that it is the Lord’s Kingdom and the Lord’s People

IV. (:15-23) PREPARING FOR BATTLE AS THE UNDERDOG

A. (:15-18) Undermanned Israelites Vulnerable to Philistine Raiding Parties

B. (:19-23) Oppressed Israelites Lacked the Weapons Available to the Philistines

Monopoly over the use of iron

Only Saul and Jonathan were adequately equipped.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What was the relationship like between Jonathan and Saul? What type of respect did the son have for his father? Why is Jonathan consistently portrayed as a man of faith and action while Saul seems to have numerous problems? How would this have affected how Saul viewed his son? How the people viewed Jonathan?
- 2) Why did the Lord respond so strongly to Saul's disobedience? Why do we find this hard to take?
- 3) What types of excuses have we used in the past to rationalize or justify certain actions that violated some principle or conviction or command of God? Are we able to convince our own conscience of the rightness of our compromise or do we remain unconvinced?
- 4) Contrast David and Saul. In what sense was David a "*man after God's own heart*" while Saul proved to be out for selfish interests?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Gordon: "The cities of Geba and Michmash lay on either side of a valley, with only a couple of miles separating them. However, with but a fraction of his force still in the field, Saul was in no position to check the Philistine raiding parties operating out of Michmash."

Blaikie: "What a solemn and impressive condemnation have we here, my friends, of that far too common practice – deserting principle to serve expediency... Look at the history of Saul. See what befell him for preferring expediency to principle. Know that the same condemnation awaits all who walk in his footsteps – all who are not solemnized by that awful, that unanswerable, question, 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'"

Deffinbaugh: "If we are really honest with ourselves and with our text, we will admit that Saul's actions do not seem to be all that bad. On the surface, it appears that Samuel is late, that the survival of Saul and the nation is doubtful unless someone acts very quickly, and that Saul certainly seems to be the man to do so. What is so wrong with Saul's actions, given Samuel's tardiness and the Philistine threat? God, however, takes Saul's attitudes and actions quite seriously, and we must take them seriously as well. As we study this text, we should seek to discern why this is so evil in God's eyes and determine what happened with Saul. Let us further seek to learn and apply the principles and lessons our text conveys to Christians, for Saul's sin is significant enough to cost him and his heirs his kingdom forever. . .

Emergencies are not excuses for disobedience to God's commands, but a test of our faith and obedience. God often tests us by taking us to the limit. That is the way we test the products we manufacture. Ford does not test its cars by gently driving them around the block a few times. They are put on the test track, which hammers the suspension with endless bumps and turns and stresses the engine with high heat, severe cold, and long distances. God tests us by taking us to the limit as well, by taking us to the breaking point.

When we reach 'our limit,' our faith in God becomes apparent. When we come to the end of our own resources, we must then trust in God. God takes Saul "to the limit" by delaying Samuel's arrival to the last moments, but Saul cannot wait. He is convinced his situation is an "emergency," and as such, the rules can be set aside. At these moments -- when we are pressed to our limit -- our faith and obedience are tested by whether or not we keep God's commands, whether or not we obey Him.

Twice the Book of Proverbs speaks of the 'lion in the road' (see Proverbs 22:13; 26:13). This is the sluggard's compelling reason for avoiding a task he really does not want to do. After all, who would be outside mowing the grass if there really was a lion out there? Emergency situations, where disaster seems imminent and breaking the rules seems expedient, may be nothing more than lions in the road. We may be willing to make exceptions to God's commands, but God is not. Let us beware of allowing a crisis to become the excuse for our disobedience.

I doubt if Saul's disobedience in making the burnt offerings is one isolated event. Rather, it is likely the climax, the culmination, of a long history of disobedience. As previously pointed out, Saul knows that his duty as Israel's king is to do battle with the Philistines and the other surrounding nations who oppress the people of God. Day after day, month after month, Saul seems to close his eyes to the suffering of his people and to the presence of the Philistines stationed in Israel. Saul's disobedience regarding the sacrifices at Gilgal is no sudden sin -- a complete shock to all. It is the logical, almost inevitable outcome of a lifestyle of disobedience. This crisis only shows Saul up for who he is (or is not). This is the way it is with us as well.

I cannot help but notice that there is no evidence of spirituality in Saul prior to his becoming king, or afterwards. But David is a young man who learned to depend upon God while a shepherd boy, left alone with his flock. David learned to trust God and to worship him. He has a history of walking with God before he became king, and that continued afterward. Saul has no godly disciplines in his life, and it shows, especially at Gilgal when the tests of faith come upon him. "

Guzik :

"What then does it mean to be a man after His own heart? We can discover this by looking at the man who was not a man after His own heart and comparing him to the man who was a man after His own heart.

i. 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.

ii. 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.

iii. 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).

iv. 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)."

TEXT: 1 Samuel 14:1-52

TITLE: *SOMETIMES LEADERS GET TOO BIG FOR THEIR OWN BRITCHES*

BIG IDEA:

RASH DECISIONS ON THE PART OF LEADERSHIP CAN PLACE THEIR TROOPS AT RISK

INTRODUCTION:

God had given Saul a taste of victory – not because of his own bravery and effective leadership but rather because of the bold faith of his son Jonathan. Still Saul was quick to give himself the credit and think that he could do no wrong. Instead of being careful to inquire of the Lord, he rashly makes some decisions that are very self-serving and that end up putting his troops at risk – damaging their strength and morale.

Contrast between Jonathan and Saul throughout this section

I. (:1-15) BOLDNESS IS ADMIRABLE WHEN SUBMITTED TO GOD'S GUIDANCE --

JONATHAN'S BOLD ATTACK ON THE GARRISON OUTPOST PUTS THE PHILISTINES ON THE RUN

A. (:1) Jonathan's Initiative to Launch a Mission

"Come and let us cross over to the Philistines' garrison that is on yonder side."

1. Two Person Mission – Just Jonathan and his armor bearer
2. Kept Mission Secret from Saul (father and king) – did not think he would get his permission or support

B. (:2-5) Surrounding Circumstances

1. (:2) Saul camped out with 600 troops outside of Gibeah
2. (:3a) Ahijah wearing priestly ephod = Potential was there to consult the Lord

Ryrie: "The ephod was used to consult God in a time of crisis. This was probably done by means of the Urim and Thummim attached to the breastplate of the ephod (see notes on Exod. 28:6-30). By yes and no questions the wrong choice between two alternatives could be eliminated."

3. (:3b) Secret nature of mission emphasized

"And the people did not know that Jonathan had gone."

4. (:4-5) Geography of the situation

C. (:6-10) Plan to Determine God's Will Regarding Engaging the Enemy

1. (:6) Confidence of Jonathan

a. Based on having God on his side

(as opposed to the "*garrison of the uncircumcised*")

b. Based on the Power of God that is not constrained by the Weakness of Man

"perhaps the Lord will work for us, for the Lord is not restrained to save by many or by few"

Davis: "Jonathan was perhaps recalling the historical events surrounding Gideon's defeat of the Midianites (Judg. 7:4 ff).

2. (:7) Support of His Armor Bearer

"Do all that is in your heart; turn yourself, and here I am with you according to your desire."

3. (:8-10) Mission Hinges on Sign from the Lord to Go Ahead

"then we will go up, for the Lord has given them into our hands; and this shall be the sign to us."

D. (:11-12) Execution of the Plan

Worked like clockwork; took advantage of the bravado and false confidence of the Philistines (who had superior numbers)

Guzik: "This was a difficult climb. Jonathan was not the kind to say, ' Well, it would be nice to do this. But the rocks are steep and there are a lot of Philistines up there. Let's just pray instead.' No; he got down on his hands and knees and climbed! If we only want victory, or want to be used by God when it is easy, we won't see much victory and we won't be used very much. "

E. (:13-15) Extent and Impact of the Successful Mission

1. Killed about 20 Men

2. Shook up the Entire Philistine Army

"And there was a trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. Even the garrison and the raiders trembled, and the earth quaked so that it became a great trembling."

II. (:16-23) WINNING IS CONTAGIOUS – IT'S EASY TO RALLY THE TROOPS WHEN VICTORY IS OBVIOUS

A. (:16) Positive Report from the Spies:

1. Confusion and Chaos in the Camp of the Enemy

"behold the multitude melted away; and they went here and there"

2. Supernatural Events: Earthquake and thunder

B. (:17) Identification of Jonathan as the Instigator (accompanied by armor bearer)

C. (:18-19) Aborted Attempt to Seek the Lord's Guidance

1. (:18) Saul Starts to Seek the Lord's Guidance

Gordon: explains that instead of the ark of the covenant, "the reading of the LXX therefore has obvious advantage: '*Bring the ephod.*'" ???

2. (:19) Saul Changes His Mind –

things are going so well he doesn't want to take the time

Fatal Flaw: too impatient to wait upon the Lord!

D. (:20-22) Israelite Soldiers Rally as the Rout Snowballs

1. (:20) Saul and His Soldiers Rally

2. (:21) The Hebrew Mercenaries Switch Back to the Winning Side

Davis: "Some scholars feel that these individuals were probably slaves captured from Israel in previous raids; however, it seems more likely that they were professional soldiers or mercenaries who had sold themselves into military service. When the Israelites were victorious, they changed their allegiance and fought with Saul."

3. (:22) Even the Cave Cowards Want In on the Action

E. (:23) Summary:

"So the Lord delivered Israel that day, and the battle spread beyond Bethaven."

III. (:24-30) SOMETIMES A LEADER PUSHES THE TROOPS TOO HARD

A. (:24) Excessive Demands by Leadership Creates Unnecessary Problems

"Now the men of Israel were hard-pressed on that day"

The battle brings enough pressure with it; unwise for leaders to increase the pressure burden.

Ryrie: "So desirous was Saul of avenging himself against his enemies that he neglected the needs of his own men and swore a foolish oath which almost cost the life of his son."

B. (:25-26) Unnecessary Problem for the People: Hunger and Weakness where God had provided Sustenance and Strength

"behold, there was a flow of honey; but no man put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath."

C. (:27-28) Unnecessary Problem for Jonathan: Ignorance of the Rash Regulation Led to Culpable Violation

1. Consequence of Disobedience: *“his eye brightened”*

2. Consequence of Obedience: *“the people were weary”*

Saul had reversed God’s whole program of blessing and cursing.

D. (:29-30) Critical Assessment by Jonathan

“My father has troubled the land. See now, how my eyes have brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. How much more, if only the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now the slaughter among the Philistines has not been great.”

Bottom Line: Saul’s rash leadership cost the Israelites an opportunity to achieve an even greater victory.

IV. (:31-35) SOMETIMES A LEADER POINTS THE FINGER OF BLAME AT EVERYONE BUT HIMSELF

A. (:31a) Victory Can Easily Lead to Carelessness

Impressive victory despite the fatigue.

B. (:31b-32) Fatigue and Pressure Make Us More Susceptible to Temptation

Guzik: “On this day of battle, because of Saul’s foolish command, the people were so hungry they broke this command. Their obedience to Saul’s foolish command led them to disobey God’s clearly declared command. This is always the result of legalism! ”

C. (:33) The Leader Deflects Criticism by Pointing the Finger of Blame at the People
Even though he had weakened them and made them vulnerable to the temptation

D. (:34-35) The Leader Can Use the Trappings of Religion to Disguise His Own Guilt
Significant: *“It was the first altar that he built to the Lord”*

V. (:36-46) RASH DECISIONS HAVE A WAY OF COMING HOME TO ROOST

A. (:36-37) Sin Obscures Our Ability to Discern the Will of the Lord

1. Admirable that Saul wants to take further initiative against the Philistines

2. Admirable that Saul wants to first inquire of the Lord and discern His will
(although maybe this was at the prompting of the priest)

3. Admirable that Saul recognized that there was a problem that needed to be addressed before proceeding

But blind to the reality that the problem was with his own pride rather than the ceremonial violation in ignorance by his brave son of the faith.

- B. (:38-43) God Is Willing to Expose Sin if We Let Him – the Casting of Lots
Why didn't Jonathan just step forward and confess?
- C. (:44-46) God Provides Surprising Grace and Mercy in Time of Need
Works through the people to spare Jonathan the death sentence due him.
Saul and Jonathan were both willing to have Jonathan die ... was Saul perhaps inclined to do away with someone he now viewed as a rival for the people's loyalty?

Blaikie: "All this shows Saul plunging and floundering from one mistake to another, and crowning his blunders by a proposal so outrageous that the indignation of the people arrests his purpose. The idea that the work of the day shall be wound up by the execution of the youth through whom all the wonderful deliverance has come, and that youth Saul's own son, is one that could never have entered into any but a distempered brain. Reason seems to have begun to stagger on her throne; the sad process has begun which in a more advanced stage left Saul the prey of an evil spirit, and in its last and most humiliating stage drove him to consult with the witch of Endor."

Yet having said all that ... it must be noted that OT saints had a very high regard for any type of oath sworn before the Lord ... so the foolishness lies more in the oath itself than in the execution of the punishment.

VI. (:47-52) SUMMARY OF SAUL'S MILITARY LEADERSHIP

- A. Numerous Conquests Against the Enemies of Israel
"he fought against all his enemies on every side"
 - 1. Moabites
 - 2. Ammonites
 - 3. Edomites
 - 4. Zobahites
 - 6. Philistines*"and wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment"*
- B. Particular Commendation for Bravery Against the Amalekites
"And he acted valiantly and defeated the Amalekites"
- C. (:49-52) Employed the Best People in Positions of Leadership

“and when Saul saw any mighty man or any valiant man, he attached him to his staff.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When have the decisions of your spiritual leaders put you under unnecessary pressure? When have you been pushed too hard? How did you respond? Why motivates leaders to make those types of mistakes?
- 2) Contrast Jonathan and Saul in a number of key areas:
 - taking the initiative vs passivity
 - boldness and faith vs. playing it safe
 - how they determine the Lord’s will
 - their attitudes towards legalism
 - etc.
- 3) How do we use religious forms to try to bail us out of difficulty instead of truly humbling ourselves and seeking God with our whole heart?
- 4) What type of military and political leader was Saul? What were his strengths and weaknesses.

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Blaikie: “And thus the faith of Jonathan had a glorious reward. The inspiration of faith vindicated itself, and the noble self-devotion that had plunged into this otherwise desperate enterprise, because there was no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few, led thus to a triumph more speedy and more complete than even Jonathan could have ventured to dream of. None of the judges had wrought a more complete or satisfactory deliverance; and even the crossing of the Red Sea under Moses had not afforded a more glorious evidence than this achievement of Jonathan’s of the power of faith, or given more ample testimony to that principle of the kingdom of God which our Lord afterwards enunciated, ‘If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence unto yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.’ . . .

When an individual heart is moved by a strong conviction of duty, it may be that God means through that one man’s conviction to move the world. . . Learn, my friends, every one, from this, never to be faithless to any conviction given to you, though, as far as you know, it is given to you alone. Make very sure that it comes from the God of truth. But don’t stifle it, under the notion that you are too weak to bring anything out of it. Don’t reason that if it were really from God, it would be given to others too. Test it in

every way you can, to determine whether it be right. And if it stands these tests, manfully give effect to it, for it may bear seed that will spread over the globe.”

Deffinbaugh: “It seems that Saul’s image suffers greatly, ever since his impressive defeat of the Ammonites at Jabesh-gilead in chapter 11. Saul has been humiliated by the Philistines, not only by their occupation of Israel, but by the way they capitalize on their iron age technology (13:19-23). Much of Saul’s embarrassment is the direct result of Jonathan’s initiative in attacking the Philistines. Now that he sees the Philistines suffering defeat at the hand of the Israelites, Saul determines to make them pay for his humiliation. His fight with the Philistines becomes personal. It is not God’s battle, or even Israel’s battle; it is his battle and his victory. And so Saul puts his men under an oath: no one is to eat until evening. The men are to fight on an empty stomach. Saul appears to reason that this will avoid wasting valuable time (and daylight?) by stopping to prepare and then eat a meal. (Since Saul has not really planned this battle, neither he nor his men are really prepared for the day’s events.) There are no ready rations for the men to eat on the run, or so it appears to Saul. So he forbids his men to eat all day long and to fight the entire day without nourishment.

Saul is wrong on two counts. First, he is wrong in thinking his order will produce a greater victory for the Israelites over the Philistines. It seems to Saul that his orders will result in more time in pursuit during the precious daylight hours, and thus more Philistines will be killed. It doesn’t work out that way. As the Philistines seek to retreat toward their own land, the battle spreads eastward, first to Beth-aven (14:23) and then to Ajalon (14:31). The Israelites pursue the Philistines over 20 miles of mountainous territory, and this without food. The Israelites become weary and weak with hunger and are not able to pursue their enemies as vigorously as they might if properly nourished.

Saul is wrong on yet a second account. He is wrong to suppose that the only way for the Israelite warriors to be fed is by means of a ‘home-cooked meal,’ which will take a long time. After all, this is not the day of ‘fast food,’ and Saul does not think there is any hope of obtaining a quick boost of energy. He is wrong. God has the “fastest” food available. He has strategically placed a flow of honey in the forest, and it takes no time at all to eat this honey. The soldiers, like Jonathan, only need to thrust their staff in the midst of the honey, take it out and place it in their mouths. There is no faster or finer food around. This is the finest, most natural nutrition for which anyone could hope. It makes ‘Gatorade’ look pathetic.”

Guzik: “It has taken a long time for Saul, the leader of Israel, to start leading. Now he is following God and Jonathan into battle.

i. Why was Saul just sitting . . . under a pomegranate tree when Jonathan was boldly trusting God for the victory? Probably Saul’s insecurity had made him so afraid to fail that he didn’t want to do anything. Now he will only go into battle because it seems like a ‘sure thing.’ We are far from a bold trust in God when we will only do what seems to be a “sure thing.” Go out and do something bold. If you fail, and God wasn’t really with it the way you thought He would be, then you still have tried. The armchair

quarterbacks and back seat drivers have nothing to say to you!

ii. These were the hold -backs, who were out there to fight the Philistines, but didn't enter the battle until the odds were in their favor. Better to come out then than never, but how much better to have the bold trust of a Jonathan! ”

Renwick: “Saul was brave and a great military leader. Hence, in spite of his failings, his people clung to him; even Samuel and David, who suffered through him, had pity and sympathy for him. We have here a brief summary of Saul's conquests and family matters.”

TEXT: 1 Samuel 15:1-35

TITLE: *REBELLION CANNOT BE TOLERATED, EXCUSED OR OVERLOOKED
THE HIGH COST OF FAILING TO FULLY OBEY*

BIG IDEA:

INCOMPLETE OBEDIENCE = COMPLETE REBELLION

PARTIAL OBEDIENCE = TOTAL REBELLION

THE COST OF FAILING TO OBEY GOD FULLY IS SUPRISINGLY HIGH

(:1-3) INTRODUCTION: THE PRIVILEGE OF LEADERSHIP CARRIES WITH IT ACCOUNTABILITY TO EXECUTE SEVERE JUDGMENTS AS COMMANDED BY GOD

CLEAR COMMISSION: TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF AMALEK PER DIVINE JUDGMENT

Roe: Paul, talking about his ministry in I Corinthians 9: 24-27, says:

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

There is a graphic illustration in 1 Samuel, Chapter 15, of the disqualification of a believer whom God personally chose and anointed. Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit and filled "mightily." God equipped him with everything needed to do the work of the King of Israel. He intended for Saul and his line to be the reigning kings of Israel from this point on. Saul was not set up to be knocked down; He disqualified himself.

A. (:1a) Privilege of Leadership

"The Lord sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel"

B. (:1b) Accountability to Obey God

"now, therefore, listen to the words of the Lord"

C. (:2) Instrument of Divine Judgment (cf. promise of Exod. 17:14)

"I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel"

D. (:3) Clarity and Severity of the Mission of Judgment

"utterly destroy all that he has"

Ryrie: “Lit, put under a ban. A ban involved devoting cities; persons, animals, and possessions to the Lord for destruction in accordance with Deut. 7:2 -6; 12:2-3; 20:16-18. While this practice was severe, it was a just punishment.”

Roe: In examining this command to "exterminate" the Amalekites you may ask why? It is because the flesh is something like cancer cells in the body. When a doctor operates, he attempts to get every single one. To leave even one in your body could bring you back for another operation. Like cancer cells, the flesh must be continually cut out of our lives to prevent its recurrence. The flesh is incurably evil, incurably malicious. The word used to describe it sometimes is "pernicious." [i.e., Webster, "destructive; having the power of killing, destroying, ruining or injuring; fatal; deadly]. It is also incurably deceitful. It does not broadcast, "Destroyer." Instead it appears enticing and noble.

I. (:4-9) TRAGIC OMISSION – SAUL’S FAILURE TO COMPLETE THE MISSION SPOILED THE VICTORY

(The spoils of victory – from a human perspective – can easily be the snare of defeat -- where there has been a failure to obey fully.)

- A. (:4) Preparation for Battle – Marshalling the Troops
- B. (:5) Plan of Attack – Ambush in the Valley
- C. (:6) Avoiding Collateral Damage – Compassion in Warning the Kenites

Ryrie: “The Kenites = Nomadic Midianites who were well disposed toward Israel from ancient times (Exod. 2:16-18; 18:9-12; Num. 10:29-32; Judg. 1:16).”

- D. (:7-9) Executing the Plan – Victory Coupled with Failure to Obey Fully
 - sparing Agag – probably a prideful trophy of victory
 - sparing what was good of the animals – probably motivated by greed and self-will; what would be the point of wasting such valuable resources??

II. (:10-19) PAINFUL CONFRONTATION – DISOBEDIENCE BRINGS SADNESS ALONG WITH A CALL TO ACCOUNTABILITY

- A. (:10-11a) Sadness on the Part of God
 - “*I regret that I have made Saul king*”
- B. (:11b) Sadness on the Part of Samuel
 - “*Samuel was distressed and cried out to the Lord all night*”
- C. (:12-13) Denial on the Part of Saul
 - 1. (:12) Pridefully Celebrating Victory instead of Humbly Seeking Forgiveness
 - “*he set up a monument for himself*”

Gordon: “After his victory over the Amalekites Moses raised an altar (Ex. 17:15f.); Saul in a fit of apparent self-congratulation erects a *stèle* (lit. ‘hand’; cf. Absalom’s monument, 2 Sa. 18:18).”

2. (:13) Out of Touch with Reality

“I have carried out the command of the Lord”

D. (:14) No Escaping the Testimony of Reality

“What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”

Blaikie: “Facts are stubborn things, and they make quick work of sophistry.”

E. (:15) Lame Excuses /Blameshifting Bring No Relief

“They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best”

Probably hypocrisy on Saul’s part since the motive was more one of greed than piety (*Blaikie*).

Roe: Notice again how beautifully the flesh rationalizes, how it never accepts responsibility for its actions. Saul says, "I carried out the command of the Lord, but they spared the best." Typically the flesh will obey God as long as it does not cost anything. The people didn't mind killing the men, women, children, infants and worthless of the flocks, but when it came to the best of the flocks what happened? This is when the flesh will never obey God. When it really costs what you want, then the flesh springs into action. That is exactly what you see here.

F. (:16-19) Perspective of the Lord – Review of the Clear Command and the Obvious Failure

1. (:16) Prophetic Communication of the Lord’s Perspective

“Wait, and let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night”

2. (:17) Background of Privilege of Divine Appointment to Leadership

“Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes, you were made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the Lord anointed you king over Israel.”

3. (:18) Review of the Clear Command

4. (:19) Call to Accountability Based on the Obvious Failure

“Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord, but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the Lord?”

III. (:20-23) WEAK ARGUMENTATION – RELIGIOUS EXCUSES BETRAY A FAILURE TO COME TO TERMS WITH THE NATURE OF REBELLION

A. (:20-21) Saul’s Argumentation – The End Justifies the Means Noble Goal of Sacrifice?

Davis: “The shift in pronouns (from ‘I’ to ‘They’) is an obvious example of the ancient (and modern) art of ‘passing the buck.’ Saul attempted to justify the deeds of the people on the grounds that their intentions were good. In other words, the end had fully justified the means. He assumed that any sacrifice, whether prepared in disobedience or obedience, would be acceptable to God. How far he had missed the point!”

B. (:22-23) Samuel’s Response – “*To Obey is Better Than Sacrifice*” Explanation of the Nature of Rebellion

Young: “Rebellion . . . witchcraft. Both are forms of apostasy, the one being denial of God’s authority, the other a recognition of supernatural powers distinct from God.”

IV. (:24-31) BELATED ADMISSION OF GUILT AND DECLARATION OF JUDGMENT

A. (:24-25) Belated Admission of Guilt – Too Little, Too Late

1. (:24) Desperate Last Ditch Confession

a. Admission of sin

“I have sinned”

“I have transgressed the command of the Lord and your words”

b. Explanation: Bowing to the Fear of Man instead of the Fear of God

“because I feared the people and listened to their voice”

Davis: “One wonders how genuine this confession really was (cf. the words of Pharaoh, Exod 9:27).”

2. (:25) Desperate Plea for Avoiding the Consequences of Sin

“Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me, that I may worship the Lord”

B. (:26-31) Declaration of Judgment – Loss of Kingdom Leadership

1. (:26-29) Finality of the Rejection

a. (:26) Rejection of Saul’s Pleas for Mercy

“the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel”

b. (:27) Saul’s Final Desperate Attempt to Hang on to Power

“Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore”

Gordon: “Saul grasps his robe in a desperate act of supplication that becomes an unintentional acted parable.”

- c. (:28) Kingdom Power Being Transferred to Another
- d. (:29) Lord Will Not Change His Mind

Ryrie: Re title here of “*the Glory of Israel*. A unique designation for God, emphasizing His eternal nature. The title is particularly appropriate in this context, which stresses His immutability.”

- 2. (:30-31) Minor Face-saving Concession

(:32-35) CONCLUSION: TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

- A. (:32-33) Samuel Carries Out the Divinely Prescribed Execution of Agag
 - 1. False Hope on the Part of Agag
 - 2. Swift Retribution Executed by Samuel

Roe: “Here is a helpless man, probably in chains, whom Samuel chops up into little pieces while doing the will of God. That should give us some idea that our attitude toward the flesh should be utterly ruthless and without mercy.”

- B. (:34-35a) Sin Causes Separation – Between Saul and Samuel
 - “*Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death.*”

- C. (:35b) Sin Causes Sadness
 - 1. On the part of Samuel
 - “Samuel grieved over Saul”

- 2. On the part of the Lord
 - “*And the Lord regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.*”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why are we surprised by (or What surprises us about) the severity of the Lord’s judgment (discipline) upon Saul as it relates to his specific offense? How seriously do we treat rebellion?
- 2) Trace the theme throughout the Scriptures of “*to obey is better than sacrifice.*” How is this topic treated in other Bible passages? What are some practical illustrations in your life of this important principle?

3) In what sense can God really “*regret*” (vs. 11, 35) that He has done something as part of His sovereign plan?

4) How can we justify the type of violence and bloodshed we see in passages like this? How can the Lord command the killing of women and children and even animals and the violent hacking into pieces of any human being (e.g. Agag), no matter the severity of their transgressions?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Davis: “The ‘repentance’ of God should not be regarded as remorse because of an error in judgment, but deep sorrow in the light of man’s failure in spite of divine provision (cf. Gen. 6:6). God’s laws and decrees do not change (cf. 15:29); but as men change, different laws operate.”

Young: “In the language of the OT, God is said to ‘*repent*’ when a change in the character and conduct of those with whom he is dealing leads to a corresponding change in his plans and purposes toward them. His repentance is not to be understood as his regretting his action, nor is it a sign of changeableness. His promises and threats are often conditional (Jer. 18:8-10).”

Davis: “Saul had all the qualities of greatness, but his independent spirit and pride had stripped him of the glory that could have been his. His early career was characterized by initiative and aggressiveness which resulted in victories (cf. 11:7), but this later degenerated into mere personal ambition (20:31). What was originally outstanding bravery (13:3) turned into a form of recklessness (14:24).”

Blaikie: “Throughout the whole of this chapter, God appears in that more stern and rigorous aspect of His character which is not agreeable to the natural heart of man. Judgment, we are told, is His strange work; it is not what He delights in; but it is a work which He cannot fail to perform when the necessity for it arises. . . . That God will execute wrath on the impenitent and unbelieving is just as much a feature of the Gospel as that He will bestow all the blessings of salvation and eternal life on them that believe.

Piper: WHY GOD DELIGHTS IN OBEDIENCE AND HATES DISOBEDIENCE

1. Disobedience shows a misplacement of fear.
2. Disobedience elevates pleasure in things above pleasure in God.
3. Disobedience shows a misplacement of praise.
4. Disobedience is as the sin of divination.
5. Disobedience is idolatry.

So it stands to reason that God will be displeased with disobedience because at every point it is an attack on his glory.

It puts the fear of man in the place of the fear of God.

It elevates pleasure in things above pleasure in God.

It seeks a name for itself instead of a name for God.

It consults the wisdom of self instead of being satisfied with the will of God.

And it sets more value on the dictates of self than on the dictates of God and thus attempts to dethrone God by giving allegiance to the idol of the human will.

But obedience, being the exact opposite, in all these things enthrones and honors God. And therefore God has pleasure in obedience.

TEXT: 1 Samuel 16: 1-23

TITLE: *CHANGING OF THE GUARD*

BIG IDEA:

LEADERSHIP TRANSITION REQUIRES CAREFUL PREPARATION

I. (:1-5) SELECTION PROCESS INITIATED PER THE LORD'S INSTRUCTIONS TO SAMUEL -- WHEN IT'S TIME TO MOVE ON . . . IT'S TIME TO MOVE ON

- A. (:1) When the Lord is Ready for New Leadership, We Should be Ready as Well
"Fill your horn with oil and go"
- don't be wasting time mourning over the former leadership and its potential and failures; Samuel seems reluctant to abandon the king that God has already rejected
 - the Lord's choice and the Lord's timing should motivate us
- B. (:2-3) Leadership Transition Can be A Dickey Affair
- Legitimate fears make us tread cautiously in the process
"How can I go? When Saul hears of it, he will kill me."
 - Sometimes there needs to be some cunning in the strategy (playing politics)
"Invite Jesse to the sacrifice"
 - Dependence upon the Lord's leading is crucial
"I will show you what you shall do"
- C. (:4-5) Obeying the Lord's Instructions is the Key to Success
"So Samuel did what the Lord said"

Blaikie: "it was an act of concealment, but it does not follow that it was an act of duplicity."

I. (:6-13) SELECTION PROCESS CONCLUDED WITH THE ANOINTING OF DAVID BY SAMUEL -- GOD'S CHOICE IS NOT ALWAYS MAN'S CHOICE BECAUSE GOD LOOKS AT THE HEART

- A. (:6) Man's Wisdom Can Not Be Trusted in the Selection Process (Eliab)
Avoid Presumption and jumping to conclusions and acting too quickly
- B. (:7) Key Principle
"man looks at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart"
Therefore, we need a selection process that seeks God's counsel

Deffinbaugh:

“There is a great deal of talk about leadership these days, and I must say that the qualities and qualifications sought in contemporary leaders are not those which God sought in David. Evangelicals choose their leaders on nearly the same basis as secular society does. We look for men who have “resources” (money and influence) and “a good business head.” God sought a man who had a heart for Him. I believe that character is the first and foremost prerequisite for leadership. It may not be the only one, but it is foundational. Let us look for the kind of leadership that God chooses. Let us seek to be the kind of men and women whom God seeks for His service .”

C. (:8-10) Carry Out the Process Step by Step –

Rejection of Jesse’s Sons – One by One

Goal: Seeking to determine: Whom has the Lord chosen?

D. (:11) Perseverance Needed to Follow the Process Through to Completion

The summoning of the youngest son who was thought to be insignificant and left to tend the sheep

Urgency in seeing the task through to completion

E. (:12-13) Pull the Trigger When the Lord Gives the Go Ahead

- Impressive natural qualities and talents

- Clear choice of the Lord

- Private anointing ceremony in the context of Jesse’s family

- Empowered by the Spirit of the Lord

“the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward”

- Samuel’s job was done

“And Samuel arose and went to Ramah”

**I. (:14-23) INTEGRATION OF DAVID INTO THE COURT OF SAUL --
THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IS GUIDED BY THE GOD
WHO CAN PROVIDE ACCESS (TO THE NECESSARY TRAINING) AND
ACCEPTANCE (IN THE NECESSARY RELATIONSHIPS)**

“the Lord is with him”

A. (:14-20) Access to the Necessary Training

B. (:21-23) Acceptance in the Necessary Relationships

“Saul loved him greatly”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What Christian leadership transitions have you been a part of? What went well? What did not go so smoothly and Why? What principles from this passage could have been applied in that situation?
- 2) When do we allow discouragement (and a stubbornness to hold on to our own plans) to slow us down in moving forward to fulfill God 's agenda? Why did Samuel have such an attachment to the reign of Saul? What was Samuel apprehensive about in going forward to anoint David?
- 3) How can we be extra careful in recognizing spiritual leaders in the church since we know that our tendency is to be over -impressed with externals while God looks at the heart?
- 4) Are we preparing ourselves for opportunities God might have for us in the future by working on character development and taking whatever steps of preparation that are suitable for the development of our gifts and abilities?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh: “The anointing of David results in a test for all Israelites. David’s anointing, unlike Saul’s, is semi-public. His father and brothers, as well as the prominent men of the city who attend the sacrificial feast have to know that the new king who will replace Saul is being designated. As men realize that David is the next king, their response to him is indicative of their relation to the King of Israel and His kingdom. It also determines their place in David’s kingdom.”

Deffinbaugh: “This may be an appropriate place to say a word about music and its relationship to the spiritual realm. You will recall from 1 Samuel 10 (verses 5 -6, 10-13) that the prophets whom Saul met, and whom Saul joined as “one of the prophets”(at least momentarily) as the Spirit came mightily upon him, were accompanied musically by stringed instruments -- the tambourine, flute and harp (verse 5). Somehow the Spirit’s coming upon Saul (and the rest, perhaps) is associated with or even initiated by music. In chapter 16, Saul’s demonic fits are calmed by David’s playing of the harp. Once again in 2 Kings 2:14-15, Elisha calls for a minstrel so that he can prophesy in the Spirit. I take it that music plays some kind of role in connecting with (or disconnecting from) the spiritual realm. I take it that we should be very careful about the kind of music to which we submit ourselves. I know there has been a lot of talk about “rock music,” and I am not inclined to wax eloquent on this matter here, but I do suggest that there is a potentially beneficial type of music, and very likely, a kind of music that may invoke the wrong spirit. This text should give us pause for thought on the subject of the music to which we listen and its influence upon us .”

Dave Martin:

PREPARATION:

God's Training Ground for Success...

- Success occurs when opportunity meets preparation. - Zig Ziglar
- The price of mastery in any field is through preparation – God's training grounds.

1. SOLITUDE

- David shepherd sheep in lonely places. Gently leading and caring for them. Quiet and all alone.
- “Sound of silence” – Getting all alone with God, away from everyday hustle & bustle distractions.
- God does not speak to us in earthquakes, wind or fire but in a quiet whisper. 1 Kings 19:12
- Your private life all alone with the Lord is where the action of preparation takes place.

2. OBSCURITY

- Success is how high you bounce when you hit bottom. - Gen. George Patton
- David labored unseen, unknown and unappreciated. A nobody that God saw!
- David was faithful in serving out -of-sight in the backfields of Bethlehem.
- Some in this church are faithfully laboring in obscurity, unseen deeds you do, are being noticed by the Lord. Stay obedient, stay faithful you're being prepared for the future. (1Co. 15:58)

3. MONOTONY

- This is remaining faithful in the insignificant, mundane, routine, unexciting, dull, boring things / life.
- David faithfully attended his sheep. He assumed the responsibility and did it well.
- The secret of success is to do the common things uncommonly well. - John D. Rockefeller, Jr.
- It's in the little things and the lonely places where we prove ourselves for bigger things.
- In God's program there is no “fast track” pill we can take – it's being faithful in the “little” things.

4. REALITY

1 Samuel 17:34-35 But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it.

- David remained committed and responsible when nobody was looking.
- Long before he faced off with Goliath he faced reality of lions and bears attacking his sheep.
- Everyone of us go through life's university of time and reality in preparation for future assignment
- This is the reality of life, God uses trials, circumstances to grow us. He will never waste a hurt.

· If you want a place in the sun, you have to expect some blisters. - Rotator

Today's Preparation determines tomorrow's achievement!

Blaikie: "Of the influence of music in remedying disorders of the nerves there is no want of evidence..."

Still, with all its success, it was but a poor method of soothing a troubled spirit compared to the methods that David was afterwards to employ. It dealt chiefly with man's physical nature, it soothed the nervous system, and removed the hindrance which their disorder caused to the action of the powers of the mind. It did not strike at the root of all trouble—alienation from God; it did not attempt to create and apply the only permanent remedy for trouble—trust in a loving Father's care. It was a mere foreshadow, on a comparatively low and earthly ground, of the way in which David, as the Psalmist, was afterwards to provide the true 'oil of joy for the mourner,' and to become a guide to the downcast soul from the fearful pit and the miry clay up to the third heaven of joy and peace. The sounds of his harp could only operate by an influence felt alike by saint and sinner in soothing an agitated frame; but with the words of his Psalms, the Divine Spirit, by whose inspiration they were poured out, was in all coming ages to unite Himself, and to use them for showing the sin-burdened soul the true cause of its misery, and for leading it by a holy path, sorrowing yet rejoicing, to the home of its reconciled Father."

Jeffries: "Saul was still legally the king, but God was preparing David for his future responsibilities. The anointing oil poured over David's head stood for holiness. It was used to set people or objects apart for God's service. Each king and high priest was anointed with oil. This commissioned him as God's representative to the nation. Although God rejected Saul's kingship by not allowing any of his descendants to sit on Israel's throne, Saul himself remained in his position until his death."

- Notes on 1 Samuel 16:13, **The Life Application Study Bible**

Terry Sisney: Greatness is not a one time event: We see David slay the giant and we think that was when he became great, but greatness is not doing one great thing in a big way, But in doing every little thing in a great way.

True greatness is not seen in the big things we do, but in the little things we do in a great way.

"Great people do consistently what others only do occasionally"
A crown doesn't make a man a king, it only identifies the king in the man .

Jeffries: "Europeans and Americans are raised with a system of thought that originated in ancient Greece. This system addresses logic -- the kind mathematicians use to deduce axioms in geometry, and the kind Sherlock Holmes made famous for solving crimes. Greek logic insists that opposites contradict each other and cannot both be true.

By contrast, Hebrews believed that opposites are often both true. In the Bible we find Jesus, the apostles, and the prophets often holding apparently conflicting ideas in tension. In 1 Samuel 16:14 Saul's troubles are attributed to 'an evil spirit from the Lord.' If we look further, we find that in the Old Testament everything, including evil, is commonly traced back to God (Job 2:10, Isaiah 45:7, Amos 3:6), who is in some sense responsible for it or the cause of it. At the same time, the Scriptures affirm the absolute holiness of God and never imply that evil has its ultimate origin in Him.

James 1:13-17 insists that God is not the source of temptation to do evil, but this 'evil spirit from the Lord' clearly moves Saul to attempt murder.

There is some merit to trying to logically work out in what sense God is responsible for evil such as Saul's 'evil spirit,' and in what sense He is not. But it is more fruitful to ask God for the Hebrew ability to hold apparent contradictions in tension. We need a certain humility about our reasoning abilities. The Bible emphasizes God's absolute sovereignty and teaches that He is able to use even evil to achieve His own purposes, which are always good. How God can use evil for good is something we need to see in specific circumstances with the eyes of faith, not try to reduce to a series of logical axioms.

It was not unjust for God to afflict Saul; He was simply following the terms of His covenant with Israel. That covenant promised blessings, such as God's Spirit to equip Saul to be king (10:10, 11:6), if Saul was obedient. It promised curses, such as the Holy Spirit's departure and an evil spirit's torment, for disobedience." - **Wayne S. Nelson:** "Hebrew Thought" in the Life Change Commentary on 1 Samuel

TEXT: 1 Samuel 17:1-58

TITLE: SPIRITUAL WARFARE

BIG IDEA:

DAVID'S VICTORY OVER GOLIATH PROVIDES A MODEL FOR SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL WARFARE

INTRODUCTION:

In what ways are our spiritual problems and adversaries like Goliath?

- 1) Our problems loom large (Goliath about 9'6") -- seem impossible to us (:4 -7)
- 2) We often struggle daily with same problem
Goliath challenged the Israelites for 40 days (:16)
- 3) Struggles can taunt us: How can you be a Christian ...
"Defied God" -- to vilify someone's character, reputation, honor; say sharp things against; taunt (:10,23,25,26,36,43,45)
- 4) We can end up feeling defeated and servants of sin -- dominated by fear (:11,24)

We need to be actively fighting the spiritual battles instead of sitting on the sidelines expecting someone else to fight our battles. Battles are an opportunity to trust the Lord to work mightily on our behalf.

I. PREPARATION FOR WARFARE

(Note: You can be sure the enemy is prepared for battle - :1)

A. Empowered by the Spirit of the Lord

David recognized that he was God's anointed and under His protection;
Conviction that his life had purpose and meaning

B. Experienced in Childlike Faith (:34-37)

cf. incidents with lion and bear

Faith in past events gives courage to trust the power of God to meet the crises of the present

C. Faithful to Authority

1. His relationship to his father -- obeying all of the little, everyday instructions (:15,17 -22); Jesse probably had imp. role in training David and preparing him for greatness

important to be faithful in little if you want to be entrusted with much

2. His relationship to King Saul -- called himself "*your servant*" (:32,34,58)

D. Confident in God's Blessing -- expected God to do great things for him and through him -- God had not explicitly promised victory, but David was confident based on the character of God and his relationship with God

E. Skillful and Disciplined in developing his abilities -- cf. his prowess with the sling (cf. our need to be experts with the Sword of the Spirit). In the exercise of his shepherd's calling he may have become so skilled in the use of the sling, that, like the Benjaminites mentioned in Judges 20:16, he could sling a hair's breadth, and not miss.

II. TARGETING STRATEGIC BATTLES

Only fight battles that the Lord has a stake in winning; make sure our battles are important to the Lord. Examine our priorities. How will victory in this battle glorify our God? In what area is Satan marshalling his forces to try to defy God and destroy God's program? The lines between the people of God and God's enemies were clearly drawn (:1-3)--no gray area here-- "the battle is the Lord's" (:47)

III. RESOURCES FOR WARFARE

A. The Wrong Kind of Resources

1. Our own might and weapons (:42 outwardly, David was not impressive when compared to Goliath; :47)
2. Untested, unproved resources (:38-39)
the world's resources and methodology can just weigh us down

B. The Right Kind of Resources

1. Slingshot and 5 smooth stones (:4a; 1 Cor. 1:27-28)
2. Meditation and Memorization of Word of God; prayer and praise and worship (study the Psalms; e.g. Ps.1)

3. The Character of God

the Living God" (:36)

the name of the Lord Almighty ..." (:45)

there is a God in Israel" (:46) -- faithful, omnipotent, covenant God

The world makes fun of the "simple" resources of the believer and would have us trust in the wrong type of resources

IV. MOTIVATION FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE

A. Zealous for God's honor (:26)

B. Legitimate desire for God-ordained rewards (:25-30)
cf. our promised eternal rewards

C. Simple obedience as a servant of God -- We have no other option

V. DISCOURAGEMENTS / HINDRANCES TO WARFARE

A. Unwise, unbelieving counsel from the very ones that should be encouraging us

B. Enemy tries to belittle us and instill fear and doubt
(:8) they were more than just "servants of Saul" -- they were the armies of the living God

C. We need to learn how to transform our weaknesses into opportunities for God to show His amazing power (:47)

D. Fear of Failure -- But isn't it greater failure not to have fought?

VI. VISION FOR VICTORY

A. Single-minded Focus on Victory (:37,46)

B. Extent of Victory (:50-54)

C. Rewards / Benefits of Victory

1. Personal (:54-55) led to recognition and greater opportunity.
God used this dramatic heroic encounter to prepare the people for David's leadership

2. Encouragement to others (:32,52)

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are we able to gain perspective on our problems (the “giants” in our life) by comparing their impotence to the almighty power of “*the armies of the living God*”? (:26)
- 2) If the battle truly is “*the Lord’s*” (:47), how can we lay aside the weapons of the flesh and the folly of self-confidence and the despair of inadequacy and trust in the deliverance of the Lord of hosts?
- 3) How can the Lord be glorified through our weaknesses?
- 4) How can our “giants” be dealt with decisively so that they don’t keep revisiting us daily with taunts and threats?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Chestnut: Even though the story is familiar, it's worth a second look.

- a. Not about underdogs, strength, or maneuverability in battle.
- b. It is about how we serve a God who can take care of situations that appear to be hopeless.

Holwick:

- I. "What is the biggest giant in your life right now?"
 1. Fill in blank on study outline. (don't put someone next to you)
 2. It may be a problem or a person.
 - A) Finances, work, relationship.
 - B) May not be a bad thing, it' s just not a good thing.
 - C) Some giants sit on your back, but others stand in the way of something good - they are a barrier.
 - D) Have a concrete giant in view during the sermon.

Holwick quoting **Glenn Gunderson:**

Seven principles for giant-killing.

1. Save your energy for fighting giants and not fellow soldiers.
17:28
 - A) Christians need to learn this, since giants are all around.
 - 1) The unsaved are dying all around us, but we choose to focus (and fight) on picayune things.
 - B) When you face a giant, keep your focus on him.

Sparrows fighting on highway in front of your car.
Whatever they were fighting over wasn't worth getting
smooshed.

2. Giants are often not as big as you think. 17:32 -33
 - A) Giants in our life get bigger over time.
 - 1) It is easy to become intimidated.
 - 2) Joshua and twelve spies is a parallel:
"The land is great, but there are giants in the land
and WE WERE GRASSHOPPERS IN COMPARISON." Num 13:33
 - B) Put giants in proper perspective. Luke 12:4f
 - 1) Finances can be painful.
 - 2) Cancer.
 - 3) "Remember that all they can do is take your physical life.
Save your fear for the one who can cast you into hell."
Hell is forever."
3. You have what it takes to kill your giant right now.
 - A) The best preparation is doing what you currently do well.
 - 1) David knew how to use a slingshot.
 - 2) All of us have special talents gained from day-to-day experiences.
 - B) Adversity sharpens you for giant -killing. 17:34
 - 1) God uses adversity to build our character.
 - 2) David went after predators (bears) while shepherding.
 - a> David is quite the guy.
 - b> I would say, "Take the sheep and leave me alone!"

...
4. Do your giant -killing in the way God has called you to do it.
 - A) Saul's armor didn't work. 17:38
 - B) Don't follow someone else's formula for fighting giants.
 - C) Learn from others but don't duplicate them.
5. Giant-killing requires a plan. 17:40
 - A) Five stones. (one for giant, four for his brothers?)
 - B) David had a plan of action.
 - 1) Stone about size of baseball, goes 100+ miles per hour.
 - 2) Goliath didn't have a chance.
 - C) Don't just wish for things to happen - make them happen.
6. Giant-killing is often a lonely business, but we are not alone.
 - A) All of our struggles seem unique to us. Prov 14: 10
 - 1) Hard for us to empathize with others.

- a> "Just stop doing it!" we say.
- 2) But our own giants seem insurmountable.

B) Remember that we're not standing alone.

- 1) David put it in perspective: "Who is this uncircumcised heathen that he defies the Lord?" 17:26
- 2) Always be centered on God first.
- 3) It is a tragedy that after listening to our complaints and fears, many would never guess we believe in a LIVING God.

C) Be strong and courageous.

- 1) We need a plan, and a GOD.
 - a> "I come against you in the name of the Lord." 17:45
 - b> One person, with God, is a majority.
- 2) Face your giant with courage.

...

7. Giant-killing results in encouragement. 17:52

A) You will encourage others to kill theirs as well.

- 1) David cuts Goliath's head off.
 - a> Philistines surrender? No, they fight. All bets off.
 - b> But the Israelites surge forward with courage.
- 2) David's courage was contagious, and so will ours be.

B) You will encourage YOURSELF for future contests with giants.

- 1) Remember your giant -killings.
 - a> Weapons kept as a trophy in David's tent.
 - b> A reminder of when God came through for him.

2) Remind yourselves of times God has been faithful.

Roper: Israel had been stripped of its manhood. There was not a man among them. You can imagine how these words of Goliath must have stung them; "You are servants of Saul, and he's no man at all! Send me a man, any man will do, just send me a man!" But there was not one man among them. That is what giants do to us. They take away our sense of manhood and womanhood. We know that we were not destined to live oppressed in this way, but we have no freedom to change. We are tyrannized, stripped of our strength and power. That is what had happened to Israel, and it is what happens to us. And note that the issue is: master, or be mastered. There is no middle ground. You cannot make peace with a giant. There may be a standoff for a while, but it cannot endure. It is either serve or be served; there can be no truce.

...

You might wonder why David chose five stones. You would think that faith would lead him to take only one. It is inviting to assume that he did it because Goliath did have four brothers, and David was going to take them all. I am inclined to think, however,

that David realized the giant might not fall the first time. There might have to be repeated efforts to bring him down, but he would come down. When he marched out to meet Goliath, David's word was, "The Lord has already delivered you into my hands." He was certain of victory. But he knew it might take repeated attempts. Hebrews 6 tells us it is by faith and patience that we inherit the promises. The application of faith in one instance may not be enough, but the victory is certain. And if we continue to apply the principles, and we are not defeated and discouraged, and we do not give up and quit but we keep moving out in obedience against the giants in our life, God will bring those giants down. The problem is that we are tempted to quit too soon. We sling one rock and miss, and then give up.

Roe:

Canaan is not a picture of heaven. There will be no fights in heaven. It is a picture of resting in God in the middle of the battles down here. The battles we are fighting are already won. We are to fight from a position of rest, depending on God's resources and God's schedule. Our enemies have been defeated in Christ and our job is to possess the land by faith. The Philistines are invaders in the land.

Number two: the Philistines are to be exterminated. As long as they are around, they will be a warlike, hostile, uncircumcised people. They had been a thorn in the side of Israel for years because they had never been totally exterminated. The Israelites, on the other hand, owned the land because God graciously gave it to them not because they earned it. He marked this covenant with them by the sign of circumcision. Circumcision was not only God's sign of the seed promise [in Genesis to Abraham] but also the sign of the land promise. So, every Israelite male in that army standing on the cliff across the valley from the Philistines had a mark on his body that said, "This land is mine. God gave it to me, and I have the right to it forever." Yet there they stood, marked by God, letting an enemy, who had no right to be there, immobilize them.

Number three: as long as Goliath held the Israelites at bay, he was a reproach and a disgrace to them. They were the "armies of the living God," yet they were terrorized by one uncircumcised Philistine.

If we allow the Goliaths in our lives to possess us, we are disgraced in the same way. We need to realize that and to never make peace with them. Look at Joshua. He rid Canaan of all the Goliaths, all the giants, except for those in the little Southwest corner of the land. They came back to haunt him.

Number four: not only are Goliaths a reproach to us, but they also make a mockery of the living God. If we believe our God is God of the universe, that Jesus Christ maintains the universe by the word of his power, that he is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and we do not act like he is, we make a mockery of our God.

...

God's idea was to have the Jewish nation always at a disadvantage so they would put no trust in human resources. God does not want our will, our integrity of character or our most valiant efforts to deal with the Goliaths, or even the little Philistines behind them, in our lives. The battle is the Lord's. He may deal with us until we bottom out, until we

lie hopeless before him, before he brings us back. He wants to teach us that out of death comes resurrection power. Until we have been crucified and have put to death everything we count on outside of Jesus Christ and his indwelling life, we cannot experience the fullness of the resurrection power of Christ. Our God is determined to put us through afflictions, persecutions, and perplexities, so the life of Jesus Christ may be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

TEXT: 1 Samuel 18:1-30

TITLE: *DIVINE PROSPERITY VS. DIVINE REJECTION*

BIG IDEA:

PROSPERITY FLOWS OUT OF THE PRESENCE AND FAVOR OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:

In studying and applying any OT passage on prosperity, it is helpful to learn from the material blessings how to seek God for spiritual blessings (not that God does not provide us with material blessings as well -- but the focus seems to be on spiritual blessings)

I. DAVID – A MODEL OF DIVINE PROSPERITY (a type of Christ)

Key = Prosperity connected with the presence and favor of God (:12,14,28)
“the Lord was with him”

Examine the different realms in which God prospered David:

- a. Friendship -- Loyalty and Love of Close Friends (:1-4)
- b. Work -- Achievements and Increasing Responsibilities
 - 1) Submissive to authority (:5)
 - 2) Prosperity from the Lord characterized everything David gave himself to
 - 3) Promoted despite Saul's suspicious, envious spirit
 - 4) Ability to take the most difficult task and still overachieve (:25-27)
- c. Reputation -- Respect and Admiration of the People
everyone admired David except for Saul (:5-8, 16, 30)
- d. Talents -- Gifted with Natural Abilities Such as Music (:10)
- e. Marriage -- Prosperous in Marriage
- f. Character -- Fruit of Spiritual Character
 - 1) Humility (:18,23)
 - 2) Courage and Faith (:17,26)
 - 3) Wisdom (:30)
- g. Persecution -- Protected from Ambush

II. SAUL -- A MODEL OF DIVINE REJECTION

Key = Divine Rejection connected with a bitter spirit

- a. Double minded -- vacillating between positive and negative attitudes
- b. Jealous over the prosperity given by the sovereign God to another servant of God (:7-8) – Very insecure ... and with good reason
- c. Suspicious and Critical -- Imputing the worst possible motives (:9)
- d. Dominated by Evil (:10)
- e. Fearful of Righteousness (as lived out by the godly -- :12,15,29)

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When you examine your closest friends, what is it about them that knit your soul most closely to them? What was the initial attraction? What qualities promoted a deeper friendship? How have you learned to be a good friend to others?
- 2) How are Christian ministries undermined by jealousy and envy? What is our response to those with obvious spiritual gifts? Do we focus on what is positive or do we look for their Achilles heel?
- 3) Trace the theme of the Lord “being with someone” throughout the OT. What are the special blessings of His presence and favor?
- 4) Did David marry for the right or the wrong reasons? What was Saul’s intent in giving his daughter to David in marriage?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Roper: “Both David and Jonathan were, to my thinking, swashbuckling men of faith, go-for-broke individuals, who were willing to fling their lives away and entrust themselves to the Lord, no matter what it might cost them. The theme of Jonathan's life is found in his own words: "The Lord will deliver, whether by many or by few." That is, ‘It doesn't make any difference how many of us there are; it doesn't make any difference how many of our opponents may exist. The Lord will deliver.’ That was the keynote of his life.

David likewise felt this way. As David was explaining to Saul his victory over the giant, Jonathan's heart was knit to the heart of David, and he made a covenant with him.

This is where friendships usually start, with some sort of attraction like this. People think the way we think, like the things we like, are interested in things as we are interested in them, and we note that they have the same perspective as we. This is not necessarily wrong. We have to remember that even the Lord chose twelve men. And Mark says he chose them on this basis: he chose those whom he would. He was drawn to these men, he liked them, he felt a natural attraction.

Davis: “There were, therefore, two fundamental reasons for Saul’s deep jealousy regarding David’s success. The first was the fact that David had captivated the imagination of the Israelites throughout the land, and had risen so rapidly in popularity. The folk song was quite clearly a thorn in Saul’s side (v. 8). The other reason for Saul’s jealousy is detected in verse 12, and that was Saul’s great fear of David. It was quite evident to Saul that David was, indeed, especially blessed of God, and at the same time he was probably cognizant of the fact that the Spirit of God had departed from him, thus leaving him without the skills and abilities necessary for successful rulership.”

Gordon: Re vv. 12-30 --

“Having failed in his murder attempts, Saul tries other ploys to reduce David to size (vv. 12-16), or to have him eliminated altogether (vv. 17-30), yet they are counter-productive (vv. 15f., 30).”

Blaikie: Re purpose of trials in the life of David as preparation for the throne –

“In the case of David, God’s purpose manifestly was to exercise and strengthen such qualities as trust in God, prayerfulness, self-command, serenity of temper, consideration for others, and the hope of a happy issue out of all his troubles. His trials were indeed both numerous and various. The cup of honour dashed from his lips when he had just begun to taste it; promises the most solemn deliberately violated, and rewards of perilous service coolly withheld from him; faithful services turned into occasions of cruel persecution; enforced separation from beloved friends; laceration of feelings from Saul’s cruel and bloody treatment of some who had befriended him; calumnious charges persisted in after convincing and generous refutation; ungrateful treatment from those he had benefited, like Nabal; treachery from those he had delivered, like the men of Keilah; perfidy on the part of some he had trusted, like Cush; assassination threatened by some of his own followers, as at Ziklag, -- these and many other trials were the hard and bitter discipline which David had to undergo in the wilderness.”

Deffinbaugh:

(:1-5) David has a “nice day”

(:6-9) The Musicians Produce a Sour Note, and the Dancers Step on Saul’s Toes

(:10-12) Murder by a Maniac ... Or ... Why can’t David get the Point

(:13-30) Kill ‘Em With Kindness or Murder in the Military

...

God is bringing to pass the things He has purposed and promised. In chapters 13 and 15, God indicates to Saul that his kingdom will end. In our text, we watch his reign unravel. Saul continues to lose a grip on his own life and on his kingdom. David is anointed as the new king of Israel in chapter 16, and we see how God prepares the way

for David's reign. David has very close links with Saul and his palace. Now, he is closely associated with two more members of Saul's royal family, his son (now a close friend) and his daughter (now David's wife). David now has authority in Saul's army, and through experience, shows himself to be a brave man and a great leader. David is on his way up, and Saul is on his way down. It is not the way we expected this to happen, but then God's plans seldom come about in ways we expect (see Isaiah 55:8 - 11; Romans 11:33-36; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 19: 1-24

TITLE: UNTOUCHABLE!

BIG IDEA:

GOD CAN USE OUR NETWORK OF CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS TO HELP PROTECT US IN TIMES OF DANGER AND PERSECUTION

(:1A) INTRODUCTION: BIG-TIME, SURPRISING DANGER

A. Unexpected/Unjustified Danger

“Now Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to put David to death.”

Any danger we face pales in comparison.

You have the king putting out the contract on David’s head.

B. Imminent Danger

C. **Complication:** Threat coming from the very one David was called to served

Aspects of authority and submission involved as well as self preservation

Rom. 8:38-39 *“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

I. (:1B-10) PROTECTION BY A CLOSE FRIEND (JONATHAN)

David needs to take responsibility to protect himself as well

“please be on guard in the morning, and stay in a secret place and hide yourself.”

A. (:1b) Good Definition of Friendship

“But Jonathan, Saul’s son, greatly delighted in David.”

Where you might have expected to find jealousy and rivalry you find true friendship instead.

Friends in high places can be helpful.

B. (:2-3) Friendship Involves Taking Risks to Support One Another

Complication: Betraying the confidence of his father and king.

Jonathan correctly viewed Saul’s unjustified attacks against David as sin. Therefore, he first tried to appeal to his authority ... but if that failed he was prepared to act according to his conscience. This was not just about friendship.

Seeking information and clarification – are things really as bad as they seem? Can a peaceable solution for forged?

C. (:4-7) Friendship Involves Speaking Up on One Another's Behalf
Reinforce their positive characteristics and contributions.

- *"he has not sinned against you"*
- *"his deeds have been very beneficial to you"*

D. (:8-10) Cycle of Danger and Protection Renewed

The ambush of a crazy man ... possessed by demons.

- Divine Providence
"he slipped away out of Saul's presence"
- Human Responsibility
"and David fled and escaped that night"

II. (:11-17) PROTECTION BY AN INTIMATE RELATIVE (MICHAL)

David needs to take responsibility to protect himself as well

A. The Counsel of Your Wife can be Perceptive and Timely

B. The Creativity of Your Wife can Suggest a Good Plan

C. **Complication:** Resorting to Trickery and Deceit

Household idol = not a very positive sign of the level of family spirituality

III. (:18-24) PROTECTION BY A SPIRITUAL MENTOR (SAMUEL)

David needs to take responsibility to protect himself as well

A. A Spiritual Mentor Makes a Good Confidante

"Now David fled and escaped and came to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him."

B. Plans to Capture David are Repeatedly Frustrated / The Supreme Power of the Spirit of God

Saul was persistent in his efforts to seek out David to capture and kill him.

C. **Complication:** What type of ecstatic prophesying was being practiced here?

Some bizarre behavior

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Imagine the breadth of the net which Saul was seeking to cast around David. He involved his servants, his army, even his close family members like Jonathan who had such an affinity with David. How frustrating was it for Saul to not be able to touch David?

2) How does the hardening of Saul's heart compare with that of Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus, or with the general account of the increasing cycles of depravity from Romans 1?

3) How was Jonathan able to remain loyal to his friend and yet respectful to his father, the king? Why did Jonathan continue to give his father the benefit of the doubt ... even though he had proved time and again that his word could not be trusted? Was this a good thing or a bad thing on Jonathan's part?

4) What type of humiliation awaits those proud antagonists of the Lord who refuse to bow the knee in submission to His will?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh: "As we leave this rescue by Michal, we should not overlook Psalm 59, which is David's reflection on his deliverance here. While we dare not attempt to deal with this psalm in detail, a couple of observations can be made. First, you will notice that Michal is never mentioned in the psalm. It is not that she is somehow being snubbed by David, as though she did not take part in the rescue. David is not looking at the immediate cause of his deliverance in this psalm, but the ultimate cause – God. Thus, David praises God for saving his life. Second, the description of David's pursuers makes it sound as though they are Gentiles, rather than Jews (see Psalm 59:5 -8). I would not be surprised if the men Saul sent to capture David were Gentiles. We know that Saul hired mercenaries (see 1 Samuel 14:52). Such men have no reservations in helping put David to death, where Israelites might. How fitting too that Saul (a Jew) would utilize such mercenaries (Gentiles) to oppose God's king, just as the Jewish religious leaders later do in opposing Christ. Finally, David speaks of these men who seek his capture as liars (Psalm 59:12). Were these men some of those who falsely accuse David before Saul (see 1 Samuel 24:9; 26:19)?"

Gordon: "Whereas one of the signs confirming Saul's election as king had been his participation in an ecstatic display by a band of prophets (10:5 -13), his subjection to the same mysterious power in this section serves only to confirm his rejection by Yahweh. As the spirit of Yahweh neutralizes Saul's attempts to apprehend David, it transpires that the latter enjoys a sacrosanctity which Yahweh himself is underwriting. "

Blaikie: "Can we think of a more desolate condition than that in which he found himself after his wife let him down through a window? It is night, and he is alone. Who could be unmoved when placed in such a position? Forced to fly from his home and his young wife, just after he had begun to know their sweets, and no prospect of a happy return! Driven forth by the murderous fury of the king whom he had served with a loyalty and a devotion that could not have been surpassed! His home desolated and his life threatened by the father of his wife, the man whom even nature should have

inspired with a kindly interest in his welfare! What good had it done him that he had slain that giant? What return had he got for his service in ever so often soothing the nerves of the irritable monarch with the gentle warblings of his harp? What good had come of all his perilous exploits against the Philistines, of the hundred foreskins of the king's enemies, of the last great victory which had brought so unprecedented advantage to Israel? Would it not have been better for him never to have touched a weapon, never to have encountered a foe, but kept feeding that flock of his father's and caring for those irrational creatures, who had always returned his kindness with gratitude, and been far more like friends and companions than that terrible Saul? Such thoughts might perhaps hover about his bosom, but certainly they would receive no entertainment from him. They might knock at his door, but they would not be admitted. A man like David could never seriously regret that he had done his duty. He could never seriously wish that he had never responded to the call of God and of his country. But he might well feel how empty and unprofitable even the most successful worldly career may become, how maddening the changes of fortune, how intolerable the unjust retributions of men in power. His ill-treatment was so atrocious that, had he not had a refuge in God, it might have driven him to madness or to suicide. It drove him to the throne of grace, where he found grace to help him in his time of need. ”

Keil and Delitzsch: “Saul and his messengers, the zealous performers of his will, ought no doubt to have learned, from what happened to them in the presence of the prophets, that God had the hearts of men in His power, and guided them at His will ... Saul was seized by this mighty influence of the Spirit of God in a more powerful manner than his servants were, both because he had most obstinately resisted the leadings of divine grace, and also in order that, if it were possible, his hard heart might be broken and subdued by the power of grace. If, however, he should nevertheless continue obstinately in his rebellion against God, he would then fall under the judgment of hardening, which would be speedily followed by his destruction. ”

TEXT: 1 Samuel 20:1-31

TITLE: TRUE FRIENDSHIP

BIG IDEA:

DAVID AND JONATHAN -- A MODEL OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP

INTRODUCTION:

Prov. 18:24 *“a friend who sticks closer than a brother”*

I. True Friendship Involves a Mutual Commitment Often Inspired by Affinities

(18:1-4) (Morgan)

- A. In the natural realm -- both young, strong, brave warriors, loved the outdoors, natural leaders
- B. In the spiritual realm -- zeal for the Lord

Blaikie: “At the foundation of all friendship lies congeniality of heart – a kindred feeling of which one often becomes conscious by instinct at first sight. But there must also be elements of difference in friends. It is a great point to have a friend who is above us in some things, and who will thus be likely to draw us up to a higher level of character, instead of dragging us down to a lower. And a friend is very useful, if he is rich in qualities where we are poor.”

II. True Friendship Is Based on God -Given Love (fruit of the Holy Spirit)

III. Can Be Trusted During Times of Danger and Confusion (20:1 -3)

“Then David fled from Nairoth in Ramah, and came and said to Jonathan”

- A. Whom would we seek out for help? What type of help would we get?
- B. Who would seek us out? What type of help would they get?
- C. Importance of loyalty
- D. Not afraid of confrontation and being very open and direct with one another

IV. Willing to Do Anything for One Another -- Even to the Point of Death

(20:4-7)

“Whatever you say, I will do for you.”

Quite an open check invitation

V. Expects to be Cut a Break; Complete Honesty; No Hidden Agendas (:8 -9)

“Therefore deal kindly with your servant”

Relationship bathed in love and forgiveness and expecting the best of each other

VI. Does Not Hesitate to Make and Keep Promises (:10-17)

no rivalry, but desire to see God's best worked out for each other;
desire to see your friend vindicated and enemies put down
desire to reap some benefits from the friendship as well
sometimes promises need to be repeated and commitments reaffirmed

love must always be central (:17)

VII. Trusts the Judgment of One Another (:18-23)

creative in devising a plan to meet the needs of the situation

can keep a secret

looks to the Lord for wisdom in evaluating and making judgments

VIII. Does Not Wilt Under Pressure or Turn Back (:24-31)

IX. Shares the Full Range of the Emotional Spectrum and Especially Grieves At the Necessity of Separation

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What expectations did David have of Jonathan and vice versa in this friendship? What demands did they make upon each other? Do our friends come through for us when the chips are down? In what ways have our friends let us down?
- 2) How could Jonathan be so free of envy and jealousy and a spirit of competition? What a unique friendship – where one party is going to be granted what on natural grounds would seem to be the rights and privileges and honor and power of the other!
- 3) Remember that Jonathan was David's brother-in-law as well as his friend. How difficult was it for them to have to separate? How have we coped with life changes that have separated us from our friends?
- 4) How does the language used by Saul and his actions towards his own son Jonathan reflect the depths of his depravity and the hardening of his heart? Are we shocked at the expression of sin among intimate family members?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Roper: There is a word which occurs very frequently in conjunction with the covenant. It is translated in various ways - sometimes as "mercy", sometimes as "loving-kindness". But the word basically means "loyalty". It indicates that God not only gives his word but that he is faithful to it. He covenants with his people that he will produce in our lives all of his will, and then he is loyal to us. He fulfills that promise. He follows through. The interesting thing is that David uses both of these terms in this statement to Jonathan. "Therefore," he says, "deal loyally with me, because the covenant you have with me is a covenant of the Lord."

This adds another dimension to friendship. Friendship is not just giving of myself to another person, but it is giving for a particular purpose - that the person might be everything God intends him or her to be. God has a plan for your life, and he is going to fulfill that plan. He is loyal to you to accomplish that plan. And he uses me in your life, and he uses you in my life, to accomplish that plan. Therefore the fact that you are a friend tells me that I not only must give of myself to you, that I am to give of myself to the end that you might be everything God intends you to be. That was the covenant David and Jonathan experienced.

...

Their friendship had progressed to the point that the one thing they held in common which was most precious to both was their relationship to the Lord. Jonathan lived that David might realize God's best in his life. David lived that Jonathan might realize God's best in his life. There was this mutual friendship which existed because each wanted God's will to be fulfilled in the other's life. That is what friendship is. You see, if we rightly understand friendship, we will never be without friends. We can never say, "I have no friends," because there are friends on every hand whose life we can share.

Deffinbaugh: "Now Saul is really mad. He picks up his spear, always nearby, and hurls it at his own son Jonathan. Saul hurls his spear, and Jonathan gets the point. He is not hit. Fortunately Saul has gotten no better at hitting his target with a spear. There is no longer any doubt in Jonathan's mind. Now there are two empty places at that table, David's and Jonathan's. How appropriate. Jonathan is deeply grieved. His grief, you will note, is not due to the humiliation his father has heaped upon him at the dinner table, but due to the way his father has dishonored David (verse 34). David has been right all along, dead right. Saul does intend to kill him, and he will also kill anyone who tries to stop him from doing so.

...

We can see that this chapter is a significant turning point in terms of David's relationship with Saul and with Jonathan. Previously, David has fled from Saul's presence, but this has always been temporary. Now, it is permanent. David will never again sit at Saul's table, never again play his harp to soothe the king's troubled spirit, never again fight for Saul in the Israelite army. David will become a fugitive who is constantly on the run from Saul who seeks to kill him. Because of this, the fellowship David has been able to enjoy with Jonathan will never be the same either. And so David and Jonathan say their sad farewells in our text. They will meet again, but it will not be often, or for long."

Blaikie: "Jonathan and he were doomed, after the briefest period of companionship, to a lifelong separation, and the friendship which had seemed to promise a perpetual solace of his trials, only aggravated their severity, when its joys were violently reft away. "

Ryrie: *Re hesed* – "Love and loyalty, the two essential aspects of a covenant relationship, are bound together in this word. Jonathan recognized that David would one day be king and requested protection for himself and his family when David would take the throne."

Young: Re vs. 22 “*for the Lord has sent you away*” –
“When Jacob’s sons sent their younger brother to Egypt, God was in the plans for Joseph’s life. So now God was sending David away to prepare him in the tough discipline of life for the leadership of Israel. ”

TEXT: 1 Samuel 21:1-15

TITLE: ON THE RUN AND OUT OF CONTROL

BIG IDEA:

WHEN WE LOSE FOCUS ON GOD'S POWER TO PROTECT US WE RESORT TO DESPERATE MEASURES TO SAVE OUR OWN SKIN WITHOUT REGARD TO:

- THE IMPACT ON THE WELL BEING OF OTHERS
- THE IMPACT ON OUR TESTIMONY FOR THE LORD

INTRODUCTION:

Sad chapter in the history of God's Anointed;
Most places we see David portrayed in a very noble light

I. (:1-9) DECEPTION PUTS AHIMELECH AT RISK (AND THE PRIESTS)

A. (:1-2) Seeking Assistance Under False Pretenses

1. (:1) Ahimelech Smells Trouble

"Ahimelech came trembling to meet David"

Roe: "How does it look to Ahimelech? Here is the leader of the armies of Saul, and he is alone. It is a Sabbath. The 'Law' forbids travel on the Sabbath. David never traveled alone. He traveled with an army, or at least a band of bodyguards. Ahimelech, knowing the kind of conflict going on 5 miles north, is sure to wonder what is happening. David, knowing Ahimelech probably understands the conflict in the palace and fearful that Ahimelech will not provide his needs, lies to him."

2. (:2) David Fails to Come Clean and Admit the Truth

"The king has commissioned me with a matter"

Probably not a very convincing tale ... but Ahimelech leaves it at that and does not press for any details.

B. (:3-6) Seeking Provisions – the consecrated bread

1. (:3) Desperate Request

"Give me . . . whatever can be found"

No time to be picky

No time for pleasantries

2. (:4) Spiritual Dilemma

Only consecrated bread available

Certain special conditions must be met

Roe: This was the "bread of the Presence," the twelve loaves that were baked every week on the Sabbath, brought into the tabernacle, into the Holy Place, laid on the table,

six loaves in each portion, each loaf representing a tribe of Israel. Each loaf was dedicated to God. They sat there the full seven days, and were sanctified to God. They indicated God was the total provider for all the needs of Israel. At the end of seven days, 12 fresh loaves were brought in to replace the twelve loaves on the table. The high priest, and the priests of the nation of Israel, could eat those loaves which were replaced. They were set apart for the use of the priests but could be eaten only in the Holy Place. So all Ahimelech had was consecrated bread, bread that had come right off the table of the Lord.

3. (:5) Holiness is Not the Issue

4. (:6) Compliance on the Part of Ahimelech –
“so the priest gave him consecrated bread”
putting physical needs above ceremonial regulations (Matt. 12:3 -4)

C. (:7) Deception Discovered – Doeg the Edomite

Roe: Why does God give David a view of Doeg the Edomite, the compromiser, the fellow who lives by his wits, by his deceit, by expediency, chief of Saul's shepherds, "big man on campus" back at Gibeah of Saul? Why right here? David knows Doeg will go back and tell Saul. What position did David put Ahimelech in? Saul is a mad man, remember. He is going to keep the reins of government no matter what YHWH wants, and should YHWH's anointed king, David, get in his way, David dies. Saul is about to embark upon a campaign that destroys Israel in order to destroy David, and David knows that. What do you think goes through David's mind about the chances of Ahimelech coming out of this unscathed? He is assuredly going to get hurt. How much does David care about that? David has now focused totally on himself, "Nobody has it as bad as I do. These are legitimate needs." God deliberately, at this point in time when David first starts his deceit, brings him Doeg, and he has a chance, therefore, to come clean so the right report gets back to Saul. [David admits later on that he knew Doeg would go and tell Saul.] But what does he do? Well, he is too focused on self and cares little about Ahimelech. When you are focused on self, you do not care about anybody else. It is just "My needs. My problems."

Ryrie: “Doeg was detained at the sanctuary at Nob because of a vow, a need for cleansing, or because he was suspected of leprosy (Lev. 13:4).”

D. (:8-9) Seeking Protection – the sword of Goliath

1. (:8) Desperate Need – no weapons
“I brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me”

2. (:9) Unique Weapon – sword of Goliath
“There is none like it”

I. (:10-15) DECEPTION OF INSANITY BEFORE ACHISH (KING OF GATH)

(first instance of defense strategy of pleading insanity)

- A. (:10) Trying to Keep a Low Profile
(cf. Witness Protection Program – new identity in land of Philistines)
trying to blend in ... avoid detection
(difficult to do with sword of Goliath attracting attention)
- B. (:11) Discovered to be both Infamous and a Dangerous Threat
“Is this not David the king of the land?”
Too famous to fly under the radar
- C. (:12-13) Brilliant Deception Inspired by Fear
“So he disguised his sanity before them, and acted insanely in their hands”
Taking tremendous risk
- D. (:14-15) Escaping as a Harmless Madman

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How should David have attempted to feed and equip himself and his men without engaging in deceit? What would a walk of faith have looked like in this predicament? Do we ever feel boxed in as if obedience is not even an option?
- 2) Re vs. 7 – How is “bad luck” (Does just happening to be there that day so that he would recognize David and rat him out) really encompassed within God’s overall plan and providence? Why do bad things happen to good people – like Ahimelech and his priests who were innocently going about their daily responsibilities?
- 3) What type of leadership qualities are being developed during this wacky time of being on the run and under constant pressure?
- 4) How does David apply his ingenuity to help escape from his quandary? Why don’t we see David calling upon the Lord throughout this episode?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Roe: The wilderness experiences in our lives are deliberately designed by God to form us into men or women of maturity. As C. S. Lewis says, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, but he shouts to us in our pain." Pain is God's megaphone to get our attention. So our struggles and stresses, which can be emotional, physical or spiritual, are God's way of telling us, "I'm going to make you into a man after my own heart."

Don't fight it. Just allow me to mold you and shape you into the image of Christ."

So we will see David have experiences and attitudes that we have. We will see him angry with God, obeying God, making it big, plunging to the depths. We will see all the peaks and valleys that a normal person experiences. This is God's man we are watching, a "man after his own heart." It is a comforting thing.

Ryrie: "The priest recognized that his moral obligation to preserve David's life by providing bread superceded the ceremonial regulation concerning who could eat the showbread (Lev. 24:5-9). Christ referred to this example when teaching the true meaning of the Sabbath law."

Davis: "David evidently adopted what is commonly known today as a 'situational ethic.' He assumed that the situation was of such a nature that the greatest good could be accomplished by getting food for his men at the cost of truth. This perhaps was the same feeling shared by Abraham in deceiving the king in Egypt (Gen. 12:13). Recall also the lies of Rahab (Josh. 2:4) and David's wife, Michal (I Sam. 19:14). The concept of a situational ethic, therefore, is not a new one.... As is the case with many lies, they seem to meet the immediate need of a given situation, but have ultimate effects which perhaps were not foreseen by the one lying. Such was the case in David's experience, for this lie led to the ultimate destruction of the city (cf. 22:22 ff.)."

Blaikie: "Time after time, he follows that policy of deceit which he had instructed Jonathan to pursue in explaining his absence from the feast in Saul's house. It is painful in the last degree to see one whose faith towered to such a lofty height in the encounter with Goliath, coming down from that noble elevation, to find him resorting for self-protection to the lies and artifices of an imposter..."

It was God's purpose now to allow David to feel his own weakness; he was to pass through that terrible ordeal when, tossed on a sea of trials, one feels like Noah's dove, unable to find rest for the sole of one's foot, and seems on the very eve of dropping helpless into the billows, till the ark presents itself, and a gracious hand is put forth to the rescue. Left to himself, tempted to make use of carnal expedients, and taught the wretchedness of such expedients; learning also, through this discipline, to anchor his soul more firmly on the promise of the living God, David was now undergoing a most essential part of his early training, gaining the experience that was to qualify him to say with such earnestness to others, 'O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusted in Him.'"

Deffinbaugh: Achish is forced to think through his offer to give David sanctuary in Gath. While he is thinking about this, David is thinking too. He has heard of the counsel the king's servants gave to Achish. He knows that if their advice is taken, he might be put to death. He is in trouble, a lot of trouble. How can David get out of this predicament with his life?

It turns out there is a way. David does escape with his life, but not with his dignity. If he

arrives as a dreaded warrior, greater even than Goliath, he leaves as a lunatic. David somehow lands on the idea of acting insane. If he can convince the king that he has lost his sanity, he will no longer be taken seriously, and he might even be allowed to live. So David begins to carry out his plan. He scribbles on the doors of the city gate and lets the saliva run down his face and in his beard. He is disgusting and pathetic.

If his act convinces no one else, it convinces the king. Achish really does not want to kill David anyway. He seems to genuinely like him. This is his way out. The king needs not take a madman seriously! There is no glory in killing David. There is no benefit to keeping him in Gath. Gath is not a mental asylum! They have enough crazy Philistines in town; they do not need an Israelite madman as well. And so Achish has David run out of town. David's life is spared, and the concerns of the advisors of the king are dealt with. This, so it seems, is a win-win situation.

TEXT: 1 Samuel 22:1-23

TITLE: *DESPERATION REPLACED BY DETERMINATION*

BIG IDEA:

GOD'S APPOINTED LEADER MAKES ALL NECESSARY PREPARATIONS TO MOBILIZE AND FULFILL HIS CALLING IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S LEADING (AND TIMING)

TRANSITION:

David once again inquiring of the Lord (20:10; 23:2)
What should I do to fulfill my calling – given my high level of responsibility (and When should I do it?)

Roe: “The cave of Adullam is about 10 miles back toward Bethlehem up the Valley of Elah which is pock-marked with caves. It is an ideal hiding place and is very close to the border of the Philistines, where David can again flee if he has to get across the border in a hurry. It is also reasonably close to Bethlehem, his home town. So, from his perspective, he is pretty centrally located. ”

I. (:1-2) ESTABLISHING HIS LEADERSHIP OVER LOYAL TROOPS

- A. Arranging (setting up) Temporary Headquarters in the Cave of Adullam
- B. Attracting the Allegiance of His Family Members

Davis: “The Moabites probably viewed David as an enemy of Saul, and therefore were willing to care for his parents, perhaps in exchange for a favor on his part. ”

- C. Appealing to those who had been similarly disenfranchised – “the down and outers”
An unpromising band of recruits – giving them a second chance at success –
The D Squad:
 - “everyone who was in Distress”
 - “everyone who was in Debt”
 - “everyone who was Discontented”
- D. Asserting His Leadership
“became captain over them” (400 men)

II. (:3-5) DELEGATING HIS FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES TO FREE HIM UP TO FOLLOW GOD'S LEADING

- A. Committing His Father and Mother to the Care of the King of Moab at Mizpah
- B. Seeking God's Will – “until I know what God will do for me”
- C. (:4) Waiting Period
- D. (:5) Relocating Upon Receiving God's Guidance

III. (:6-19) HIDING FROM THE RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF KING SAUL

A. (:6-10) Saul Seeking Intelligence on David's Whereabouts
Doeg spills the beans

B. (:11-19) Saul Executing Ahimelech (along with his priests and city) for Helping David (instead of betraying him to Saul)

IV. (:20-23) TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR MISTAKES AND ERRORS IN JUDGMENT

A. (:20-21) Tragic Report from Abiathar – some of Ahimelech who escaped
“And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the Lord”

B. (:22) Admission of Guilt by David
“I have brought about the death of every person in your father's household.”

C. (:23) Confident Focus on the Future
“Stay with me, do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life; for you are safe with me”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why did God send the prophet Gad to instruct David to relocate from relative safety in the cave of Adullam to the more precarious location in Judah? How did David respond to this guidance?

2) How did Saul's servants respond to him – to his charges of conspiracy and to his outrageous command to kill all the priests? Do you think popular opinion was turning against Saul as he ordered this bizarre massacre? What did the general public think of this massive hunt to find and kill David and his men?

3) Why did Doeg the Edomite respond differently? What was he hoping to gain? How do you think his actions affected him?

4) It appears as if David had some insight into the consequence of his duplicity way back at the time Doeg was hanging around the camp. How could he live with himself in the future knowing that his actions had caused the loss of so much innocent life? How could he be so bold as to promise Abiathar safety?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Davis: “The presence of Abiathar with David must have been of considerable comfort at this time, for now he had the ephod and the Urim and the Thummim (23:6). In spite of the destruction and devastation at Nob, God had made provision for David. This, indeed, was an act of mercy and grace. Abiathar remained with David for a long period of time, and after David’s time as an outlaw was appointed high priest. He held the office until Solomon banished him for his share in Adonijah’s attempt at seizing the throne (1 Kings 2:26ff.).”

Blaikie: “There is one thing in David, when he received the information, that we cannot but admire – his readiness to take to himself his full share of blame ... Nor did he excuse himself on the ground that the massacre was the fulfillment of the longstanding sentence on Eli’s house. He knew well that that circumstance in no degree lessened his own guilt, or the guilt of Doeg and Saul. Though God may use men’s wicked passions to bring about His purposes, that in no degree lessens the guilt of these passions.”

Roe: How will David ever learn to trust God with all his heart, to be a man after God's own heart, if he is safe in his stronghold at Adullam where his safety is tied to a physical relationship of hiding in a cave with his 400 men instead of a spiritual one of simply trusting God in time of danger? So, God deliberately sends him back into Judah where there is risk. The Christian life is a life of risk taking. It is called "faith." Faith is when you step out and act like you believe that what God says is true, even when you do not see how it is ever going to work out. So, David is called to go back into Judah and become a man of faith. ...

God's apparent "extravagance" with the lives of believers is classically illustrated in the martyrdom of the early Christians. They, together with their families, were thrown into arenas as food for lions. They were put on stakes, covered with tar and lit as torches for banquets. Actually the word "martyr" in the Greek simply means "witness." But because in those days so many times witnessing cost you your life, the term became consistently used as a witness by death. "Martyr" today means to die for your witness. Those early Christians died by the hundreds and God could have stopped that, but he did not. But, again, take your eyes off this life a moment and think, "Where did those believers go when they died and with Whom were they after death?" Additionally, early accounts show that numbers of pagans became Christians by watching the way Christians died. Again, if God chooses to evangelize the lost in this manner, it is His right. "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church."

Deffinbaugh: “But the conspiracy theory goes even further. Not only does Saul accuse Jonathan and David of conspiring against him, he also accuses his servants – all of them! Saul is surrounded by his servants as he sits under the tamarisk tree near his home in Gibeah (verse 6). He begins by reminding his servants about the nature of politics and the spoils of political victory and power. As a reward for their loyalty to Saul, these Benjamites have been given property and positions of authority as political spoils. Do they think that if David becomes king they will enjoy the same spoils? They

most certainly will not. And so Saul reminds his servants that they owe him -- big time. And now he wants a payback -- by having them inform him of David's whereabouts. Saul tells his servants that by keeping silent about David and withholding any information about him and his whereabouts, they are joining David in his conspiracy against Saul. Doeg the Edomite finds this ample reason to pass on to Saul what he observed while at Nob."

TEXT: 1 Samuel 23:1-29

TITLE: *OUR ROCK OF ESCAPE*

BIG IDEA:
GOD SPECIALIZES IN ENGINEERING NARROW ESCAPES

INTRODUCTION:

Dangerous form of Hide and Seek; David hiding with his loyal band of followers (now about 600 men); Saul seeking to destroy him with all the power and resources of the military at his command as well as intelligence gathering resources

Have you ever been in a tight spot ... questioning God's ability to deliver;
Finding grace to help just in the nick of time

**I. (:1-14) NARROW ESCAPE #1 – TRAPPED IN KEILAH --
WHEN GOD LEADS US INTO DANGER, HE PROVIDES THE PATH OF
ESCAPE**

A. (:1-5) Obedience to Our Mission Requires Submitting to God's Leading Instead of Being Paralyzed by Fear

1. (:1) Leadership Dilemma: Should I put my troops at risk to fulfill my mission to protect the nation?
"the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and are plundering the threshing floors"
2. (:2) Clarity of Guidance – Directly tied to the willingness to obey
"Go and attack the Philistines, and deliver Keilah"
3. (:3) Fear Can Cause Us to Question God's Leading
"Behold, we are afraid here in Judah."
4. (:4) Patience of God in Helping Us Work Through Our Fears –
Restatement of God's Clear Guidance
"Arise, go down to Keilah"
5. (:5) Obedience Leads to Blessing (but can also heighten our danger)
"he led away their livestock and struck them with a great slaughter"

B. (:6-12) Boxed in by Obedience

1. (:6) Availability of Priestly Resources for Seeking God's Guidance
"he came down with an ephod in his hand"

2. (:7-8) Opportunities on the Part of Saul

“So Saul summoned all the people for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.”

3. (:9-12) David Asks the Hard Questions

“Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?”

C. (:13-14) The Hardship of the Wilderness is Better than the Comforts of the Palace

“And David stayed in the wilderness in the strongholds.”

II. (:15-18) ASIDE:

ENCOURAGING COVENANT BETWEEN DAVID AND JONATHAN

A. (:15) David Knew the Danger

“Now David became aware that Saul had come out to seek his life while David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh.”

B. (:16-18) Jonathan Took the Risk of Encouraging David

“And Jonathan, Saul’s son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God.”

III. (:19-29) NARROW ESCAPE #2 – CLOSE CALL IN WILDERNESS OF MAON (BETRAYED BY THE ZIPHITES) – THE LORD CAN PROVIDENTIALLY INTERVENE EVEN WHEN OUR ENEMIES HAVE US SURROUNDED

A. (:19-23) Ziphites Betray David to Saul

B. (:24-29) Lord Providentially Intervenes to Distract Saul at the Last Minute

Roe: They commemorated it. That says something about David and his men's view of their own resources as adequate. They memorialized that place as a worship act to their God, as an altar like Abraham. As Abraham trekked through the land, wherever God appeared to him, he erected an altar. David and his men knew who got them out of that mess, YHWH, and they called it the Rock of Escape, literally "the Rock of Slipperies." They slipped away from Saul.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How does God demonstrate His Sovereignty and His Providential Care by leading us to the very brink of our fears? Why does God allow the pressure to build to the point where it is almost unbearable?

2) Was the Lord angry with David for inquiring a second time (vs. 4) after his men were hesitant to obey the initial command? Was this a lack of faith on David's part or a wise move to check and make sure?

3) Note how the Lord used Abiathar to provide guidance and protection for David and his men. Apart from the awful slaughter of the priests in chapter 22, David would not have had such a valuable resource at hand. How has God caused something in your life that looked very bad on the surface to turn out very good in the end?

4) What memorials have we erected for our families to celebrate the Lord's faithfulness and provision?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh: Jonathan is the Barnabas of the Old Testament. What great encouragers both these men are. In the Book of Acts, Barnabas starts out as the prominent leader, and Saul (the apostle Paul) is but a man whom Barnabas takes under his wing. As time passes, it becomes clear that God has chosen Paul to assume the dominant role. When this becomes evident, Barnabas joyfully accepts this fact and becomes Paul's most loyal supporter.

The same spirit is seen in Jonathan. He is the king apparent, the descendant of Saul whom all expect to rule in his father's place in time to come. Because of Saul's sins, God rejects him as king and designates David as the next king. Jonathan realizes this and, like Barnabas in New Testament times, becomes David's most loyal friend and supporter. When David is in danger and his spirit seems to wane, Jonathan makes his way to and through the wilderness to seek out his friend to encourage him. This he obviously does.

Roe: There is a mountainous range in this wilderness of desert. "The rock" is probably a conelike mountain or mound sitting out in the desert all alone. It would be a beautiful hiding place as long as no one knew you were there, but the Ziphites have told Saul all of the hiding places of David. Everyone of them! Trying to capture a guerrilla band like David's is like hitting a body of mercury. It goes in all directions! Saul needs to get David holed up somewhere, like he had in Keilah, so he can surround him. The Ziphites tell David, "Saul is coming after you," so he heads for this cone where he can hide. No one is going to look for him in the middle of the desert on a barren mountain with very little water, in fact, there is very possibly no water there at all. No pasture either, and 600 men needing food and drink. Ordinarily no one would look there but the Ziphites tell Saul exactly where David is. So there is David holed up, and Saul's got him.

Ryrie: Re city of Keilah – “a city of Judah about 3 miles S. of Adullam, bordered on the territory of the Philistines, who would raid the threshing floors after the Israelites had done the hard work of harvesting and processing the grain. ”

Blaikie: “What wonders cannot faith perform when it gets clear of all the entanglements of carnal feeling, and stands, firm and erect, on the promise of God! How infinitely would such a faith relieve and sustain us in the common troubles and anxieties of life, and in deeper perplexities connected with the cause of God!”

TEXT: 1 Samuel 24:1-22

TITLE: DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE --
THE HUNTER BECOMES THE SITTING DUCK

BIG IDEA:
**HONORING UNJUST AUTHORITY POSITIONS THE RIGHTEOUS FOR
ULTIMATE VINDICATION**

**(:1-3) INTRODUCTION: OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS ... OR IS IT
TEMPTATION?**

Setting the Scene

- A. (:1) Opportunity Knocks Once Again for Saul – His Intelligence Network at Work
“He was told, saying ‘Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi”
- B. (:2) Overkill Should at Least Lead to a Sure Kill
“Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men in front of the Rocks of the Wild Goats.”
- C. (:3) Opportunity Actually Knocks for David
“Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave.”

**I. (:4-7) ONLY A SENSITIVE CONSCIENCE CAN PROVIDE RESTRAINT
AGAINST TEMPTATION**

- A. (:4) Common Sense Can Sometimes be a Bad Spiritual Counselor –
Spiritual Rationalizations for taking matters into your own hands
“you shall do to him as it seems good to you”
- B. (:5) A Sensitive Conscience Always Provides an Extra Dose of Restraint
“David’s conscience bothered him”
The slippery path downward must be checked at the very beginning while you can still retrace your steps.

Gordon: “the tearing of a robe, and especially the hem of a robe, could be a highly symbolic act in the near east. We have already had an instance in 15:27f., where the loss of a kingdom is portended (cf. 1 Ki. 11:30f.). In certain circumstances the grasping or releasing of a hem could indicate submission or rebellion on the part of the person responsible.”

- C. (:6) The Sanctity of the Lord’s Anointed Must Take Precedence Over Personal Ambition and Even Common Sense
“Far be it from me because of the Lord that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord’s anointed.”

- D. (:7) Godly Leadership Can Protect the Impetuous From Grave Error
“And David persuaded his men with these words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul.”

I. (:8-15) DAVID MAKES A STRONG CASE BUT ULTIMATE VINDICATION MUST COME FROM GOD

- A. (:8) Expression of Honor – I will show respect even to an unjust king who is out to kill me.
- B. (:9) Question of Credibility – Why do you believe the lies about me?
- C. (:10-11) Witness of Reality – Obviously, I am not out to harm you.
- D. (:12-15) Judge of Righteousness – God will ultimately vindicate me.

Deffinbaugh: David reminds the king that men can be known by their fruits. In the words of the ancient proverb, David quotes, “Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness” (verse 13). David has done nothing wicked toward Saul, and he assures Saul his hand will not be against him in the future (verse 13). He also reminds the king that his fears about David are exaggerated. David likens himself to a dead dog and to a single flea (verse 14). How can such a great man as Saul, with all his military might, can have such fears about David ?

I. (:16-22) TEMPORARY REMORSE CAN LOOK PRETTY IMPRESSIVE

- A. (:16) Tears of Remorse
- B. (:17-19a) Truths of Justice
- C. (:19b-20) Times are Changing
- D. (:21-22) Terms of Conciliation

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) To what lengths will Satan go to try to disrupt the kingdom of God and His program for the ages? Look at how quick Saul was to go the extra mile to seek after David to destroy him.
- 2) How do we sometimes confuse opportune circumstances with the Lord’s providential leading? Note the type of counsel that David’s men provided. How does

our natural mind work in such circumstances? How does this passage help to refute the modern counsel of “If it feels good do it”?

3) What type of training and knowledge must have informed David’s conscience to get him to respond as he did?

4) Are we content to leave matters in the hands of the Lord as David was?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Davis: “This act brought no great joy to David, for his heart ‘smote him’ in that he had mistreated God’s anointed (cf. v. 5). David recognized that this deed was of his own bidding and not that which was commanded by God. In addition to that fact, David was very sensitive to the sanctity of the throne. As far as David was concerned, Saul was still God’s anointed. Nowhere had the Lord indicated that it was his time to assume the throne. In the light of these facts, David considered his act most inappropriate.”

Gordon: “As king, Saul himself should have been the vindicator of the oppressed – except that he is, in this instance, the oppressor. David therefore appeals to Yahweh for his vindication. In fact, Saul pronounced sentence *against himself* in verse 17.”

Blaikie: “We can hardly think of a stronger temptation ... than that under which David now lay. In the first place, there was the prospect of getting rid of the weary life he was leading, -- more like the life of a wild beast hunted by its enemies, than of a man eager to do good to his fellows, with a keen relish for the pleasures of home and an extraordinary delight in the services of God’s house. Then there was the prospect of wearing the crown and wielding the sceptre of Israel, -- the splendours of a royal palace, and its golden opportunities of doing good. Further, there was the voice of his followers urging him to the deed, putting on it a sacred character by ascribing to it a Divine permission and appointment. And still further, there was the suddenness and unexpectedness of the opportunity. Nothing is more critical than a sudden opportunity of indulging an ardent passion; with scarcely a moment for deliberation, one is apt to be hurried blindly along, and at once to commit the deed.”

Roe: Quotes this poem which appears in Chapter 2 of Ray Stedman's book "The Servant Who Rules, Mark 1-8". It is anonymous:

When God wants to drill a man,
And thrill a man,
And skill a man;
When God wants to mold a man
To play the noblest part,

When he yearns with all his heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall be amazed,
Watch his methods, watch his ways --

How he ruthlessly perfects
Whom he royally elects.
How he hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows, converts him
Into trial shapes of clay

Which only God understands,
While his tortured heart is crying,
And he lifts beseeching hands.
How he bends but never breaks
When his good he undertakes.
How he uses
Whom he chooses,

And with every purpose, fuses him,
By every act, induces him
To try his splendor out.
God knows what he's about.
This is exactly what God is doing with David now.

Roe:

Has it ever struck you that the tragedy of Saul's life is that it is lived in a constant state of tension? He really does love David. There really is a father-son relationship there. Saul is not a degenerate maniac. He is an outstanding man, although admittedly living in his own strength instead of God's, but he really is an outstanding man. He is a far better father than David. He was a great king while he was walking with the Lord. He is a superb general. His own sons love him. His son, godly Jonathan, goes to his death with him. His other sons also stay with him and are killed alongside their father Saul in his last battle. In the midst of his madness, Saul's sons die with their father. What do the sons of David do? They fight among themselves and one son even tries to kill David and take over his throne. Humanly speaking Saul is really an extraordinary man. Tragically though, Saul lives much of his life dominated by the flesh even though he has a godly background. "Saul" means "prayed for." Since his father named him "prayed for," he probably was an answer to prayer. And Saul, in the depths of his soul, really wants to do good, but he is in bondage to the flesh which says, "I come first." "Me, myself and I," the unholy trinity. Have you ever thought about the horrendous tension Saul must have undergone?

Deffinbaugh: In his book, *Spiritual Leadership*, **J. Oswald Sanders** speaks of three principles which govern spiritual leadership:

- Sovereignty
- Suffering
- Servanthood

I believe this dear brother is absolutely right, and that these three principles can be seen in the life of David as God prepares him for spiritual leadership. Let us consider each of the three.

The sovereignty of God is one of the principle factors in David's thinking about leadership as well. God sovereignly raised up Saul as Israel's king. Though Samuel anoints David as Israel's next king, David believes it is God who will remove Saul and that this is not his task. So long as God keeps Saul in power, to lift his hand against Saul is to lift his hand against God. Circumstances may have been favorable for David or one of his men to kill Saul, but David's belief in the sovereignty of God keeps him from doing so.

From the time David is anointed king to the time he is appointed king, David endures a great deal of suffering. Most of his suffering comes from the hand of Saul. David's ascent to the throne is not in spite of his suffering, but by means of it. Suffering is the means by which God prepares David for leadership. And this is no exception. Joseph's suffering at the hand of his brothers prepared Joseph to lead and prepared a way of deliverance for his family. Israel's suffering in Egypt prepared the people of God for the exodus and their life as free men and women. Our Lord's suffering prepared Him for the ministry which He will have as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Our suffering accomplishes exactly the same thing.

David's men are tempting him to shortcut his sufferings and to hasten his rule as king by killing Saul. Their temptation is little different from the temptation of our Lord by Satan in the wilderness at the beginning of his public ministry (see Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-12). We too are tempted to avoid suffering and to get right into the glory, but suffering is God's appointed means of bringing us to glory. David is willing to suffer in order to obey God, even though it seems to be inconsistent with his future reign.

The final factor Sanders describes in relation to spiritual leadership is servanthood. Servanthood and submission are very closely related in my mind. Both are very much involved in God's preparation of David for kingship. A servant is one who faithfully serves another. David is Saul's faithful servant, even when Saul is seeking to take his life. Submission is subordinating your own personal interests to serve another.

David serves his master, Saul, faithfully. His conscience troubles him when he cuts off a portion of Saul's robe. This is not serving Saul faithfully. He refuses to consider killing Saul, or to let his men do so. This is not serving Saul. Suffering is the price David is willing to pay to serve Saul faithfully. Saul is, in a sense, David's enemy, and God has put his life in David's hands. But David believes that in order to do what is good in his sight, he will have to serve Saul, not slay him. And in order to serve Saul, he will have to endanger his own life. So David lets Saul go and then reveals himself to Saul outside the cave. David goes so far as to submissively rebuke Saul, pointing out

that he is not his enemy, and that he has done only good toward him. David never ceases to serve Saul in submission, as long as he is alive and as long as he is God's king. David does "good" toward Saul, as Saul himself confesses, and this David does by suffering at Saul's hand, by serving Saul, and by submitting himself to Saul, looking ultimately to the sovereign God for justice and retribution .

TEXT: 1 Samuel 25:1-44

TITLE: *THE BIG STICK OR WISE RESTRAINT?*

BIG IDEA:

SPIRITUAL LEADERS MUST RESTRAIN THEIR EXERCISE OF POWER TO FOLLOW THE PATH OF DISCERNMENT RATHER THAN IMPULSIVELY RESPONDING TO PROVOCATION

(:1) BACKGROUND

Death of Samuel – note how he was respected by all of Israel

David goes to the wilderness of Paran

I. (:2-13) THE PROVOCATION: INTRODUCTION TO A RICH FOOL (NABAL) AND HIS IMPRESSIVE WIFE (ABIGAIL)

A. (:2) How Rich was This Rich Fool?

- businessmen
- “*very rich*”
- 3000 sheep; 1000 goats

B. (:3) How Foolish was This Rich Fool?

- “*harsh and evil in his dealings*”
- “*a Calebite*” – possibly a reference to derivation of word as = “*dog*”

C. (:3) How Impressive was His Wife?

- “*intelligent and beautiful in appearance*”

How did she end up hitched to a loser like Nabal? Why would her family have arranged such a marriage?

D. (:4-8) David Solicits Deserved Assistance from Nabal

Deffinbaugh: David learns that Nabal is sheering his sheep. When the sheering is done, there is a time of celebration for all the workers, and for anyone else nearby who is not so fortunate. During this festive time, Judah goes up to Timnah, and there manages to get his daughter-in-law Tamar pregnant (Genesis 38:12 -26). At this time of celebration, Absalom persuades David to let his sons come to his home to celebrate, thus enabling Absalom to have his revenge against Amnon by killing him (2 Samuel 13:23 -29). We know that at such times the Law of Moses instructed the Israelites to be generous with those who were not so fortunate (see Deuteronomy 14:28 -29; 26:10-13; Nehemiah 8:10-12). For David to ask Nabal for a gift is not unusual at all. And since David’s men had contributed to Nabal’s well-being and wealth, David’s request is even more reasonable.

E. (:9-13) Nabal’s Foolish Refusal Provokes David into Attack Mode

II. (:14-17) SOUNDING THE ALERT – THE INITIATION OF DISCERNMENT

- A. (:14-16) Conscience Regarding the Right and Wrong of the Situation
 - *“the men were very good to us”*
 - *“They were a wall to us both by night and by day”*
- B. (:14a) Wisdom to Approach the Right Person (Abigail) for Intervention
 - “But one of the young men told Abigail”*
- C. (:17b) Wisdom Not to Approach the Wrong Person (Nabal)
 - “he is such a worthless man that no one can speak to him”*
- D. (:17) Sensitivity to the Gravity of the Situation
 - “evil is plotted against our master and against all his household”*

III. (:18-31) BEGGING FOR MERCY – THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DISCERNMENT

- A. (:18-22) Preparation Meets Opportunity and Immediate Intervention
- B. (:23-31) Humility Seeks Mercy and Long-Term Spiritual Benefit

Deffinbaugh: If Abigail has succeeded in convincing David that killing Nabal will not be worth the effort, she now presses on to show David how taking vengeance will be detrimental to him. She begins by pointing out that the Lord has restrained David from shedding blood and from avenging himself by his own hand (verse 26). Is she referring to this very moment, or is she speaking of the way God kept David from avenging himself against Saul, one chapter earlier? I am not certain on this. But with these words she does indicate that the hand of God is in all of this, that God is restraining David from shedding innocent blood and from avenging himself. She expresses her certainty that if David leaves vengeance to God, God will deal appropriately with Nabal, as with all others who seek evil against David.

IV. (:32-35) RESTRAINING REVENGE – THE HEEDING OF DISCERNMENT

It took a lot for such an important man like David to be willing to listen and learn from the wife of someone he despised.

Roper: This is quite a speech that Abigail makes. In essence she is saying, "David, you're wrong." In fact she says, "David, what you are doing is evil. You're trying to save yourself, trying to avenge yourself. You're trying to seek your own rights, and what you're doing is not right. When you become king this will haunt you, it will live in your conscience to the end of your days. You see, David, your life is bound up with the

life of God. The battle that you are fighting is God's battle; the life that you're living is God's life. And God will take care of his own. You don't need to fight yourself, and you don't need to defend yourself; God will defend you. Let him. Don't take vengeance on your enemies, let God take vengeance." That is quite a strong rebuke - coming from an unknown woman to a man who is soon to be king of Israel.

V. (:36-44) RESOLUTION FROM THE HAND OF GOD – TYING UP THE LOOSE ENDS

A. (:36-38) What Was the End Result for Nabal

“it happened that the Lord struck Nabal, and he died”

Roe: “Now, notice what Abigail does not do. She does not desert her husband. She does not deceive her husband. She goes right back to her old abusive, hard, unteachable, irascible, evil Nabal, instead of running off with David.

...

The Abigail principle does not give you the right in the New Testament to go out and deliberately do something against your husband's wishes, knowing that you have usurped his place of headship. In the New Testament you are to submit to your husband in everything-, as to the Lord, trusting the Lord to deal with your husband as Abigail did. She went back and lived with Nabal as his wife. She went back to spend the rest of her years with a man who was going to be abusive and angry and hostile to her. She did not run off with David or run home to mother. She went back to her husband, willing to accept whatever the consequences were of her actions, for YHWH's sake.”

B. (:39-40) What Was the End Result for David

1. Worshipped God

2. Proposed to Abigail

C. (:41-42) What Was the End Result for Abigail

“became his wife”

D. (:43-44) Aside: David's Marital Status

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What was Nabal's motivation for refusing David and his men assistance? Why did David assume that Nabal would help them and why did he react so strongly to the rejection?

2) What principles about a wife submitting to her husband can be gleaned from this passage? Did Abigail overstep her bounds in some areas? Where is she to be

commended? In terms of progressive revelation, how much more accountable are we today for such doctrines that have been more fully developed in the NT?

3) What contrasts can you draw from this passage between wisdom and foolishness?

4) What did Abigail mean in vs. 31 by her exhortation that David in later years “*When the Lord shall deal well with my lord, then remember your maidservant*”? Do you think she harbored any hope of some day being David’s wife?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh: David is somehow willing to deal with the treatment Saul hands out, but not with the insults of Nabal. Why? I think we may have a clue. First, Saul is David’s superior, in terms of authority. David is Saul’s servant. He is willing to take unfair treatment from his superior. Second, David has been promised the kingdom, once Saul is out of the picture. David can handle abuse from Saul because he knows that before long he will fill Saul’s vacated throne.

Nabal is not David’s superior, and he does not at all like the treatment he receives from him. Furthermore, David is not thinking or acting as a man of faith when he sets out to kill Nabal and all the males in his household. David expects an immediate “return” on his “investment” of serving Nabal. He expects the reward to come from Nabal, now. He is not looking for a heavenly reward, then.

How many of us minister to others with a measuring stick in our hands? We are willing to love and serve others sacrificially, but with a certain set of expectations. We expect that sacrificial love and service should be reciprocated. When in return for our doing good, our neighbor gives us evil, like David, we get hot under the collar and look for some way to retaliate. We forget that, like Christ, our words and deeds may bring about persecution and suffering, rather than approval and gratitude. Our reward in heaven will be great, but there may be no such rewards on earth. Let us be careful to do our good works as to the Lord, looking to Him for our reward, and not the recipients of our sacrificial service. David may have learned here that the problem with acting like a servant is that people begin to treat you like a servant. It is one thing to serve in order to be promoted; it is something quite different to serve to be demoted.

Roe: Nabal not only turns David down saying, "Who is David?" (a national hero a few years back), but also "'Who is this son of Jesse?', this poor family with no background? He is just a slave running away from his master, and there are a bunch of those all over the place." In fact, a lot of David's men may well be exactly that. If you remember, his force is made up of "discontents," men in debt, those who are "bitter of soul." So Nabal may even be making an allusion to the kind of people David is running around with. Nabal deliberately is going out of his way to insult David. Why? Because it will ingratiate him with Saul. He chooses sides. He takes the expedient way, but unfortunately he runs into a redheaded Jew.

...

What is David's problem? Ego. His pride has been injured. It is not the welfare of his men that bothers him, although he is undoubtedly going to take care of them by taking a number of Nabal's sheep. The trouble is David's ego has been crushed, and you just do not shaft David especially in front of others. All his life he has been the runt of the litter. All his life people have stepped on him. All his life he has had this resentment, this hostility, building up in him. Someday he is going to get even, and here he has four hundred skilled guerilla warriors armed with iron weapons which they have taken from the Philistines at Keilah. Nabal only has a household with a few weapons and relatively few servants. It is going to be a total slaughter. David is going to get even for all the things that have happened to him down through the years.

Roper: Now, in the Scriptures a fool is not necessarily a man who acts ignorantly or foolishly, as we use that term. He is a man who has rejected the truth about God. As you read Proverbs you discover that there are only two kinds of people in the world: wise men, and fools. Wise men are people who respond to the truth of God in obedience. They fear God and they let the truth live in their lives. Therefore they are wise. It has nothing to do with their intelligence or education; it is a moral issue. They are wise because they behave according to the truth. But a fool is a man who has rejected the truth. That is why the Psalmist says, "The fool has said in his heart 'There is no God.'" It is not an intellectual issue; it is a moral issue. He had not made room for God in his heart.

...

There is another thing we need to notice here. In verse 22 David thanks the Lord and thanks Abigail because he has been kept back from bloodshed and from saving himself. Then in verse 34 he mentions that the Lord God of Israel has restrained him from harming both her and her household. David was restrained. He learned at this point, I believe, to let the Lord control him. He recognized that he wasn't free to do as he pleased. He couldn't run amok, he couldn't redress the things which had been done against him. He had to count on the Lord, and the Lord disciplined and restrained and controlled him. And for David, that was the most valuable lesson he could learn, because he could not reign as a king until he had learned to let God reign in his own life. He learned this lesson from Abigail, and I believe that this was a pivotal point in David's life.

Blaikie: The revengeful purpose and rash vow of David were not the result of deliberate consideration; they were formed under the influence of excitement, -- most unlike the solemn and prayerful manner in which the expedition at Keilah had been undertaken. God unacknowledged had left David to misdirected paths. But if we blame David, as we must, for his heedless passion, we must not less admire the readiness with which he listens to the reasonable and pious counsel of Abigail. With the ready instinct of a gracious heart he recognizes the hand of God in Abigail's coming -- this mercy had a heavenly origin; and cordially praises Him for His restraining providence and restraining grace. He candidly admits that he had formed a very sinful purpose; but he frankly abandons it; accepts her offering, and sends her away in peace.

TEXT: 1 Samuel 26:1-25

TITLE: *WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING – HIGH STAKES GAMES – WHO REALLY DESERVES TO DIE?*

BIG IDEA:

THE UNJUSTLY ACCUSED FUGITIVE REFUSES TO TAKE MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS WHILE EXPOSING THOSE WHO ARE TRULY GUILTY

(:1-5) INTRODUCTION: HIDE AND GO SEEK – THE ONE HIDING TURNS OUT TO BE THE ONE SEEKING

- A. (:1) Reconnaissance Report from the Ziphites
“Is not David hiding on the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?”
- B. (:2-3A) New Search Expedition Led by Saul
“to search for David in the wilderness of Ziph” with 3000 men
- C. (:3B-4) Intelligence Gathering by David
“David sent out spies, and he knew that Saul was definitely coming.”
- D. (:5) Personal Surveillance by David
“And David saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner”

I. (:6-12) CAPTURE THE FLAG – SNEAK ATTACK YIELDS SIGNIFICANT TROPHIES

- A. (:6) Challenge of Faith (Courage) – Who will Volunteer for this Dangerous Mission? Ahimelech or Abishai?
“Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?”
- B. (:7-8) Golden Opportunity or Gilded Temptation?
“Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand”
- C. (:9-11) Practical Theology – David has learned his lessons well
 - 1. (:9) Sanctity of the Lord’s Anointed
“Who can stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed and be without guilt?”
 - 2. (:10) Vengeance Belongs to the Lord – both in terms of Type and Timing
Possible Options Foreseen by David in Faith:
 - a) Immediate Judgment -- *“surely the Lord will strike him”*
 - b) Natural Resolution -- *“or his day will come that he dies”*
 - c) Violent End -- *“or he will go down into battle and perish”*

No positive outcomes foreseen here; David had a confidence in the Lord's justice

3. (:11) Restraint of Revenge and Focus on the Mission at Hand

a. Restraint of Revenge

"The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed."

b. Focus on the Mission at Hand

"but now please take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water, and let us go"

(Spear = sign of authority – **Davis**)

D. (:12) Providential Protection

"they were all asleep, because a sound sleep from the Lord had fallen on them"

II. (:13-16) PIN THE TAIL ON THE DONKEY – IF THE SHOE FITS WEAR IT – HUMILIATION OF ABNER

A. (:13) Platform for Placing Blame

"Then David crossed over to the other side, and stood on top of the mountain at a distance with a large area between them"

B. (:14) Calling out Abner and His Soldiers

"And David called to the people and to Abner"

C. (:15-16) Condemnation of the Guilty vs. Vindication of the Righteous

1. Condemnation of the Guilty – exposing their evil motivation

"This thing that you have done is not good. As the Lord lives, all of you must surely die"

2. Vindication of the Righteous

"see where the king's spear is, and the jug of water that was at his head"

Proof sufficient of David's righteousness

III. (:17-20) CLUE -- FAIR OR FOUL? – DAVID PLEADS HIS INNOCENCE

A. (:17) Recognition of David by Saul

"Then Saul recognized David's voice"

B. (:18) Rebuke for Unjustified Pursuit of David by Saul

"Why then is my lord pursuing his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand?"

C. (:19a) Reasoning Regarding Primary Motivation – 2 Options

1. Motivation coming from the Righteous Indignation of the Lord??

Answer is Sacrifice --

"If the Lord has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering"

2. Motivation coming from the jealousy and wickedness of men ??

Answer is "Let them be cursed" --

"but if it is men, cursed are they before the Lord"

D. (:19b) Result in David 's Life has Been Drastic –

both in terms of Material Deprivation and Spiritual Stress

1. Material Deprivation

"for they have driven me out today that I should have no attachment with the inheritance of the Lord"

2. Spiritual Stress

"saying, 'Go, serve other gods.'"

E. (:20a) Request for Common Sense and Justice to Prevail

"do not let my blood fall to the ground away from the presence of the Lord"

F. (:20b) Reminder of the Futility and Absurdity of Continuing to Chase After David

"The king of Israel has come out to search for a single flea, just as one hunts a partridge in the mountains."

IV. (:21-25a) SORRY – SAUL ADMITS HIS FOLLY

A. (:21) Proclamation of Sorrow by Saul

1. Admission of Sin

"I have sinned"

2. Plea for Restoration of Relationship

"Return, my son David"

3. Promise of Future Security

"I will not harm you again"

4. Acknowledgment of David 's Righteousness

"because my life was precious in your sight this day"

5. Confession of the Severity of the Offense

"Behold, I have played the fool and have committed a serious error"

B. (:22) Path of Cautiousness by David

"Behold the spear of the king! Now let one of the young men come over and take it."

David was in no hurry to take Saul at his word and personally hustle over to return the spear.

C. (:23-24) Preaching of Divine Justice and Divine Providence by David

1. Divine Justice

“And the Lord will repay each man for his righteousness and his faithfulness”

2. Divine Providence

“may He deliver me from all distress”

D. (:25a) Prophecy of Blessing Imparted by Saul

“Blessed are you, my son David; you will both accomplish much and surely prevail.”

(:25b) CONCLUSION:

“So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do you think David came into the camp in anger intending to kill Saul and then repented and changed his mind, or do you think David all along was restrained in his actions and only intended to make his point before Saul and Abner? Why did David give back the spear but apparently keep the water jug?
- 2) Was it wise for David to publicly humiliate Abner in the way that he did?
- 3) Why such a strong connection between the geographic land of Israel and the opportunity to worship the one true God? Why did David equate making him a fugitive with forcing him to seek after other gods?
- 4) What lessons from the life of Saul do we learn about the difference between worldly sorrow and genuine repentance?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Roe: Notice David's humanness. He has just had a tremendous spiritual victory, but he cannot resist just one little jab. Now, David can not coarse talk Saul because in Exodus 20, Scripture says you are not allowed to revile God or curse the ruler of your people . However, it says nothing about cursing the General of your people. So David has a little proxy vengeance here. He goes way over on the other side of the hill and holds up the spear and the jug of water. The jug was right by Saul's head as was the spear. He takes

this opportunity to taunt Abner, the man who has been harassing him. This is a very tactical error. (Abner is now commander of the king's army. David used to be commander of Saul's army. Possibly there was rivalry between them even then.) Abner is quite a general, and David causes him to lose face in front of 3,000 of his troops. Abner is an oriental. How do you think Abner is going to respond? Poor old David just can not resist this kind of thing. When David, upon Saul's death, becomes king of Judah, Abner takes the remaining son of Saul, Ishbosheth, and with the ten northern tribes sets up his own kingdom in opposition to David. He does not return to David until Ishbosheth insults him and he loses face in Israel. Only then does he deliver Israel to David. David's little indulgence here may well have kept him from becoming king of all of Israel for several years. When you have a spiritual victory, don't push your luck. The retribution of God is always there. When you disobey God you will pay for it somewhere down the line. I think this incident is one of the basic reasons Abner refused to allow the ten tribes of Israel to join with Judah. under David as king.

Deffinbaugh: Re similarities / differences between chaps. 24 and 26 – 2 separate incidents --

This is much like what the author of 1 Samuel is doing in chapter 26. In chapter 24, David is conscience-smitten because he has cut off a portion of Saul's robe. While David does many things right in dealing with Saul in chapter 24, he fails to consistently apply the same principles in his dealings with Nabal in chapter 25. It is only after he is gently rebuked by Abigail that David leaves vengeance to God and gives up his plan to execute Nabal, along with all his male servants. In chapter 26, we find David in circumstances similar to those in chapter 24. I believe God is giving him another chance, a chance to "do it right." And that he does, as we shall see. The similarities of chapters 24 and 26 inform us that David gets a second chance. The differences between the two chapters tell us how well David did, the second time around .

...

David has come for Saul's spear and water container, and that is all. So he takes up Saul's spear and water jug, instructing Abishai to come along with him. I can see Abishai shaking his head as they make their way back through that maze of bodies surrounding Saul and finally slip into the safety of darkness. "That was a suicide mission! All that only to take a spear and a water jug." Whether they knew it or not, the author of our text informs us that this was not just a stroke of good luck, or even a good military maneuver. God had miraculously put these 3,000 men to sleep. David and Abishai could have been yelling at each another (Is it possible they were?), and no one would have awakened. Abishai could have stumbled and fallen upon a couple of these soldiers, and they still would have been safe. I wonder how many times in history men have assumed they had a really close call, or they did a spectacular job at some task, without ever knowing that behind it all was the hand of God .

...

If David has grown spiritually after the events of chapter 24, and this growth is evident in chapter 26, we must conclude that Abigail plays a significant role in this. The things David affirms as true in chapter 26 are the very things about which Abigail assures him. If David has any doubt that he will become the next king, Abigail assures him he will reign over Israel (25:30). Though David wants to take vengeance on his enemies (i.e.

Nabal), Abigail reminds him that God will better handle such matters, and that leaving this to God will keep David from any regrets (25:31). Does David fear for his life ? Abigail assures him that his life is safely in God's hands (25:29). It is said that behind many great men, there is a great woman. Certainly that was true of David and Abigail.

Do some scholars agonize that chapter 26 is too similar to chapter 24? It is similar, because it is a kind of replay of chapter 24. When God wants to teach us a lesson, if we fail to learn that lesson through one experience, God will continue to bring experiences our way which confront us with the same basic test. I think the reason there is a second incident in chapter 26, so similar to the one described in chapter 24, is that God wanted David to retake the same test so that he received a higher score .

Rick Gillespie-Mobley:

Saints, there are plenty of opportunities which are going to come your way, but it's not God's will for you to take them. Some come as a test, others as a temptation. You may think, I can't pass up this opportunity. Let me ask you this, if you take the opportunity will you be drawn closer to God? Will you be sacrificing your family because of no time or energy to give them? Will you be selling a little piece of your soul because of some compromise you have to make. If something is of God, God does not require you to sacrifice part of your relationship to him. Part of our problem is we think of what is convenient rather than what is best.

. . .

This was the last time King Saul pursued David, but it was not because of a change on Saul's part. David went to the land of the Philistines and Saul was afraid to pursue him in Philistine. Not long afterwards King Saul lost his life in the battle with the Philistines. God being faithful and true to His word, He made David King over Israel without David having to murder anyone to obtain the position.

Blaikie: "David doubtless parted from Saul with the old conviction that kindness was not wanting in his personal feelings, but that the evil influences that were around him, and the fits of disorder to which his mind was subject, might change his spirit in a single hour from that of generous benediction to that of implacable jealousy."

TEXT: 1 Samuel 27:1-12

TITLE: *OUT OF BOUNDS*

BIG IDEA:

DESPAIR FUELS DESPERATION RESULTING IN A LIFE OF DECEPTION

(:1) INTRODUCTION: DESERATE MEASURES

A. David Driven by Despair –

1. Defeatist Thinking

“Now I will perish one day by the hand of Saul”

Saul has been the one frustrated thus far; why should David give up on the Lord’s protection? Apparently David has just tired out of the discipline of living a moment by moment type of faith walk.

2. Limiting Your Options

“There is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the Philistines”

B. David Driving Saul to Despair as He Justifies His Actions

1. Rationalistic Justification

“Saul then will despair of searching for me anymore in all the territory of Israel”

2. The End Justifies the Means

“and I will escape from his hand”

No sign of David inquiring after God in this passage; no waiting upon the Lord for guidance; no evidence of faith; no clinging to God’s promises; It is always a problem when one leaves the promised land without explicit divine command

I. (:2-7) SETTING UP CAMP OUTSIDE OF THE PROMISED LAND (IN THE MIDST OF THE ENEMY)

A. (:2a) Heading Out of Bounds Puts Lives in Jeopardy

“So David arose and crossed over, he and the six hundred men who were with him”

B. (:2b-3) Living with the Heathen Contradicts God’s Design of Holiness

“And David lived with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each with his household”

“David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess”

C. (:4) Accomplishing His Short-sighted Objective Provides David with a False Sense of Security

“Now it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, so he no longer searched for him.”

D. (:5-7) Negotiating for a Piece of the Pie Secures a Strategic Foothold

“let them give me a place in one of the cities in the country”

II. (:8-9) STRATEGIC GUERRILLA ATTACKS TO BENEFIT JUDAH

A. (:8) Effective Base of Operations for Strategic Guerrilla Attacks

“Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites and the Girzites and the Amalekites”

B. (:9a) Ruthless Tactics Required Because of His Deception

“did not leave a man or a woman alive”

C. (:9b) Valuable Spoils of Victory

“and he took away the sheep, the cattle, the donkeys, the camels, and the clothing.”

III. (:10-12) SELLING THE DECEPTION TO THE ENEMY

A. Achish Asked the Right Questions

“Where have you made a raid today?”

B. Achish Lacked Objective Evidence

And David did not leave a man or a woman alive, to bring to Gath, saying, “Lest they should tell about us, saying, ‘So has David done and so has been his practice all the time he has lived in the country of the Philistines.’”

C. Achish Believed the Lies of David

“So Achish believed David”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What type of defeatist thinking enters our mind – despite all that God has done for us in His grace and His providence in providing for us and protecting us?

2) Do we ever get tired of trying to follow the Lord and just lay aside any efforts at seeking Him and take matters into our own hands? What has been our experience in those times?

3) Was David justified in such a wholesale slaughter of the enemy – were they truly under “the ban” or was this excessive in this case?

4) What impact, if any, do you think David ’s two wives had on his decision making during this period of time?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Jeffries: Quoting Irving Jensen:

a. This is the fourth type of "refuge" David has sought.

(1) In 19:18-24 he had fled to the home of Samuel in Ramah. There he found true refuge in the Word of God, which he celebrated in Psalm 119, believed by many Bible scholars to have been composed by David during this time.

(2) In 21:10-15 we read of David’s brief visit to the Philistine city of Gath, before King Achish. His uneasiness at being on the very soil of Israel’s bitter rivals convinced him that he had placed himself at great personal risk, and he feigned madness in order to effect his escape.

(3) Much of the rest of the book refers to David’s seeking refuge in any number of deserts, most likely in hopes that the vast expanses of wilderness into which he fled deeper and deeper would separate him from Saul. It is clear, however, that Saul always found David in these places, sometimes being tipped off by locals who were willing to turn the "outlaw" in.

b. Now in Chapter 27 it appears that David has reached his emotional limit. Weary of being hounded, convinced that Saul will not give up his relentless pursuit, David seems to have decided to flee Israel permanently, returning to the land of the Philistines.

(1) He and his entire army -- along with their families -- are said in v.2 to have "settled" there.

(2) Saul is so convinced that David is gone for good that in v.4 he finally ends his chase.

(3) David again goes before King Achish, this time to request a "permanent" place of refuge within his territory. Achish, seemingly convinced that David has, indeed, become an authentic exile, gives his entourage the town of Ziklag, where, we read in v.7, David remained for _____ months, until the death of Saul.

(4) "David’s faith in God was at a low ebb to utter such words as those of 27:1. He was running away from God, and it was of the mercy of God that he was not consumed.

The Ziklag experience of David was dark indeed. Throughout it all we do not once hear him mention God. Not once is there a song on his lips. Not once do we hear of the priest or the prophet or David consulting with God. Let each child of God take solemn warning. When clouds gather around, and faith is beginning to weaken, let us not in sudden panic 'speedily escape into the land of the Philistines,' but rigidly and persistently continue to trust in the Lord with all our heart, and wait patiently for Him."

- **Irving Jensen**: I & II Samuel: A Self-Study Guide

Roe: David was getting tired of being chased around the wilderness. He began to tire of God's total provision. He wanted to have this thing over with. He wanted to be out from under the pressure, to be free from the possibility of death, to be free from the constant tension of sleeping with one hand on his sword and one ear listening for the special task force, run by a mad man, designed to get him. These were very normal, natural desires. In themselves there was nothing wrong with them, but he needed to get back to Judah, out of Moab, where he could learn that God would be his shield; that God would be his "exceeding great reward" as God had told Abraham. God was committed to David becoming king of Israel. He had anointed him to replace Saul, not to be slain by Saul, and David knew that. So his desire to get out from under the pressure may have been normal and natural but it was wrong. The Philistines were the one outfit that seemed to be holding their own against Saul, so, David figured that was the place to go to ease the pressure. Things had been seesawing back and forth. The more Saul pursued David, neglecting his kingship, the more the Philistines moved onto the frontiers and took over the land. David was just plain tired of going through the process of what God calls "boot camp," being honed, chafed, molded, "disciplined" in Hebrews 12, into the image and likeness of God, into a man after God's own heart. He wanted out. So, he said to himself, "I think I'll escape over into the territory of the Philistines."

...

David, to save his own skin, exposes six hundred men and their families to the paganism of the Philistines after he had just pleaded with Saul [chapter 26, verse 20], "Don't let me be chased out of the country. Don't let my blood fall to the ground away from the Lord." He wanted to be where he could worship his God. The tabernacle, of course, was where the Jews worshipped their God. But now David is willing to pay any price, no matter how it will influence his people or how it will influence their children, as long as he can stay alive.

Deffinbaugh:

You can imagine that David, his 600 fighting men and all their families, must have made quite an impact on Gath. It is not out of consideration for Achish or Gath that David makes a request of the king, however. David approaches Achish with a request. He asks if he can be given a city where he and his followers and families can live that is not under foot. It seems a reasonable request, and so Achish gives David the city of Ziklag. This city is 25 miles or so to the south and east of Gath. It is somewhat out of the way, from a Philistine perspective, and not all that distant from Israelite cities. It gives David and his followers a "place of their own," in an area where David's activities will not be monitored by Achish. It is something like moving far enough away

from your in-laws to have a life of your own. David dwelt in Philistia a year and four months, but the town of Ziklag becomes a permanent possession of the Israelite kings (verses 6-7).

...

About this time, David must be mentally patting himself on the back: "It can't get any better than this." David does not have to hide out in the desolate "God forsaken" wilderness areas of Israel; he can freely go anywhere he wants, with respect. He can even drop in on the king. He does not have to "beg" for a handout for his men, but rather can live high on the spoils of his raids. He does not have to fear that the Israelites will betray him; he frequents Israelite villages and towns, bringing their leaders presents from the spoils of war. And if Saul will not deal with the enemies of Israel who surround this nation, David will. David seems to have the best of both (Israelite and Philistine) worlds. And so it appears, but not for long. The chickens, as we say, are about to come home to roost.

Davis: "David was suspicious of permanently residing near or in the royal court of Achish and requested a territory of his own in the countryside (v. 5). This he did so he would be free from the constant surveillance to which he would be exposed in the capital city. Also, David probably wanted freedom to observe his own religious rites. David's decision also may have involved his attempt to protect his followers from assimilation with Philistine religious ideas and customs. The fact that David was accepted by the Philistines probably indicates that he was similar to the typical Habiru of Canaan. Also, it is entirely probable that Achish was in desperate need of reinforcements following his encounter with King Saul (cf. 23:27-28),"

TEXT: 1 Samuel 28:1-25

TITLE: *PHYSIC HOTLINE: LOOKING FOR GUIDANCE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES*

BIG IDEA:

FEAR OF THE FUTURE INTENSIFIES WHEN ONE LOSES ALL CONNECTION WITH THE LORD AND TURNS INSTEAD TO PHYSICS

(:1-2) INTRODUCTION: PERILOUS PROMOTION = BIG TIME CONFLICT OF INTEREST

(More of an Aside in preparation for future dilemma than an Introduction to Saul 's hitting rock bottom in Chap. 28)

- Achish impressed by David 's exploits and skill in warfare
- Achish determined to secure David 's loyalty and keep better tabs on him
- Achish requires David and his men to fight with the Philistines in upcoming battle against Israel
- Achish makes David his own personal bodyguard for life

I. (:3-7) PROPHETIC INSIGHT REPLACED WITH PAGAN FORTUNE TELLING

A. (:3) Tremendous Void in Prophetic Resources

1. Godly Resources -- Prophet Samuel no longer around

"Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him and buried him in Ramah his own city."

2. Pagan Resources – Fortune Tellers Removed

"And Saul had removed from the land those who were mediums and spiritists."

Roe: "First, Samuel, Saul's last pipeline to Yahweh, who will not answer Saul, is dead. Secondly, apparently to cultivate Samuel, he destroyed all mediums and all wizards in Israel. Any person in Israel who either practiced occultism, or even went to someone who did, was to be slain. Both the Deuteronomy and Levitical teachings were very definite. God did not want any of them in the land. They were both defiling and detestable to Jehovah. And so Saul obeys God, apparently in order to curry favor with Samuel. He does remove from the land the mediums, the wizards, the witchcraft and the necromancers, those that raise the dead. So now here he is without Samuel as the pipeline to God and without an occult system to find out about the future. "

B. (:4-5) Tremendous Need for Prophetic Resources

1. Philistines and Israel gathered together for Battle

"So the Philistines gathered together and came and camped in Shunem"

“and Saul gathered all Israel together and they camped in Gilboa”

2. Saul Shaking in His Boots

“When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly.”

Did Saul know that David and his men were included in with the ranks of the Philistines? Did this cause him even greater consternation?
(Deffinbaugh)

C. (:6) All Connection with the Lord Has Been Lost

“When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets.”

D. (:7) Saul Contradicts His Own Convictions in Seeking a Medium

“Seek for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.”

Wants to talk to one who can make connection with the dead in a type of séance.

cf: Exodus 22:18

Leviticus 19:31; 20:27

Deuteronomy 18:9-14

Deffinbaugh: Problem: The Philistines are camped in Shunem; Saul and the Israelite army are camped in Gilboa. En-dor is approximately eight miles north of Gilboa, and to get there, Saul has to go around the Philistines.

II. (:8-19) FORTUNE TELLING CAN CONVEY A HARSH DOSE OF REALITY -- SAUL'S WORST FEARS CONFIRMED

(We are used to nice platitudes in our fortune cookies; or innocent sounding horoscopes)

A. (:8-14) Connection Established with Samuel Through the Reluctant Medium

1. (:8) Saul approaches medium in disguise (acting with bad conscience)

“Then Saul disguised himself by putting on other clothes, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night”
- did not want the medium to recognize him
- did not want his fellow Israelites to know what he was doing

2. (:9) Medium is fearful of prosecution

“Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?”

3. (:10) Saul grants immunity (directly against the law of God)

“there shall no punishment come upon you for this thing”

4. (:11-14) Connection established with Samuel

a. (:11) Saul Requests Connection with Samuel

“Bring up Samuel for me”

b. (:12) His Identity as King Saul Exposed
“Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul.”

c. (:13-14) Appearance of Samuel
“And Saul knew that it was Samuel”

B. (:15-19) Communication of God’s Judgment Confirms Saul’s Worst Fears
God’s message stays the same ... He is true to His Word --

1. (:15-16) Confirmation that God has Departed from Saul
“the Lord has departed from you and has become your adversary”

2. (:17) Confirmation that the Kingdom has been Transferred to David
“for the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David”

3. (:18) Vindication of the Lord’s Justice
“As you did not obey the Lord and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, so the Lord has done this thing to you this day.”

4. (:19) Prophecy of Impending Doom – both personally and for the nation
“Moreover the Lord will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. Indeed the Lord will give over the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.”

III. (:20-25) PERILIZING FEAR CAUSES ONE TO BECOME DYSFUNCTIONAL

A. (:20) Panicky Fear Hits Immediately
“Then Saul immediately fell full length upon the ground and was very afraid”

B. (:21) Temptation to Trust in the Flesh
Don’t Kill the Messenger – Instead, Trust me and let me Help you ...
Medium Wants Saul to put confidence in the Flesh ...
“I have taken my life in my hand, and have listened to your words which you spoke to me”

C. (:22-25) Distraction of Futile Provision of Physical Hospitality
(But physical comfort and compassion cannot alleviate the spiritual dysfunction)

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Was God making a huge effort to give Saul a last chance to repent by bringing back Samuel from the dead to communicate with him, or was the demon really in charge in this interchange? Was there any opportunity for Saul to repent at this point or was he already too hardened in his heart and God was just communicating His judgments?
- 2) What types of fortune telling and witchcraft and spiritism exist today ? What other Scriptures give insight into how much God hates such demonstrations of the occult? Do we really see the danger in such interactions?
- 3) Why would Saul even request to hear from Samuel, God 's prophet, if he had no intention of changing his heart to truly confess his sins and repent?
- 4) Was the medium making a legitimate attempt at hospitality out of compassion for Saul and a desire to escape repercussions on herself, or is the medium a type of the temptation to trust in the flesh?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Jeffries: Quoting **Kenneth Chafin:**

“This story is a classic example of a person who has rejected God’s guidance. When he suffers the consequences of his action, he is without resource or help. Saul had ‘made his bed,’ but now he didn’t want to ‘sleep in it.’ We live in a society that does not see the relationship between our decisions and what happens to us. Even the religious community seems to feel that, no matter what we do with God’s instructions for our lives, at any moment we can repent and turn to God. Naturally He will not only forgive us but will relieve us of the consequences of our actions. God does forgive graciously, and grace causes our relationship to be restored, but that does not mean that we can start afresh without having to live with the results of our action.

For Saul to be forced to go into battle alone was nothing more than the natural results of his decisions and actions."

- Kenneth Chafin: 1, 2 Samuel

Roe: If God cannot reach you with the love of God, he will try to reach you by the wrath of God. As we go through this chapter, I want you to look at it as God's last attempt to reach Saul. Look at it not for the wrath of God, but for the wrath of God used as an instrument of the grace of God. God really wants Saul to change his mind. He does something here he has never done in Scripture before. He brings back a man from the dead. In Luke 16, Christ tells of a rich man living a lavish life while Lazarus, a poor beggar, lies in front of his gate wishing for even the crumbs from his table. The beggar is a believer The rich man is not. They both die. The rich man is in Hades in torment. Lazarus is in Abraham's bosom, a picture of Paradise. The rich man begs to

have Lazarus come over, dip his fingers in water and put it to his lips for he is in torment. But Abraham says, "I'm sorry he can't do that. 'Remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things, but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed.' We cannot cross over to you if we would, and you cannot cross over to us if you would." So the rich man said, "Then I beg you send Lazarus back from the dead to warn my five brothers so they don't come here." Abraham said, "They have Moses and the Prophets," (The same law of God that Saul had). The rich man says, "No, if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." Abraham says, "No, they won't. If they will not repent because of Moses and the Prophets, they will not repent even if a man comes back from the dead." It is my personal belief that in this story Jesus is referring to the incident with Saul which we are about to study. I am not saying that the Word of God teaches this, just that it is my personal belief.

...

Saul has two basic problems. One is a deep terror of the future and the second is a deep physical weakness. Now, here is the compassionate flesh in action. The flesh has an amazing ability to come in just at the right moment with just the wrong answer and just the wrong focus. Saul is totally wiped out. It is his one chance to cry out to God in terror, in anguish, in weakness and hopelessness and throw himself on the mercy of God. God would have responded just like that. But in comes the flesh.

...

What does the flesh always try to appear like when it comes to rescue you? Yes, a friend, a helper, a loving companion, someone whose arm goes around you. It's you. It's good ole Bob the Slob back again, and we've been together for years.

Don't ever kid yourself that the flesh comes to you with "Evil" stamped across its forehead. Satan never does anything like that. Satan masquerades as an angel of light in the service of a ministry of righteousness and appears right at the wrong time, at the crucial moment, looking good, but always focusing on the wrong thing. Saul has a spiritual need and a physical need and what does the "maidservant" focus on? His physical need., and she offers her credentials. What are her credentials?

Well, look at them, they are good. "Your maidservant has obeyed you," and secondly, "I have taken my life in my hand for you," and " 'I have listened to your words which you spoke to me.' I have credentials that show you I can help you. I've been on your side all along Now, because I'm on your side, please listen to me. I'm with you. Let's get something to feed your body so you can get up and go out of here and go to your destiny," which, of course, is down the tube. But we'll do it with strength and vigor! If you are going to walk in the flesh, at least walk well. We giggle, but that is the terrible tragedy. We feed the flesh and make it strong and healthy so it can destroy us. If we would crucify it, cut off its source, it would wither, but no, we feed it.

Deffinbaugh: The woman now appeals to Saul to listen to her and take her advice. After all, this is the least he can do for her when she has risked her life for him. She pleads with the king to let her fix him something to eat, something to give him strength enough to be on his way. He refuses. His appetite is gone. Both the woman and Saul's servants

prevail upon him to eat, not because he is hungry, but because he must regain his strength to return to his camp. Like the father of the prodigal son, the medium of Endor kills and prepares the fatted calf (see Luke 15:22-24, 29), but it is not for a feast of celebration, nor because the prodigal has repented and returned. It is more like a wake. She slaughters the calf and prepares it, along with some bread. The king eats, and then goes out into the night. It is the darkest day of Saul's life so far, but an even darker day is yet to come -- the next day -- when Samuel's prophecies are fulfilled.

...

Saul started out all right, but very quickly became careless about obeying God's commandments. Even when rebuked for his sins, he does not fully repent, and thus a repetition of his sins is inevitable. Given Samuel's prophetic declaration in chapter 15, we should hardly be surprised to find Saul seeking divine guidance by means of a medium. If a person finds God's commands repulsive, he also finds them easy to cast aside. Is it any wonder that such a person eventually turns to witches, mediums (or a number of other means of obtaining guidance), when such people "direct" them in the way they really wish to go in the first place (compare 2 Timothy 4:3-4)? We see that the end of Saul's life is tragic, but it should not be surprising. It is the logical outcome of the path he has chosen to walk.

Chris Appleby: Well, Saul isn't bored, but he is desperate. He can't find a prophet who can tell him what God wants him to do. So he resorts to a medium to try to contact Samuel for one last piece of advice. It's ironic isn't it, that when Samuel was alive, Saul took little notice of what he told him, but now that Samuel is dead Saul is willing to risk the anger of the Lord in order to seek his advice.

Davis: What, then, was the purpose of God in bringing Samuel back for this appearance? This unusual act on the part of God was certainly designed to emphasize the doom of Saul and God's displeasure for his coming to a necromancer. **Robert Jamieson** suggests three additional reasons:

- (1) To make Saul's crime an instrument of his punishment.
- (2) to show the heathen world God's superiority on prophecy, and
- (3) to confirm a belief in a future state after death.

TEXT: 1 Samuel 29:1-11

TITLE: *RELEASED FROM THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA*

BIG IDEA:

GOD CAN MAKE A WAY OF ESCAPE WHEN THERE SEEMS TO BE NO WAY

(Popular song: “God Can Make a Way”)

(:1-2) INTRODUCTION: BACK TO THE BATTLEFIELD / MARSHALLING THE TROOPS / STAGING AREA

A. (:1) Philistines Lining Up Against the Israelites

1. Philistines

“Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek”

“And the lords of the Philistines were proceeding on by hundreds and by thousands”

2. Israelites

“while the Israelites were camping by the spring which is in Jezreel”

B. (:2) David is the Wild Card

“David and his men were proceeding on in the rear with Achish”

- Dilemma for the Philistines:

Will David be loyal to Achish and aid in the battle or will he ambush the Philistines from behind as a turncoat?

- Dilemma for David

Will he be a traitor to his homeland and fight against his God or will he arouse suspicion on the part of Achish and be put to death?

I. (:3-5) DISAGREEMENT AMONG THE PHILISTINE WAR COMMAND -- THE REPUTATION OF DAVID AROUSES SUSPICION ON THE PART OF THE PHILISTINE WAR LORDS WHO PRESSURE ACHISH TO SEND DAVID PACKING

A. (:3a) Shock of Philistine Commanders Upon Seeing David and His Men in such a Strategic Role (bringing up the rear)

“What are these Hebrews doing here?”

B. (:3b) Naiveté (Blind Trust) of Achish Defending His Decision

“Is this not David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, who has been with me these days . . . and I have found no fault in him from the day he deserted to me to this day?”

C. (:4-5) Demand of Philistine Commanders that David not be Trusted

1. Responded to Achish in Anger

“But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with him”

2. Demanded that David and His Men be Sent Packing

“Make the man go back, that he may return to his place where you have assigned him, and do not let him go down to battle with us”

3. Cited the Hero Reputation and Cult Following of David among the Israelites

“Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands”

4. Feared David as a Potential Formidable Adversary

“lest in the battle he become an adversary to us”

II. (:6-10) DECEPTION WINS OUT OVER NAIVETE (BLIND TRUST) IN THE MIND GAME BETWEEN DAVID AND ACHISH

A. (:6-7) Achish Diplomatically Dismisses David

1. Achish Has No Problem with David

“you have been upright, and your going out and your coming in with me in the army are pleasing in my sight; for I have not found evil in you from the day of your coming to me to this day”

2. His Commanders Have Huge Problems with David

“Nevertheless, you are not pleasing in the sight of the lords”

3. Pragmatic Decision

“Now therefore return, and go in peace, that you may not displease the lords of the Philistines”

B. (:8) David Shrewdly Protests His Loyalty

1. Check Out My History with You

“But what have I done? And what have you found in our servant from the day when I came before you to this day”

2. How Can You Deny Me This Opportunity

“that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?”

C. (:9-10) Achish Refuses to Reconsider the Decision

1. If it were up to Achish no problem

“I know that you are pleasing in my sight, like an angel of God”

2. He has decided to yield to the demands of his commanders

“nevertheless the commanders of the Philistines have said, ‘He must not go up with us to the battle.’”

(:11) CONCLUSION: DAVID AND HIS MEN EXIT THE BATTLEFIELD

“So David arose early, he and his men, to depart in the morning, to return to the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How does deception entangle us further and further so that our options are limited and we seem unable to extricate ourselves?
- 2) Why does Achish use expressions that sound like he has some type of affinity with the God of David?
cf. *“As the Lord lives”* (:6)
“like an angel of God” (:9)
- 3) Why was there such a strong difference in perception as to how David was viewed? What was blinding Achish’s eyes to the truth?
- 4) Was Achish wise to yield to the overwhelming judgment of his subordinate commanders?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Davis: David was very diplomatic in his response to the words of Achish, for quickly to agree with Achish’s command would be to raise questions concerning his loyalty to the Philistine cause. But to object to it too vigorously might lead to engagement in the Philistine battle with Israel which would place him in a most awkward position indeed! Thus, very diplomatically, David reacted with surprise and indignation that his loyalty should be questioned. Inwardly he certainly must have rejoiced at the deliverance from the dilemma in which he found himself (v. 8). The mild reaction of David satisfied Achish that David was truly an ally, but he continued to remind David that while he was a man without guilt he still could not participate in the Philistine battle.”

Deffinbaugh: The author departs from a strictly chronological order in these chapters. In chapter 28, we find the Israelites encamped at Gilboa, while the Philistines are at Shunem (28:4). This is quite far to the north and the scene of the actual battle between these two armies (see 31:1). But in chapter 29, the Philistines are gathered at Aphek, while the Israelites are at Jezreel. This is considerably south of the sight described in chapter 28, which means that the events of chapter 29 precede those of chapter 28. The author has purposefully departed from the chronological order of events to a more thematic order. He is more interested in making his point than providing us with a

chronological time line. It would seem that the author's intent is to alternate between Saul and David so as to continually contrast these two men.

Max Frazier, Jr.: Talk about being in a tight spot. That was David. Here was the future king of Israel, anointed by God, heading north with the king of the Philistines to do battle against the nation over which he was to be king. How could he battle against the armies of Israel? And yet, if he turned and ran the Philistines would attack him as being a traitor. Ever found yourself between a rock and a hard place? Ever been in a situation where it seemed that any choice you made would be the wrong choice? How many times have we witnessed the power of God coming to our rescue. Although David had curried favor with the Philistine king, he had not really endeared himself to the other Philistine leaders. They still viewed David with suspicion. So, when the time for battle drew near, God moved in their hearts to ask David to withdraw from the battle. Their motives were selfish. They did not want David to be given the opportunity of turning against them. Yet, in their selfishness, they were being used by God to answer that ache within David's heart. David found that God does provide a way of escape, sometimes it is a literal escape, when temptations appear to overtake us. We just need to wait in patience before Him. God will make a way even when there seems to be no way. Praise the Lord !

Arthur Pink: Wondrous are the ways in which God preserves His saints. Many a one has been withheld from that success in business on which he had fondly set his heart: it was God delivering him from those material riches which would have ruined his soul! Many a one was disappointed in a love affair: it was God delivering from an ungodly partner for life, who would have been a constant hindrance to your spiritual progress! Many a one was cruelly treated by trusted and cherished friends: it was God breaking what would have proved an unequal yoke! Many a parent was plunged into grief by the death of a dearly loved child: it was God, in His mercy, taking away what would have proved an idol. Now we see these things through a glass darkly, but the Day will come, dear reader, when we shall perceive clearly that it was the preserving hand of our gracious God thus dealing with us at those very times when all seemed to be working against us.

The above meditations have been suggested by what is recorded in 1 Samuel 29. At the close of our last chapter we saw how mercifully God interposed to deliver His servant from the snare of the fowler. Through his unbelief and self-will, David found himself in a sore dilemma. Seeking help from the ungodly, he had placed himself under obligation to the king of Gath. Pretending to be the friend of the Philistines and the enemy of his own people, David was called upon by Achish to employ his men upon the attack which was planned against Israel. Then it was that the Lord interposed and preserved the object of His love from falling into much graver evil. He now graciously made "a way to escape" (1 Cor. 10:13), lest His poor erring child should be tempted above that which he was able.

<http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/David/david.htm>

TEXT: 1 Samuel 30:1-31

TITLE: *WHEN GOD IS FOR US WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?*

BIG IDEA:

OUR GREATEST TRAGEDIES OFTEN ARE GOD'S TESTING GROUND TO PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR GREATEST TRIUMPHS

(:1-2) INTRODUCTION: SACKING OF ZIKLAG WHILE DAVID WAS AWAY

“Then it happened when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had made a raid”

Chestnut: Depending on how it is handled, a crisis can either make us or break us.

1. Illust. The Chinese do not have an alphabet as we know it. Rather than letters, words are represented by symbols. They have an interesting word -symbol for "crisis." It is a combination of the symbols for "danger" and "opportunity."

2. What is a crisis?

- a. CRISIS: "A stage in a sequence of events at which the trend of all future events is determined" (Random House College Dict.)
- b. Everyone experiences times of crisis:
 - 1) Graduation from high school (job, college, marry, Armed Forces?)
 - 2) Laid off/quitting a job with nothing in sight.
 - 3) Discovering a member of family has a drug/alcohol problem.
 - 4) Having your husband/wife die; discover they are unfaithful.
- c. Some people become STRONGER in these experiences; others WEAK.
 - 1) WHY? Not what happens. How we DEAL with what happens!
 - 2) POINT: How we react in moments of crisis will largely determine whether such events MAKE/BREAK us.

I. (:3-6) DAVID FINDS STRENGTH IN THE MIDST OF IMMENSE TRAGEDY AND BITTER OPPOSITION

A. (:3) Tragedy of Immense Proportions

“And when David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive.”

Not taken captive by any nice, civilized group but by a barbaric bunch of thugs.

B. (:4) Grief of Immense Proportions

“Then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep.”

Remember, this was a rough and tough bunch of 600 men with some checkered past histories; not a group easily overcome by emotion and not easily given over to weeping.

- C. (:5) Personal Side to This Tragedy and Grief – as it touched David
“Now David’s two wives had been taken captive, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite.”
- D. (:6a) Bitter Opposition From His Own Troops
“Moreover David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters.”
How did David handle the distracters and the opposition that will rise up against all strong leaders at some point?
- E. (:6b) Turning Point: *“David Strengthened Himself in the Lord his God”*
How do we do this in our walk with the Lord? Study the Psalms to get some insight from David into this whole process.

II. (:7-10) DAVID TURNS TO THE LORD FOR GUIDANCE

- A. (:7) Utilizing the Proper Resources
1. Priest
“Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech”
 2. Ephod
“Please bring me the ephod”
- B. (:8) Specific Inquiry and Prompt Response
1. Specific Inquiry
“And David inquired of the Lord, saying, ‘Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?’”
 2. Prompt Response
“And He said to him, ‘Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them’”
 3. Bonus Pledge
“and you shall surely rescue all.”
God is so gracious to answer beyond our wildest expectations.
This was not just going to be a revenge mission, but a successful rescue mission.
- C. (:9-10) Intense, Strenuous Pursuit
1. Started out with full contingent of 600 men
“So David went, he and the six hundred men who were with him, and came to the brook Besor”

Apparently David was able to rally all of the troops behind his continued leadership ... despite their grumblings and bitterness.

Deffinbaugh: “Hot Pursuit, Cold Trail”

2. 200 Tired out and had to be left with the baggage
“for two hundred who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor, remained behind”

III. (:11-15) ESSENTIAL INTELLIGENCE OBTAINED FROM A MOST PROVIDENTIAL SOURCE – AN ABANDONED, HALF-DEAD AMALEKITE SERVANT

Problem: The Amalekites had too big of a lead; could not be tracked successfully just by David and his men. They needed some outside intelligence to guide them to the camp of the enemy.

- A. (:11a) Providential Discovery of a Possible Guide
An abandoned, half-dead Amalekite servant
“Now they found an Egyptian in the field”
- B. (:11b-12) Nursing Him Back to Life
“then his spirit revived. For he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights.”
- C. (:13-14) Interrogation by David
“To whom do you belong? And where are you from?”
- D. (:15) Win-Win Proposition
 1. David led to the camp of the Amalekites
“Will you bring me down to this band? ... I will bring you down to this band.”
 2. Egyptian has his life spared
“Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master”

IV. (:16-20) THE SLAUGHTER OF THE AMALEKITE RAIDING PARTY ACCOMPLISHED A COMPLETE RESCUE AND ACCUMULATED EXTRA DIVIDENDS

- A. (:16-17) Slaughter of the Amalekite Raiding Party – 24 Hour Blood Bath
“David slaughtered them from the twilight until the evening of the next day”
- B. (:18-19) Complete Rescue – Providential Safekeeping

“So David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and rescued his two wives. But nothing of theirs was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that they had taken for themselves; David brought it all back.”

C. (:20) Extra Dividends – Leadership of David Recognized and Rewarded

“So David had captured all the sheep and the cattle which the people drove ahead of the other livestock, and they said, ‘This is David’s spoil’”

III. (:21-31) EQUITABLE AND STRATEGIC DISTRIBUTION OF THE SPOILS OF VICTORY

A. (:21-25) Equitable Distribution to All 600 Men – Giving God the Credit for the Victory

“For as his share is who goes down to the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike.”

B. (:26-31) Strategic Distribution as Presents to Key Leaders in Judah

“Behold, a gift for you from the spoil of the enemies of the Lord”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How did the discovery of the sacking of Ziklag burst David’s bubble of feeling that everything was going his way and that he didn’t really need to depend on the Lord but could rely on his own powers of persuasion and deception? Have we ever needed a drastic wake-up call?

2) Compare how the Amalekites treated their captors with how David and his men destroyed everyone (men, women and children) in their conquests of the outlying Philistine camps. Do you think David in his wildest dreams thought that he would recover everyone and everything that had been taken?

3) How quick is God to respond positively to David once David turns from reliance upon the flesh to seek after Him with his whole heart? What does this teach us about God’s patience and grace and forgiveness?

4) How does David overcome the pettiness and selfishness of those who participated in the victory by pointing their attention to giving God the glory? How did this help establish a new code of conduct that was maintained down thru the years?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Chestnut:

- A. In **Howard J. Clinebell's** book, *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling*, there is a chapter, "Crisis Counseling."
1. Clinebell: One of the most productive things a counselor can do for someone in a crisis is to prevent them from making rash decisions.
 2. Isn't that the greatest danger in a crisis?
- B. "Non-constructive" (WRONG) responses to crisis:
1. Deny that a problem exists ostrich approach.
 2. Evade the problem drugs, alcohol.
 3. Refuse to seek help "handle it myself"
 4. Blame others for your problems society, genes, upbringing
 5. Fail to explore possible solutions "won't work anyway"
- C. "Constructive" (RIGHT) responses to crisis:
1. Face the problem.
 - a. Cancer Learn more about it.
 - b. Adultery Vent hurt feelings.
 2. Accept responsibility for the problem.
 - a. Even if not your fault What can I do about this?
 - b. Separate changeable from the unchangeable.
 3. Seek help.
 - a. Talk to others about it.
 - b. May even involve professional help.
 4. Explore ways to deal with the problem.
 5. Take steps, however small, to handle problem constructively.

Davis: "When David returned to Ziklag, he took a large portion of the spoils which he had recovered and sent it to the elders of Judah and to friends in various cities. This was an important move on David's part because it re-established contacts with the leaders of Judah. His act was perhaps a way of expressing gratitude for the protection they had afforded him in the hills of Judah when pursued by King Saul. Such an act would also be a means of demonstrating his loyalty to the people of Judah. This was made necessary because of his long association with the Philistines (a year and seven months). Among the towns to receive goods from David was the town of Hebron which was to become the capital of his first kingdom (v. 31)."

Blaikie: "Complaining men are generally selfish men. They objected to David's proposal to share the spoil with the whole body of his followers. Their proposal was especially displeasing to David at a time when God had given them such tokens of undeserved goodness. It was of the same sort as the act of the unforgiving servant in the parable, who, though forgiven his ten thousand talents, came down with unmitigated ferocity on the fellow-servant that owed him an hundred pence."

Deffinbaugh:

We must remember the physical and mental condition of these men. They have just traveled nearly 60 miles from Aphek back to Ziklag, no doubt pressing hard to get home as soon as possible. They can rest up at Ziklag, once they arrive, or so they think. Then, finding their loved ones kidnapped, their cattle stolen, and their city destroyed by fire, they weary themselves weeping (verse 4). Now they are off in hot pursuit of the enemy. The enemy raiding party has a substantial lead, and the trail is getting cold. They can easily disappear into the wilderness. If they are to be overtaken in time to rescue their loved ones, David and his men must move quickly.

I imagine David and his men are marching double time. As time passes and the heat of the sun works on David and his men, they grow weary. When they come to the brook Besor, a third of the men simply cannot go on. They have plenty of motivation – their families are in danger, and they want to be there to rescue them – but they simply do not have the strength to continue on. Two hundred men collapse there by the brook, unable to press on. Even if they do go on, they will only slow the rest down. David and the other 400 men press on, leaving much of their gear behind with the 200 so that they can move faster and expend less energy .

...

David does not let these wicked men prevail. He takes the initiative in dealing with their demands and handles them very well. 169 He refuses to allow these men to have their way, while showing them why they are wrong in what they demand. Consider David's reasoning.

(1) They have not earned these spoils, as they suppose. The victory and the spoils are a gracious (and thus unmerited) gift from God. God gave these spoils, as He gave the victory. How then can these men claim the spoils, as though they earned them?

(2) The victory is a team victory, and the team is greater than 400 in number. When David employs the word us, it seems clear he includes all 600. "God gave the victory to us," David argues, "to the whole 600 men, and not just to the 400."

(3) David's 600 men are all brothers (verse 23). This is not just a collection of individuals; it is a brotherhood. These 600 men are a family. When the Amalekite raiders return to their camp, everyone in the camp celebrates in the victory; everyone shares in the spoils. Should David's men do any less?

(4) The battle is a team effort, with each member playing a different role. Just because 200 stayed behind does not mean they had no part in the victory. They stayed with the baggage (as I understand it, the baggage of the 600 men), and thus they contribute to the victory as well. Their victory is a collective victory, and so every man should have an equal share of the spoils.

TEXT: 1 Samuel 31:1-13

TITLE: FINISHING POORLY

BIG IDEA:

DEFEAT, DEATH AND DESECRATION MARK THE END OF THE LINE FOR THE BACKSLIDDEN KING OF ISRAEL

I. (:1-6) TRAGIC DEATH OF SAUL AND HIS SONS

(only partial story told here; need to read 2 Sam 1 for the rest of the story)

A. (:1-3) Setting – Saul Defeated and Brought to the Point of Death

1. (:1) Philistines defeating the Israelites on Mount Gilboa

“Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa.”

2. (:2) Philistines killing Saul’s sons (including Jonathan)

“And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua the sons of Saul.”

3. (:3) Philistine sniper archers taking out Saul

“And the battle went heavily against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was badly wounded by the archers.”

B. (:4-6) Death of a Dynasty

1. (:4) Saul falls on his sword

“Saul took his sword and fell on it”

2. (:5) Armor bearer falls on his sword

“And when his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died with him.”

3. (:6) Saul’s 3 sons and all his men die as well

“Thus Saul died with his three sons, his armor bearer, and all his men on that day together.”

II. (:7-10) HUMILIATING DESECRATION OF SAUL AND HIS SONS

Don’t overlook the religious element in this mutilation of the bodies and public display. Weapons and armor displayed as trophies in their temples of idolatry.

A. (:7) Run out of Dodge! -- Occupation of Israelite Cities by Philistines

“And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley, with those who were beyond the Jordan, saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and sons were dead, they abandoned the cities and fled; then the Philistines came and lived in them.”

B. (:8-10) Off With His Head! -- Display of Captured Trophies

1. (:8) What a find!

“And it came about on the next day when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa.”

2. (:9a) Cut Off His Head

“And they cut off his head”

put it in the temple of Dagon (1 Chron. 10)

3. (:9b-10a) Displayed His Weapons

a. Military Victory -- *“stripped off his weapons”*

b. Political Victory -- *“sent them throughout the land of the Philistines, to carry the good news to the house of their idols and to the people”*

c. Religious Victory -- *“And they put his weapons in the temple of Ashtaroth”*

4. (:10b) Displayed His Body

“they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan”

III. (:11-13) HEROIC RETRIEVAL/BURNING/BURYING OF SAUL AND HIS SONS

A. Heroic Retrieval

“all the valiant men rose and walked all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan”

B. Burning of the Bodies (because of the desecration)

“and they came to Jabesh, and burned them there”

C. Proper Burial of the Bones

“And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh”

D. Appropriate Mourning

“and fasted seven days”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How did this tragic end for Saul and his sons fulfill Samuel’s prophecy back in

28:19?

2) Why did the Lord allow Jonathan to be killed despite his loyalty to David?

3) Why was the armor bearer hesitant to take Saul 's life? Was Saul wrong to try to take his own life and spare the embarrassment of additional Philistine indignities? What other details from 2 Sam. 1 help to fill out the story recorded here? Which story is to be believed?

4) How does our disobedience and rebellion give the enemy opportunity to gloat and to drag down the name of God? How can we make the glory of God our passionate pursuit?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Blaikie: "Saul seems never to have been deficient in personal courage, and in the course of the battle he and his staff were evidently in the very thickest of the fight. ...

The spirit of vaunting, which had so roused David against Goliath because he defied the armies of the living God, appeared far more offensively than ever. Not only was Israel defeated, but in the view of the Philistines Israel's God as well."

Davis: "The men of Jabesh-gilead had not forgotten Saul 's intervention on their behalf at an earlier period of time (1 Sam. 11). In addition to that, it should be remembered that some of the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead were Benjamites by marriage after the great Benjamite War as described in the later chapters of the book of Judges. . .

In the classical sense, Saul could not be called a great king, but that his achievements were many is clear from David 's exquisite elegy recorded in II Samuel 1. Whatever military and judicial victories may have been attributed to Saul, they are overshadowed by his tragic spiritual failures."

Gordon: "A different version is given by the Amalekite youth who reports Saul 's death to David in 2 Samuel 1:6-10, but there is every reason to think that the Amalekite was trying to do himself a favour by telling David what, as he thought, would earn his commendation."

Deffinbaugh: "Clearly the author of our text is choosing to focus on Saul more than on his sons or the nation Israel. For example, we are not told how Jonathan dies, although we would very much like to know and although we would expect him to die like the champion he was, fighting to his last breath. Before we look at the way Saul dies, let us pause to recall that when Saul is killed, many Israelites also die, and many other Israelites turn and flee, as we are told in verse 7. Those on the other side of the valley and across the Jordan (who are not the focus of the Philistine attack) see the defeat of

Israel and the death of Saul and his sons, and know there is no hope of defeating the Philistines. They flee for their lives, abandoning their cities, which the Philistines then occupy. This great defeat not only reduces the size of Israel's army, it reduces the size of Israel. . . .

It is not a matter of coincidence that Saul is killed by the hands of the Philistines (28:19) and by the hand of an Amalekite (28:18). A kind of poetic justice is described here. Saul is reaping what he himself has sown. He is killed by uncircumcised hands because God said this was the way he would die. No matter how hard Saul tries to change his destiny, he cannot succeed at thwarting God's will or His word. Is his death not one more attempt to disobey God, one final act of rebellion? Like the first, Saul's second request that his enemies not make sport of him is denied. First, Saul is hit by a number of Philistine arrows, which literally drain the life out of Saul. His slow, agonizing death is not a pretty sight. Saul does not go out looking good. After Saul is dead, his armor is stripped from his body and his head cut off. The Philistines must really enjoy this. And then they take Saul's armor and his head and parade them around their cities, taking them into the temple of their god. All of this mocks not only Saul, but his God. The final indignity for Saul is that his body, along with the bodies of his sons, is fastened to the wall of Bethshan. The indignities Saul suffers in death could hardly be worse . . .

God's word is absolutely reliable. God will do as He has promised. He will deal with sin and rebellion in judgment; He will deal with trust and obedience in blessing. Saul is removed from his throne and from life; David is preserved from Saul's plots and soon installed as king of Judah (and then of Israel). Before the first man ever sinned, God declared that the penalty for sin was death (Genesis 2:16 -17). From that point on, God has spoken clearly to men with respect to sin. His word not only defines sin, it spells out the consequences for sin – death (Romans 3:23; 6:23). God gave Saul time to repent, but he did not. And so his death came to pass, even as God had said. If you have never trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation, God is now giving you opportunity to repent. You may, like Saul, choose to use this time for repentance as the opportunity to add to your sins. But be assured, your sins will find you out. The wages of sin is death. If you repent, by acknowledging your sin and trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation, you will have eternal life. Be assured that God's promises – both of judgment and of salvation – are certain. Saul reminds us of this truth.”

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