

Saul: A Flock of Sheep for a Kingdom

1 Samuel 15:13-15

13 Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD." 14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" 15 And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; NKJV

Saul has been described as the greatest tragedy in the Old Testament. Very few men had the opportunity that Saul did. And Saul came close but his character was flawed. No matter how much he tried he could not fulfill God's plan for his life.

In our text this morning we find the final straw that brought him down. But we probably need to find out how this all started and where Saul went wrong. And along the way if you try hard enough, you might find yourself in these pages. If you do, you do not need to end up like Saul, unless you follow his path.

- I. Saul Chosen as King
 - A. Samuel was the judge over Israel.
 - B. But his sons were corrupt.
 - C. The people asked God for a king like the other nations around them.
 - 1. They wanted someone to fight their battles for them.
 - 2. They were really rejecting God as their king.
 - 3. So Samuel warns the people of the potential abuses of having a king.
 - 4. But the people would not be persuaded.
 - D. God brings Saul to Samuel
 - 1. Saul thinks he is looking for his fathers donkeys
 - 2. But God has different plans.
 - 3. Finally, being in Samuel's neighborhood, they decided to visit the prophet and see if he would ask the LORD to help them find the donkeys.
 - 4. While they are alone Samuel anoints Saul as king over Saul's objections.
 - a. Saul started out being humble, not desiring so great an honor.
 - b. But he had been drafted by God.
 - 5. But Saul does not tell anyone, not even his family.

- E. Samuel calls all the people together to proclaim Saul as king.
 - 1. They perform an ancient method of drawing straws until Saul's family is chosen and finally Saul himself, but he cannot be found.
 - 2. So they enquire of the Lord where he is and God tells them that he is hiding in among the supplies.
 - 3. Once again Saul is anointed king and the crowd calls out God save the king.

II. The Rescue of Jabesh

- A. The city had been attacked by the Ammonites and were requesting help from anyone who would .
- B. Saul reacted like a true king, treating this as an emergency of the first magnitude.
- C. Saul sends out the call and gathers an enormous army and defeats the Ammonites and rescues the city.
- D. King Saul showed great magnanimity in an occurrence that day. At Saul's original coronation, certain people had opposed his appointment as king. Today, the entire nation came to be Saul's supporters, and they called for the death sentence against those who had opposed Saul earlier. But before anything could be done, Saul nullified their verdict, saying no one would be put to death during the celebration of a great victory given by the LORD.
- E. The people of Jabesh never forgot their debt to Saul. Decades later when Saul was killed in battle and his body desecrated by the enemy, the brave men of Jabesh risked their lives to retrieve his body and give him an honorable burial.

III. Saul's First Disobedience

- A. Later when the Philistines become a threat to the people Saul once again sends out the call but does not get the same response.
- B. The Philistines also hear about the call to arms and they assemble a large army to fight with the Israelites.
- C. The prophet Samuel had made arrangements to meet Saul at a certain time, to offer sacrifices and ask the LORD's blessing on this military venture.
- D. But as the time passed Israel's soldiers, seeing the brewing crisis and the king's worried state, began to go AWOL.
 - 1. Saul, seeing his army evaporating before his eyes, panicked.
 - 2. Rather than trust the LORD for victory, he decided he needed to stop the loss of manpower.
 - 3. So, without waiting for Samuel to arrive, he offered the sacrifices himself.

- E. Just as Saul was finishing, Samuel arrived.
 - 1. Saul tried to make excuses for his violation, but Samuel replied that because of Saul's disobedience, the LORD would remove him from being king, replacing him with “a man after [God's] own heart.”

IV. Saul's Foolish Order

- A. Jonathan with great trust in God takes his armor bearer and begins to rout the enemy.
 - 1. God helps by sending an earthquake.
 - 2. Soon some Israelites who had joined themselves to the Philistines saw what was happening and they turned on the Philistines.
 - 3. Also in all the confusion the Philistines began to attack each other.
- B. Saul follows suite.
 - 1. When Saul sees the possibility of victory he pronounces a curse on anyone who would stop to eat anything before sundown.
 - 2. Jonathan is not aware of the curse and stops to eat some honey that the forest is filled with all around him.
- C. Later when it is revealed what Jonathan has done, Saul tries to have him put to death but the soldiers will not allow it since God had worked with Jonathan that day to bring such a great victory.

V. Saul's Downfall Foretold

- A. Later Saul graduated from ignoring the LORD to outright disobedience.
- B. God sent the prophet Samuel to King Saul with a mission.
 - 1. The LORD's assignment to Saul was: attack the evil Amalekites; destroy them completely, taking no survivors and no plunder.
 - 2. God gives Saul a great victory however, Saul kept the Amalekite King Agag alive as a trophy, and his soldiers, following his example, kept much Amalekite livestock as plunder.
- C. At this disobedience, the LORD spoke to Samuel, saying he regretted making unfaithful Saul king. Samuel lay awake all night, bitterly crying to God for the disaster that was coming on Saul.
- D. The next day Samuel found Saul, who greeted him saying, “I have performed the commandment of the LORD.”
 - 1. Samuel answered, “If you obeyed the LORD, what are all these animals here for?”

2. Saul made excuses, but Samuel was firm against all his arguments
3. Even if Saul sacrificed all those animals, as his excuse claimed, it wouldn't undo his act of rebellion.
4. Obedience is precious to God.

Saul starts out so well but falls because he decides to go without God.

Then he turns to outright disobedience.

He gave more importance to his plans than to God's.