

# CONCERNING THE WAY

September 24, 2008

## LESSON 31: ISRAEL: 1 SAMUEL



### Introduction

*This lesson continues 1 Samuel, and we'll go over chapters 9 through 15, which mainly has to do with Israel's first king, Saul. Have you ever wondered why God chose Saul as the first king, and then rejected him? We'll see in this lesson an example to us of a believer who seemed to be good outwardly, seemed to obey God, but didn't have his heart right.*

*Dusty Rhodes*

In chapter 9 we will encounter the anointing of Saul, the first incumbent of the office. Legalists love Saul and can't stand David. Legalists have never understood why God rejected Saul when he didn't commit any immoral sin, when Saul was a man who was righteous in many different ways; he was loyal, he was moral, he was an outstanding citizen, and God rejects him and picks up a man who was a murderer, an adulterer, a man who was a gorilla fighter, a man who was in charge of a band of hoods for years on end, and this man is the one that is said to be acceptable to God. Why? It's because Saul, in his soul, had negative volition and a learned behavior pattern of self-righteousness.

Saul has a hard time admitting that he's wrong. He is a self-righteous proud individual and as a result he is bounced from the office. Saul does commit a lot of sins but they're all mental attitude sins and no one ever sees those. So from the outward appearance Saul is a very wonderful person. David had few mental attitude sins. Most of David's sins just happened to be overt where everybody could see them so he comes out on the losing end of the comparison whereas Saul's sins are internal. But both men obviously did not live up totally to the Law. Here again are the verses in Deuteronomy describing God's instructions for a king:

**Deuteronomy 17:14-15** *When you come to the land the LORD your God is giving you and take it over and live in it and then say, "I will select a king like all the nations surrounding me," (15) you must select without fail a king whom the LORD your God chooses. From among your fellow citizens you must appoint a king — you may not designate a foreigner who is not one of your fellow Israelites.*

So he has to be one that "God chooses." Why does God get in the process of choosing kings? Whose law is it that is to be enforced by the king? God's law, and therefore God is interested in the one who's going to carry out the enforcement of the law. Maybe you've never prayed this way before for our government, but think about that when you start looking in the New Testament and you read 1 Timothy 2 where you are commanded to pray for the people in authority and power, pray that God has a right leader for this country. God has certain individuals that will be the best under the situation to execute judgment; don't pray for a great personality, pray for the man that in God's sight will execute God's laws and will introduce God's standards. That is the man to pray for.

So in this chapter God chooses the first king. If this is to mean something that will help you in your Christian life and not just go down as an interesting little tale, then you should look at the lives of Saul and David in ways that you can apply to your Christian life today. There are a lot of things about these men that are interesting, hundreds of details. And there's no way on earth that I can possibly emphasize all the details that are there in the text. All we can do is select some. So in this reconnaissance, so to speak, through Saul and David and this section of the Old Testament, I have selected those details that emphasize one theme and the theme is the difference between the good life and the spiritual life. Or, the difference

between human good and divine good because I think this is the contrast between these two men that the Holy Spirit would have us understand and apply in our own lives.

These two men are going to try to fill this office of king, and they fill it to some degree but never totally, and they're going to be measured in their personal lives by how well or how poorly they fit this office. And David's a lot better fit than Saul is. And so we want to look at why a man of Saul's capabilities, his leadership, his background, could be so fantastic and fail this office.

We're going to study why God chose a man whom God knew in advance would not fill the office. This has created consternation in some people's minds as to whether God was mixed up when He did it. If you'll recall the principle of Romans 15:4 this should not cause confusion in your mind. You should understand that what God is doing here is playing ball with history in such a way that the sequence of Saul to David is going to be for our benefit. Now, God was just in doing this because He didn't tamper with Saul's volition; Saul could have chosen to submit to God in all areas of his life and he could have fit the office. History has been designed to reveal God's grace. God takes a man that fits the world's description of what a king should be and then He shows us that is not the kind of man that He has in mind.

**1 Samuel 9:1-2** *There was a Benjaminite man named Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin. He was a prominent person. (2) He had a son named Saul, a handsome young man. There was no one among the Israelites more handsome than he was; he stood head and shoulders above all the people.*

Saul came from a prominent family. He had all of the right qualifications, he came from what we would call upper class material; he was a man with the proper upbringing. He came from a family that had long established roots in the land, they were a reputable family, they were known throughout the land for their wealth and their power and yet they were not known in any immoral way at all. They were known as good solid citizens. And so he would be welcomed to most political circles; if any political party can get a man from a prominent family not only do they have the wealth of the family at their disposal but they also have the reputation of the family at their disposal; so the first thing to understand about Saul is his family.

What verse 2 is telling us is that this man was personally fantastic to behold. He had a tremendous physique, he was very tall, and when he faces Goliath later on, you have to understand that Saul is the giant of Israel, that's the point of that story. And the author is trying to point out is that David's a runt, Goliath is the giant of the Philistines and Saul is the giant of the Israelites. And the giant of the Israelites is cowering and then this little runt comes trotting out with his slingshot.

So Saul had family qualifications and he had personal qualifications. In the next verses Kish's donkeys run off and he sends Saul out to find them. Saul searches high and low and travels a long distance without finding them. I guess you could say that Saul couldn't find his donkeys with both hands! He ends up going to the town where Samuel is, to ask him if he knows where the donkeys are.

**1 Samuel 9:15-16** *Now the day before Saul arrived, the LORD had told Samuel: (16) "At this time tomorrow I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin. You must consecrate him as a leader over my people Israel. He will save my people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have looked with favor on my people. Their cry has reached me!"*

Verse 16 is going to be important later on because God declares something that Saul will do and here we have the doctrine of God's sovereignty and the doctrine of eternal decrees. If people would understand this they wouldn't have any trouble with eternal security. Here's the point, when God chooses an instrument to do a job, the instrument always does the job. Now Saul is going to blow it, as far as the office is concerned, but Saul will accomplish what is said in verse 16, whether Saul obeys the Lord in other areas of his life or

not. God has sovereignly said Saul will be the man to deliver His people from the Philistines and Saul will do it. The end of verse 16 should be an encouragement for those of you in prayer, this shows you that God does hear and He's affected, really and truly, by prayers made by believers. Here's one of those little verses that says I've changed My mind because I've heard the voice of My people, the implication being that had He not heard the voice of His people He would not have looked and not have taken this step.

**1 Samuel 9:17-20** *When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said, "Here is the man that I told you about! He will rule over my people." (18) As Saul approached Samuel in the middle of the gate, he said, "Please tell me where the seer's house is." (19) Samuel replied to Saul, "I am the seer! Go up in front of me to the high place! Today you will eat with me and in the morning I will send you away. I will tell you everything that you are thinking. (20) Don't be concerned about the donkeys that you lost three days ago, for they have been found. Whom does all Israel desire? Is it not you, and all your father's family?"*

## Chapter 10

**1 Samuel 10:1** *Then Samuel took a small container of olive oil and poured it on Saul's head. Samuel kissed him and said, "The LORD has chosen you to lead his people Israel! You will rule over the LORD's people and you will deliver them from the power of the enemies who surround them. This will be your sign that the LORD has chosen you as leader over his inheritance.*

This is the classic text for anointing, this is the text in all of God's Word that defines what it means to be the Christ. Notice some things about verse 1. First, oil in the Bible always is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. And do you remember what happened when Jesus Christ was baptized by John? The form of a dove, the Holy Spirit, came and identified himself with Jesus Christ at that point. Same here, the vial of oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

**1 Samuel 10:2-6** *When you leave me today, you will find two men near Rachel's tomb at Zelzah on Benjamin's border. They will say to you, "The donkeys you have gone looking for have been found. Your father is no longer concerned about the donkeys but has become anxious about you two! He is asking, "What should I do about my son?"' (3) "As you continue on from there, you will come to the tall tree of Tabor. At that point three men who are going up to God at Bethel will meet you. One of them will be carrying three young goats, one of them will be carrying three round loaves of bread, and one of them will be carrying a container of wine. (4) They will ask you how you're doing and will give you two loaves of bread. You will accept them. (5) Afterward you will go to Gibeah of God, where there are Philistine officials. When you enter the town, you will meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place. They will have harps, tambourines, flutes, and lyres, and they will be prophesying. (6) Then the spirit of the LORD will rush upon you and you will prophesy with them. You will be changed into a different person.*

In verse 2 he gives three signs. Remember the prophet will always give signs and these signs will be the authentication devices so that the person will trust the prophet. Notice that each one of these signs includes a specific prophecy as to time and place. So Saul will have the evidences that this is valid.

Now verse 6 reveals what it means to be the Christ, it is the first time in the Old Testament that we encounter something that looks like New Testament regeneration. Saul is actually already regenerated, but at this point his personality will change by a work of the Holy Spirit. Now this is a set up, because here Saul's coming in from the family of Kish, with a business mentality, concentrating on material possessions and the details of life. That's the old Saul. Now Samuel says when the Holy Spirit comes on you you're going to be turned into a new Saul. Then, instead of concentrating on material possessions you're going to be concerned with spiritual things and you're going to be concerned with the Word of God.

Why do you suppose that God gives this particular test to Saul? Because God wants to demonstrate to you and to me that there is a difference between the good life and the spiritual life. There is a difference between a person who has all the attributes of citizen of the year and the person who is acceptable to Him. There's all the difference between human good and divine good.

**1 Samuel 10:7** *"When these signs have taken place, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God will be with you."*

Here is the invitation to Saul to a spiritual life. What Samuel is saying is look Saul, the Holy Spirit is going to come upon you and you are going to get a demonstration of a changed life; your personality will be temporarily changed. Now Saul, when that happens to you, you can go on positive volition and continue the new Saul and carry on as a different man, or you can revert back to the old Saul, back to your old family learned behavior patterns that are full of human good. So do what you want to. Do you see the freedom? Samuel doesn't violate Saul's privacy, he says it's up to you Saul, you're living your life before the Lord.

**1 Samuel 10:8-10** *You will go down to Gilgal before me. I am going to join you there to offer burnt offerings and to make peace offerings. You should wait for seven days, until I arrive and tell you what to do." (9) As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed his inmost person. All these signs happened on that very day. (10) When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, a company of prophets was coming out to meet him. Then the spirit of God rushed upon Saul and he prophesied among them.*

So Saul is transformed into a new man. In verse 10, he began to teach the Word of God is what that's talking about, it's not some gobbledygook where they're frothing at the mouth. So don't look for the charismatic mania here.

**1 Samuel 10:11** *When everyone who had known him previously saw him prophesying with the prophets, the people all asked one another, "What on earth has happened to the son of Kish? Does even Saul belong with the prophets?"*

Now begins the pressure on Saul. He starts off his spiritual life, you might say, with the whole culture in which he was previously, against him. The old Saul that loves the material possessions, has been changed to the new Saul, and the people noticed the change in Saul, now he's emphasizing the spiritual things, he's teaching the Word, and they say, is that Saul the son of Kish in that prophetic movement?

**1 Samuel 10:12** *A man who was from there replied, "And who is their father?" Therefore this became a proverb: "Is even Saul among the prophets?"*

Those men are prophets because of God the Father's grace. And so while this mob is chanting, is Saul one of the prophets, and laughing and mocking and so on, this one believer is saying here is a work of God. And it caught on from that day down to the time this book was written, Saul is among the prophets? How can that be? And so the people of the town understood there was a big difference between Saul's old life style and the new one that would be demanded of the prophets.

**1 Samuel 10:13-16** *When Saul had finished prophesying, he went to the high place. (14) Saul's uncle asked him and his servant, "Where did you go?" Saul replied, "To look for the donkeys. But when we realized they were lost, we went to Samuel." (15) Saul's uncle said, "Tell me what Samuel said to you." (16) Saul said to his uncle, "He assured us that the donkeys had been found." But Saul did not tell him what Samuel had said about the matter of kingship.*

And now we have the test. He didn't tell his uncle that God had chosen him as king. He must have been uncomfortable talking about the Word of God with his uncle. So Saul reverts back to his old nature. You'll see this trait begin to get stronger and stronger and begin to undermine what could have been a fantastic opportunity that this believer had. I'd like to ask the challenging question: do you find yourself in this kind of a mold? The Holy Spirit broke Saul loose from his mold, at least for a matter of hours. Saul had the opportunity to break loose and to change his life pattern into divine good from human good. The Holy Spirit can break you loose too, but He's not going to force you. He provides like He did here and then He expects you to follow up.

Why does God anoint Saul before He gives him the choice to accept or reject God's plan for his life? Well, it's about God's sovereignty. Saul had no choice as to whether he's going to be king or not; God chose him as king, the question was whether he's going to be a good one or a bad one. The theme of these chapters will be the confirmation in history that the choice was right; when God reveals His choice He's always vindicated by the evidences. This is part of Biblical faith. Saul was the right choice. Saul was God's choice for the office, and later when you begin to see things that might make you doubt whether Saul is saved or might make you doubt whether God knew what He was doing, you have to go back to the evidences in chapters 10 and 11.

*1 Samuel 10:17-19 Then Samuel called the people together before the LORD at Mizpah. (18) He said to the Israelites, "This is what the LORD God of Israel says, 'I brought Israel up from Egypt and I delivered you from the power of the Egyptians and from the power of all the kingdoms that oppressed you. (19) But today you have rejected your God who saves you from all your trouble and distress. You have said, "No! Appoint a king over us." Now take your positions before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans.' "*

Liberals say that here we have two conflicting accounts of the anointing of Saul. And as always, the liberals run before they read, for yes there are two incidents happening here but they're not at all contradictory. What the liberals see as a contradiction in the narratives is the fact that in chapter 8 and in the passage we're going to see right now, there's a hostility to the office of king. Samuel is angry and God is not pleased that the nation has chosen centralized power. Yet it appears back in 9:1-10:16 everything is fine.

But this is the way God often does respond to man's sinfulness. When man sins God is angry at our negative volition and for the historic effects it has. But God accommodates Himself to it and moves through that. The nation desires a king. It is bad that they do this because the Bible is always against socialism and centralized power. But God allows centralized power to grow, and then cursing turns into blessing because He turns it into a revelation of the office of Jesus Christ. And so there is no contradiction in the attitudes of God; it's simply the way God responds on any number of occasions in Scripture to man and his sinful world.

Notice the emphasis is on the work of God and this is a reminder of God's faithfulness. **Whenever you have a major shift in history, God always announces beforehand that He has been faithful and that the shift that is going to happen men have brought upon themselves, not because of God's lack of faithfulness.** The tendency of believers is to say that God is insufficient. This is what Israel was doing.

The word "rejected" in verse 19 in the Hebrew is a word which means despised. How do believers despise the Lord? Anytime that you face a problem in the Christian life that you do not give thanks for you are despising God. But Christians fail to take the truth of 1 Corinthians 10:13, that there will never come a problem for which God has not provided a solution so that we may be able to bear it, so that we can move to Romans 8:28 and say "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose." When we fail to respond to this, as 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In EVERYTHING give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus," we are despising God. We are saying in effect He's a lousy Savior, He got us legal status with the Father through His death on the cross but He can't get us out of the little problems. Every time we do this we despise God's character and then we are wide open to the attacks of Satan every time.

Satan loves it when you panic, he loves to have you respond to the pressures of life this way.

Samuel has called the nation to a national conference and they're going to use the Urim and the Thummim, which are the tools of the high priest, exactly what they were is still a matter of debate, but it was a "yes/no" type situation. They would bring the tribes, two tribes at a time, and they'd eliminate them one by one, and finally Benjamin would be picked out. And then they'd start working on the Benjamite clans, and then when they had the clan found out, then they would work through the families. And finally they come to the family of Kish. Now remember, Samuel knows in advance what the solution is going to be. But here is where you see the confirmation. If God has truly worked through Samuel, then when God the Holy Spirit works through the Urim and the Thummim you should come out with the same answer.

**1 Samuel 10:20-21** *Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was chosen by lot. (21) Then he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families, and the family of Matri was chosen by lot. At last Saul son of Kish was chosen by lot. But when they looked for him, he was nowhere to be found.*

Now this is another one of those humorous incidents in 1 Samuel. If you want one book in the Bible that shows that God has a sense of humor it's this one. Earlier we saw Saul chasing lost asses all over Israel and today we're going find him buried under some suitcases.

**1 Samuel 10:22** *So they inquired again of the LORD, "Has the man arrived here yet?" The LORD said, "He has hidden himself among the equipment."*

This is a very humorous, God is saying, all right, you want a king, take a good look at what kind of a king you've got; he's hiding under the suitcases. What a glorious way for a king to enter his kingdom! God is narrating this through the Holy Spirit and He intends it be funny. It really happened, this is not a distortion of the historical incident, but it's God's sarcasm at believer's stupidity. And God, has this same humorous attitude to some of the goofy things you and I do. It might do you some spiritual good to think about God that way; He's not some ogre that's sitting on the throne ready to strike you with lightning. But if we are made in God's image and part of the image of man is humor, why should we be surprised that God has humor? Of course God has a sense of humor; of course He smiles, of course He laughs.

**1 Samuel 10:23-24** *So they ran and brought him from there. When he took his position among the people, he stood head and shoulders above them all. (24) Then Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the one whom the LORD has chosen? Indeed, there is no one like him among all the people!" All the people shouted out, "Long live the king!"*

In history, this is where the phrase, "God save the king" came from; it's these passages from 1 Samuel where most of the customs of European royalty originally came from. And it's not talking about the king living a long life. The Hebrew word for "life" means a lot more than that, it's more let him live abundantly, let him do good things.

**1 Samuel 10:25-27** *Then Samuel talked to the people about how the kingship would work. He wrote it all down on a scroll and set it before the LORD. Then Samuel sent all the people away to their homes. (26) Even Saul went to his home in Gibeah. With him went some brave men whose hearts God had touched. (27) But some wicked men said, "How can this man save us?" They despised him and did not even bring him a gift. But Saul said nothing about it.*

Samuel adds to the Scripture here, and by the way, this is the sign of what a real living prophet is to do. If we had real living prophets today we will have them writing canonical Scripture. And if we really had a gift

of prophecy we would have to conclude that the canon of Scripture is still open because there would still be a functioning prophetic line and we should still expect infallible inerrant Scripture. I don't know about you but I haven't heard of too many chapters being added to the book of Revelation.

A note about verse 27: The significance of not bringing the king gifts is tantamount to rebellion. In an Oriental court not to bring the king a present would be rejecting his authority. So notice what Saul does to someone who rejects his authority. "Saul said nothing about it." And so here again we see a flaw. By despising Saul these guys were despising and rejecting God, who chose Saul. But notice what Saul does? I'm a nice guy, I won't lower the boom on these guys, I'll allow them to violate the authority of my office. Saul is not respecting his office, and therefore he does not respect his God. These people don't respect God and Saul lets them get away with it. He should have killed them right here. But he let it go.

## Chapter 11

Saul has got to have a military victory because the king's job is to deliver. They understood the principle that freedom comes only with military victory. So in chapter 11 Saul leads Israel to a great victory over the Ammonites. This proves to the people that Saul is qualified to be their king. After the battle:

*1 Samuel 11:12-15 Then the people said to Samuel, "Who were the ones asking, 'Will Saul reign over us?' Hand over those men so we may execute them!" (13) But Saul said, "No one will be killed on this day. For today the LORD has given Israel a victory!" (14) Samuel said to the people, "Come on! Let's go to Gilgal and renew the kingship there." (15) So all the people went to Gilgal, where they established Saul as king in the LORD's presence. They offered up peace offerings there in the LORD's presence. Saul and all the Israelites were very happy.*

After the military victory, now we have the coronation. The people understand that the guys who rejected Saul earlier need to be caught and executed, everyone understands this except the guy who was hiding in the suitcases. You may think verse 13 is really good, really nice of Saul, but it's the first time we see that Saul doesn't have the will required to be a king. This would be a pattern for his life.

The significance of Gilgal, you recall, is the place where Israel came across Jordan. It was the place for the ratification of the covenant in Joshua. And now Saul is crowned the first king of all Israel here. So, first Saul is chosen by a prophet, and anointed. Then he is publicly chosen, then he has a military victory, and finally he is crowned king. There's a parallel here with Christ that's very interesting.

Christ was chosen by John the Baptist; but Christ has not yet been publicly proclaimed as Messiah to the world by Israel. Christ has not yet had His major military victory which He will in Revelation 19, and Christ has not been crowned king as yet in history. That we have yet to experience, but we will in His Second Coming. However, in the spiritual realm of the Church Jesus Christ is already fulfilling these things.

*Hebrews 1:3-5 The Son is the radiance of his glory and the representation of his essence, and he sustains all things by his powerful word, and so when he had accomplished cleansing for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (4) Thus he became so far better than the angels as he has inherited a name superior to theirs. (5) For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my son! Today I have fathered you"? And in another place he says, "I will be his father and he will be my son."*

This refers to the coronation of Christ which was at His ascension. Jesus Christ has been coronated at the Father's right hand. At the cross, Jesus Christ obtained complete victory over the powers of Satan and they are defeated foes from this point on in history. Jesus Christ was publicly proclaimed by a remnant, just as during the Church Age every time someone is born again we have a public proclamation. But during

Christ's earthly ministry we had public proclamation by the remnant, we had a victory at the cross and we had His coronation. Notice too, that He could not be coronated until, like Saul, He proved Himself. Christ did not sit automatically at the Father's right hand. He couldn't sit there until He had proved Himself, and what was it that Christ did to prove Himself worthy? He died on the cross, and led a perfect life. That is the historical evidence. This is why you've got four Gospels in your Bible; those four Gospels are to give you the historical evidences that Christ is worthy. Now the other half of Christ's ministry is yet to come.

**1 Corinthians 15:24-26** *Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he has brought to an end all rule and all authority and power. (25) For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. (26) The last enemy to be eliminated is death.*

That refers to the total complete and final military victory of Jesus Christ over Satan. This why the Bible insists over and over there is no freedom apart from a victory involving putting down by force the forces of evil. The liberal has never understood this because the liberal can never understand what Christ did on the cross. The liberal clergymen will talk about Jesus the Master, Jesus the Lord, Jesus this, Jesus that, Jesus did good and Jesus did miracles, if you redefine them properly so we don't allow supernaturalism into the system. Jesus did all these things. But nowhere in their list of what Jesus does is a forcible putting down of rebellious elements of evil.

And therefore the liberal is always under the delusion that you can produce real freedom and real happiness without victory involving a military type victory, as Christ did on the cross, as Christians are now doing in the spiritual realm. There is no freedom for you as a believer functioning right now unless you actively struggle and become victorious over satanic attacks. If you ran your Christian life like some want the United States to run its foreign policy you'd never make it. You'll never win in the Christian life by sitting down and having a conference with Satan; now Satan you take that and I'll take this and then we'll vote. You can just imagine how far this would get you in the Christian life. Ephesians 6:11-17 has a definite military theme, there's no spirit of compromise anywhere in those verses.

## Chapter 12

**1 Samuel 12:1-2** *Samuel said to all Israel, "I have done everything you requested. I have given you a king. (2) Now look! This king walks before you. As for me, I am old and gray, though my sons are here with you. I have walked before you from the time of my youth till the present day.*

In the middle of the coronation at Gilgal Samuel gets up and he makes this great speech. This is a change of command ceremony. Saul is officially replacing Samuel as the national leader at this point. Chapter 12 is the speech that Samuel gives before he steps down from his office. Samuel says I want you to understand that God does not condone this but He is going to, for this moment in history, go along with it. God is going to accommodate Himself to the spiritual weakness of the people.

**1 Samuel 12:10-15** *Then they cried out to the LORD and admitted, 'We have sinned, for we have forsaken the LORD and have served the Baals and the images of Ashtoreth. Now deliver us from the hand of our enemies so that we may serve you.' "When you saw that King Nahash of the Ammonites was advancing against you, you said to me, 'No! A king will rule over us' — even though the LORD your God is your king! (13) Now look! Here is the king you have chosen — the one that you asked for! Look, the LORD has given you a king! (14) If you fear the LORD, serving him and obeying him and not rebelling against what he says, and if both you and the king who rules over you follow the LORD your God, all will be well. (15) But if you don't obey the LORD and rebel against what the LORD says, the hand of the LORD will be against both you and your king.*

Verse 10 is the confession, and Samuel wants to make it clear that every point the nation has confessed, at

those points God has always forgiven.

**1 Samuel 12:19-25** *All the people said to Samuel, "Pray to the LORD your God on behalf of us — your servants — so we won't die, for we have added to all our sins by asking for a king." (20) Then Samuel said to the people, "Don't be afraid. You have indeed sinned. However, don't turn aside from the LORD. Serve the LORD with all your heart. (21) You should not turn aside after empty things that can't profit and can't deliver, since they are empty. (22) The LORD will not abandon his people because he wants to uphold his great reputation. The LORD was pleased to make you his own people. (23) As far as I am concerned, far be it from me to sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you! I will instruct you in the way that is good and upright. (24) However, fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. Just look at the great things he has done for you! (25) But if you continue to do evil, both you and your king will be swept away."*

So here you have the final divine viewpoint before Samuel passes off the scene, that this was not God's will for centralized power. And in God's grace He's going to turn it into something good. He's going to show through this office the person of Christ.

### Chapter 13

God has very graciously condescended to our stupidity by picking out a loser to fill the office at the first, and fall flat on his face. Were it not for the grace of God we would all be Saul's. So don't gloat over Saul's failure, just learn from it.

If you're a New Testament believer, if you have personally accepted Christ and you have come to that point in your life of depending completely on Him for your salvation, then you become a king and a priest according to the book of Revelation. You do not exercise your kingship today; you exercise your priesthood today. However, one day in eternity we will and when we do, then we must also follow the model of David rather than the model of Saul and so the lesson does pertain to us. In Matthew 23:27 we have the classic rejection of God toward human good.

**Matthew 23:27-28** *"Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs that look beautiful on the outside but inside are full of the bones of the dead and of everything unclean. (28) In the same way, on the outside you look righteous to people, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."*

The word "unclean," is a word that occurs often in the Old Testament to describe "human good". Odors in God's Word are used primarily to indicate the attitude of God, so that when the prayers of the saints are offered the prayers are like perfumes coming up to the nostrils of God. So the sense of smell in the Scriptures is usually identified with God's attitude of acceptance or rejection. If God says you smell like sweet perfume, that is a believer who operates on grace. If God says you stink, that is a believer who operates on human good and God does not like that. In this case the word "unclean" means rotting stinking human flesh. If you've ever smelled a dead person, an animal that's been dead for a while, or even spoiled meat, that is what the Scriptures are trying to say what human good is like to God.

Jesus says yes you appear beautifully outwardly, so the conformity to God's righteousness appears valid. And in Saul's life the man does appear to conform to God's righteous standards. That's why we call it human good. Human good is simply a satanic counterfeit of spirituality. It is a disastrous thing for the believer to get involved in. You have to be on your guard continually that each one of you do not get involved in this human good thing because it will destroy your soul. It will actually destroy your soul much faster than personal sin because human good is an attempt to cover up a guilty conscience.

*Isaiah 64:6 We are all like one who is unclean, all our so-called righteous acts are like a menstrual rag in your sight. We all wither like a leaf; our sins carry us away like the wind.*

This again uses the concept of something that stinks. This is God's attitude toward human good. Now that most of you are in shock turn back to 1 Samuel 13 and let me demonstrate why human good is so bad.

Let's look at the soul and watch how it works. Our conscience has God-consciousness in it; the conscience is fed by general revelation (creation) and special revelation (the Bible) together, and that produces a God-consciousness, so that we know truth; there is never a man on the face of this earth that doesn't know some truth, because if he didn't know truth it would mean that God could not hold him responsible. It's a very simple line of reasoning. God cannot judge people guilty for violating the truth if they never knew the truth. All men have some degree of understanding of truth. Every person, I don't care if he's out in the middle of Africa and hasn't had any contact whatever with the body of Christ, he still is held accountable to truth, see Romans 1:18 and following.

When your conscience points something out to you that that is sin, that violates God's righteousness. The only way to handle the problem is through the cross of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ died for your sins on the cross and if you're not a believer, then you have to accept Christ as Savior in order to deal with that conscience problem. If you are already a Christian then you must appropriate the finished work of Christ at the point of 1 John 1:9. Either way the cross, which is effective because of the blood of Christ, is applied to our guilty conscience.

Now what does the mind try to do? When you're in rebellion against God and the conscience begins to convict, the mind has a series of defense mechanisms - fantasy, rationalization, isolation, suppression and projection are only five, there are more. We are going to see three of these defense mechanisms used by Saul. The conscience says you're wrong, you violated God's standard and you know it. I don't believe you can destroy your conscience. But you can harden and callous it, so that scar tissue is built up over time and the intensity of the conscience is reduced. The mind does this by putting out human good.

Human good is an attempt by the mind to satisfy the conscience with something other than the blood of Jesus Christ. Instead of going to grace, saying I know I have sinned, the mind says no, I'm not guilty. I'm a pretty good person, look at all my good works. And so the mind begins to trot out all these good works and tries to satisfy the conscience with human good. But if human good could solve man's sin then Jesus Christ did not have to die. If it was just simply a case of balancing your sins with your human good and leave it at that, God didn't have to die. There's no need whatever for the atonement.

And so actually human good is so awful in God's sight because it negates the death of His Son. This is what is so horrible and stinking about human good. Any time any person puts human good to their conscience and says well I'm not so bad, that person is essentially saying Christ's death on the cross means absolutely nothing to me. That is actually the sinful mental attitude behind human good. All right, let's watch Saul.

*1 Samuel 13:1-3 Saul was [thirty] years old when he began to reign; he ruled over Israel for [forty] years. (2) Saul selected for himself three thousand men from Israel. Two thousand of these were with Saul at Micmash and in the hill country of Bethel; the remaining thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin. He sent all the rest of the people back home. (3) Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost that was at Geba and the Philistines heard about it. Then Saul alerted all the land saying, "Let the Hebrews pay attention!"*

Notice which of the two garrisons went on the offense—Jonathan's. And this is going to be something you will observe again and again with these men. Saul was a great man but for some reason never could get on

the offensive. Something always slowed Saul down and he never seemed to exercise his potential as a leader. His son, Jonathan, was a fantastic leader and very aggressive, and so was David.

**1 Samuel 13:4-5** *All Israel heard this message, "Saul has attacked the Philistine outpost, and now Israel is repulsive to the Philistines!" So the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal. (5) For the battle with Israel the Philistines had amassed 3,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and an army as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Micmash, east of Beth Aven.*

Now, the Philistines counterattack, and, they don't touch Jonathan. They come up to Saul's two thousand but they don't touch Jonathan's one thousand. That has been demonstrated over and over again in war; the enemy will always pick on the weak unit. They will not pick on the aggressive units. The Philistines come up against Saul because they sense the man is indecisive, and this always is the way it goes in war.

This isn't some abstract principle, this applies to you in the Christian life. Satan won't bother you generally if you are an aggressive believer. Now he'll try to throw roadblocks up and so on, but generally... the principle is stated by James, "Resist Satan and he will flee from you." Now that principle holds in spiritual warfare as well as political warfare. Satan avoids aggressive believers like this; he'll try to cripple you and then he attacks. But usually when a believer is aggressive he won't bother you.

The second thing to notice is about the chariots and the horsemen. These two particular garrisons are in the highlands, and the chariots can't be used in the highlands. There's no way the Philistines can deploy these chariots, except for one purpose; they are used to scare the opponent psychologically. Chariots did to an ancient army what tanks do to a modern army. Tanks and armor are used for shock value; this is why the Germans blitzkrieg was a very powerful tool, as long as they didn't encounter any organized resistance, like they did in Holland and Poland, because you kept pushing, pushing, fast, fast, so your opponents never get a position to stand still and to fight you. The Romans learned an equivalent to it through Hannibal; Hannibal had one of the greatest shock devices the Roman army ever faced; it was elephants.

But the Philistines operated the same way, they brought three thousand chariots up, and they began to move them up the valleys. Now of course anybody with some smarts who had an aggressive mentality would have immediately taken the initiative and ambushed the chariots. You could destroy the backbone of the Philistine army by ambushing them as they came up the valleys but they don't do that.

**1 Samuel 13:6-7** *The men of Israel realized they had a problem because their army was hard pressed. So the army hid in caves, thickets, cliffs, strongholds, and cisterns. (7) Some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan River to the land of Gad and Gilead. But Saul stayed at Gilgal; the entire army that was with him was terrified.*

Well this was a mass disaster at this point. They get faked out by the psychological threat of all these chariots and there's a mass retreat to the east, to Gilgal, and across the Jordan valley, all the way over on the east side of Jordan. So that's what happens to Saul's army. Saul, for some reason, always had this problem during his career. He never could seem to mobilize men to fight. He encountered the same thing with Goliath. What saved the day when the Philistines attacked and you had Goliath standing out there; everybody was shaking and trembling again, and finally David moved out and took care of the problem.

Now after their hiding and trembling, we have Saul's first failure. God the Holy Spirit has preserved this record of a man's failure not for us to gloat and say ha-ha, look at Saul; it is so we as believers will not fall into the trap of human good. We deal with our spiritual problems in grace, we admit we are sinners, we appropriate the finished work of Christ, we move on. We don't bother trying to impress people with how much we do, like the whitewashed tombstones, full of stinking rotting bodies on the inside.

To understand Saul's failure you have to remember, who comes first, the prophet or the king? The prophet. So the prophet has to be there, the king must always consult the prophet.

**1 Samuel 13:8** *He waited for seven days, the time period indicated by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the army began to abandon Saul.*

Now Saul has a choice; Saul can do what Samuel said and wait seven days. But what does Saul do? Obviously it's a bad situation. But the Word of God is not saying this believer faces an easy choice.

**1 Samuel 13:9-10** *So Saul said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings." Then he offered a burnt offering. (10) Just when he had finished offering the burnt offering, Samuel appeared on the scene. Saul went out to meet him and to greet him.*

One of the things about human good is that it always wants to put on a good outward appearance and this includes piety. Saul knows that this sacrifice should be done, that's an outward religious act, so he does it. Notice too in verse 10, when Samuel comes, what does Saul do? The great man of etiquette comes out that he might salute him. Again, the outward performance. Saul is meticulous, unblamable in his outward behavior. He recognizes the principle of the sacrifices, the peace offerings, he knows they have to be made and he also knows that he should respect the prophet.

**1 Samuel 13:11-14** *But Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul replied, "When I saw that the army had started to abandon me and that you didn't come at the appointed time and that the Philistines had assembled at Micmash, (12) I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down on me at Gilgal and I have not sought the LORD's favor.' so I felt obligated to offer the burnt offering." (13) Then Samuel said to Saul, "You have made a foolish choice! You have not obeyed the commandment that the LORD your God gave you. Had you done that, the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever! (14) But now your kingdom will not continue! The LORD has sought out for himself a man who is loyal to him and the LORD has appointed him to be leader over his people, for you have not obeyed what the LORD commanded you."*

Verses 11-12 illustrate one of the features of human good. We've got excuses. Human good starts with an excuse not to accept responsibility for your sin. It's always somebody else's fault. It is avoiding personal responsibility before the Lord. And so Saul's got a whole bunch of excuses here. Now, these are all legitimate reasons for having trouble. But what's missing? One little problem. Samuel said. Saul, wait for me and I'll tell you what to do. In other words, he violated the authority of the Word of God.

Satan is always trying to get us to believe that God does not come through on His promises. When you and I say in the middle of a situation, NO, I am not going to panic, I am going to wait on the Lord because He promised me that He would provide, that is where you honor Jesus Christ. You honor Him by refusing to be rushed into some response to something and you relax, you wait. And what Samuel was telling Saul is, I don't care if thirty thousand of your men were vaporized, I don't care if the Philistines are three feet away from you, I told you to wait.

Now the discipline seems a little harsh here in verses 13-14. What did the man do to deserve this? Well first let's understand what the discipline is that he gets and then we'll understand a little bit why it's given. It's a very sad day because later on Saul is going to lose his son as a result of verse 13, he is going to watch his son get slaughtered on a day of battle; Jonathan has just been killed right here, effectively in verse 13. What we call the Davidic Covenant would have been given to Saul. God would have set up this dynasty of Saul, or the Saulite dynasty, and the son next in line for that dynasty was Jonathan. Jonathan would have

been king. Had Saul trusted the Lord, God would have put Jonathan on the throne.

Verse 14 means Jonathan is rejected and he is going to die, slaughtered in battle, a very brave soldier, a very wonderful man, is going to die because of an idiot father. Saul is bounced from his calling in a very, very tragic way.

Now there's a progression with Saul. Here we have negative volition (disobedience) towards God's law. Then as a result of negative volition we have a lack of illumination of the Holy Spirit, increasing human viewpoint and then we have hatred toward God, then toward people, and we have frustration. Now Saul is beginning to become mentally ill at this point. And we're going to watch this man wind up as a psychotic. Here's where it starts.

Samuel sees the darkness growing in this man's heart and when he gets in a panic situation he can't obey the Word. Let's look at some of the defense mechanisms that Saul has used in these excuses. First of all he has rationalization. He rationalizes his disobedience by saying well, circumstances forced me to do it. The second defense mechanism that he used is suppression; he suppressed from his conscious mind 1 Samuel 10:8, that is an order that was given to him and he suppressed that order. And finally, he's using projection, he is blaming Samuel for being late. You promised me and you didn't show up, so Samuel, it's your fault. See, it's not his fault, always somebody else's fault, it's the circumstances fault. **Watch this in your own character!** Go back to this the next time this temptation happens to you.

Now the second failure of Saul is going to be a dramatic follow up to the first one. We're going to watch how Jonathan works and how he is spiritually the aggressor and his father is spiritually passive.

**1 Samuel 13:15-18** *Then Samuel set out and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin. Saul mustered the army that remained with him; there were about six hundred men. (16) Saul, his son Jonathan, and the army that remained with them stayed in Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin, while the Philistines camped in Micmash. (17) Raiding bands went out from the camp of the Philistines in three groups. One band turned toward the road leading to Ophrah by the land of Shual; (18) another band turned toward the road leading to Beth Horon; and yet another band turned toward the road leading to the border that overlooks the valley of Zeboim in the direction of the desert.*

Now what's going to happen is that Jonathan is going to shift the initiative from the Philistines to the Jews and he is going to do it by a tremendous act of faith. If you were writing this in English these next verses would be in a footnote.

**1 Samuel 13:19-22** *A blacksmith could not be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines had said, "This will prevent the Hebrews from making swords and spears." (20) So all Israel had to go down to the Philistines in order to get their plowshares, cutting instruments, axes, and sickles sharpened. (21) They charged two-thirds of a shekel to sharpen plowshares and cutting instruments, and a third of a shekel to sharpen picks and axes, and to set ox goads. (22) So on the day of the battle no sword or spear was to be found in the hand of anyone in the army that was with Saul and Jonathan. No one but Saul and his son Jonathan had them.*

No one in the army had weapons. So the Philistines had a very smart system. We've mentioned this before, and it's confirmed here the disarmament of the Israelites by the Philistines.

## Chapter 14

**1 Samuel 14:1-2, 6** *Then one day Jonathan son of Saul said to his armor bearer, "Come on, let's go over to the Philistine garrison that is opposite us." But he did not let his father know. (2) Now Saul was sitting under a pomegranate tree in Migron, on the outskirts of Gibeah. The army that was with him numbered about six hundred men. (6) Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come on, let's go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised men. Perhaps the LORD will intervene for us. Nothing can prevent the LORD from delivering, whether by many or by a few."*

Saul is sitting around wondering what to do, but his son takes a more aggressive attitude. Jonathan is doing what his father should be doing; his son is out conducting a little reconnaissance, and he's finding out what are they doing over there. Now to see this situation you've got to understand what the problem is. Jonathan is going to have to cross this valley; and all the time he's going to be under constant surveillance. There is no way he can sneak across this valley undetected. The second thing that Jonathan has against him is that he's only got himself and his armor bearer, against probably a couple hundred men. That's the situation and look at this man's faith; Jonathan recognizes that this is a holy war, and the battle is the Lord's.

Remember that the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant was circumcision. Circumcision was a sign of separation. It carried a tremendous potent force as far as inter-marriage was concerned; no Jewish man could ever intermarry without being conscious of the fact that he was separated and that he bore on his body the sign of his covenant. So when we see the word "uncircumcised" in verse 6 it's not just a word of derision. What Jonathan is saying was, these uncircumcised Philistines don't own this land, they don't belong on this property, let's go over and see if the Lord will kick them out; that's what he's saying. I want you to see that Jonathan has a tremendous theological framework for what he's going to do.

The end of verse 6 is a beautiful illustration of divine guidance. Jonathan at this point doesn't really know whether the Lord is going to grant deliverance but he knows enough of the mind of the Lord that he's going to try. He says with God on our side it doesn't matter whether we have two or two hundred or two thousand. The Lord is not going to be hindered when we have too few. Watch what happens.

**1 Samuel 14:7-10** *His armor bearer said to him, "Do everything that is on your mind. Do as you're inclined. I'm with you all the way!" (8) Jonathan replied, "All right! We'll go over to these men and fight them. (9) If they say to us, 'Stay put until we approach you,' we will stay right there and not go up to them. (10) But if they say, 'Come up against us,' we will go up. For in that case the LORD has given them into our hand — it will be a sign to us."*

So he says, I'm going to walk down there in full view of them all. Obviously the guards will challenge him. And he's going to listen to how the guards give the challenge. Now what is the thinking behind this? Here's where the believer is using his head. Jonathan knows enough about military to know that if they say you just stay there until we come out and investigate, that means that these guards are sharp; they will not permit an enemy to come intruding through their perimeter before they find out their ID. So Jonathan says if those guards yell "you stay there" then we know that God has not opened the way for us. But if we walk up there they say "come on up", then we know that that's the beginning of the sign that God has given them to us.

Jonathan is not using some sort of a fleece. He's not saying if we see three spears come out that's God's will, if we see two come out that's not God's will. It's something that's common sense. This is a legitimate petition for a believer to do in this kind of a situation, using your common sense to set up some kind of a situation where you see God's leading. Jonathan is saying if we see evidence of God already working in that situation we're going to go in; if I don't see evidence of God working in the situation, I'm not going to go in. The response of the guards will indicate whether the Holy Spirit is working already.

**1 Samuel 14:11-14** *When they made themselves known to the Philistine garrison, the Philistines said, "Look! The Hebrews are coming out of the holes in which they hid themselves." (12) Then the men of the garrison said to Jonathan and his armor bearer, "Come on up to us so we can teach you a thing or two!" Then Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come up behind me, for the LORD has given them into the hand of Israel!" (13) Jonathan crawled up on his hands and feet, with his armor bearer following behind him. Jonathan struck down the Philistines, while his armor bearer came along behind him and killed them. (14) In this initial skirmish Jonathan and his armor bearer struck down about twenty men in an area that measured half an acre.*

Catch the sarcasm of verse 11? You can just see these Philistines, oh, look at these little mice, they're coming out of their holes. In other words, the Philistines are a little over-confident. This move is so audacious that the Philistines can't even comprehend anybody being so stupid as to try something like this. We don't have the exact geography but apparently what had happened was that Jonathan came out and there was an overhang or something, and he and his armor-bearer were temporarily out of sight of these people. So the garrison came out and started to file down, and the land was rough and they had to come down single-file to see what was going on. The words "struck down" in the Hebrew is the imperfect sense, so you get the idea these guys fell one at a time, boom, boom, boom. Apparently the terrain was such that they could only get one man in there at a time. This armor-bearer is back there having a ball, killing anyone that Jonathan knocked down and rolled down the hill.

Then Jonathan and his armor-bearer apparently take off. And they begin to go back to Gibeah, but the "twenty" is put in there for another reason. It's fantastic the two men did slay twenty, that's one to ten, that's a pretty good kill ratio. But it's put in there so you remember that Jonathan's effort in itself is not sufficient to carry the day; it was a bold effort, it was done in faith, but this by itself was not sufficient to dislodge the enemy. Jonathan has exercised obedience to do what he could in the situation, trusting God for the rest, and this is a good lesson for us as believers. Now watch the blessing that God pours out on the nation because one man believed in the middle of a crisis.

**1 Samuel 14:15** *Then fear overwhelmed those who were in the camp, those who were in the field, all the army in the garrison, and the raiding bands. They trembled and the ground shook. This fear was caused by God.*

Word gets back to the main Philistine camp about what has happened, two guys came up this cliff and zapped twenty of our southern perimeter guards. They did what? Then here's where the mighty God of Israel is going to transform this thing into a fantastic panic. He starts out using the natural terror of a surprise attack by two men, and then starts using nature forces, and the earth is literally beginning to shake under these guys.

And so we have one man on positive volition plus the faith technique. The positive volition by itself is nothing, but you add God's blessing to that effort and like with the bread and the fishes that Jesus Christ fed five thousand, amazing things can happen. Right at this point there is a fantastic opportunity to utterly destroy the Philistine army. Jonathan saw the issues, trusted the Lord, and moved out.

Saul did not fail in some moral area; this is where Christians have got to wake up. The average Christian is so dumb when it comes to human good that he will immediately accept it as a work of the Holy Spirit. Any person cranking out human good is perfectly acceptable in most Christian circles. Any time someone is moral, any time someone leads a stellar life, any time someone has all the etiquette and so on, they are immediately accepted as some great spiritual work of God. This is tragic because this is one of the areas that God gets very angry about and here you see Saul doesn't commit one "moral" sin. He simply fails to

use the faith technique in the area of his calling, which is the messiah-king. Now in verse 16, while Jonathan and his armor-bearer are over raising Cain with the Philistines, on the other side of this great valley Saul has a northern perimeter. Saul's watchmen look across this valley and they begin to notice what's going on, there's complete confusion over in the Philistine camp. Jehovah is waging His psychological warfare and there's a tremendous opportunity here for Saul.

At this point Saul had the opportunity to completely annihilate all of the Philistines. Back in 13:5, the Philistines had brought everything they had against the Israelites. They wanted to put the fear of the Philistines into the Hebrews, but God, in His sovereignty, is setting a trap. He's bringing the entire Philistine army and putting them right in one spot. Saul can completely deliver the nation Israel; right here Saul can destroy the entire Philistine military machine and completely deliver his nation. And Jonathan has opened the door, everything's going, now all that's required is a man who is going to use his faith.

**1 Samuel 14:16-19** *Saul's watchmen at Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin looked on as the crowd of soldiers seemed to melt away first in one direction and then in another. (17) So Saul said to the army that was with him, "Muster the troops and see who is no longer with us." When they mustered the troops, Jonathan and his armor bearer were not there. (18) So Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring near the ephod," for he was at that time wearing the ephod. (19) While Saul spoke to the priest, the panic in the Philistines' camp was becoming greater and greater. So Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand!"*

So Saul starts off right, he seeks the Lord's will. He's got a fantastic opportunity but he can't follow up on it. Why? Because he's only got one set of good weapons; Jonathan's taken the other one. So he's got to look to the Lord to provide him with weapons to take advantage of this situation.

In verse 19, he suddenly reverses what he did before. Now he cannot wait for the Word of God; he's got to jump at an opportunity. If he is fighting the battle of Jehovah, the smart thing to do is to find out what your superior officer wants you to do. Call him up, find out what's going on. That's what he's supposed to do, and that's what he starts to do. So he goes to the priest and the priest starts to use this ephod, which is this yes/no type thing. And he began to use it. Meanwhile Saul, you can just see him, all the time the priest is doing this he's looking over there and watching what's happening in the Philistine camp, and finally it looks so great that he says oh, never mind that, let's go. In other words, never mind what God wants, I'm going to take advantage of this situation.

He's like many of us as believers, we start out using faith, I'm going to trust God with this problem, and then the problem looks so simple now that I can handle it; all right God, forget it, I'll move on. See, this is the classic rejection of the faith technique, and you've all had the experience where you have trusted the Lord with the problem and it looked very bad. Then tomorrow you wake up and it looks good, and so you say well, I'll forget that jazz about trusting the Lord and try it on my own.

**1 Samuel 14:20-24** *Saul and all the army that was with him assembled and marched into battle, where they found the Philistines in total panic killing one another with their swords. (21) The Hebrews who had earlier gone over to the Philistine side joined the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. (22) When all the Israelites who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines had fled, they too pursued them in battle. (23) So the LORD delivered Israel that day, and the battle shifted over to Beth Aven. (24) Now the men of Israel were hard pressed that day, for Saul had made the army agree to this oath: "Cursed be the man who eats food before evening! I will get my vengeance on my enemies!" So no one in the army ate anything.*

Verse 21-22 is how God is graciously supplying weapons to Saul's men. These Hebrews who were already

on the Philistine's side were captives and other people, turncoats and so on. In other words, this is the wishy-washy crowd, they'll go with the winner, and they saw that Saul wasn't winning and so they went over to the Philistine side. These were the weak Jews who went down because of the strong Philistines and the destruction of Saul's reputation. Apparently when these Jews that were in the Philistine garrison saw what was happening they chose the opportunity to escape and they brought with them adequate weapons.

And so in verse 23, Beth Aven is about 5 miles to the west, and Saul is at last in active pursuit. He's chasing the remnants of the Philistine garrison. Now we have another parenthesis in verse 24, and this is one of the worst military decisions that Saul ever made, and is an example of what happens when you have a believer with chaos in the heart, which ultimately results in the inability to make wise decisions.

Now in ancient war there was a tremendous emphasis on physical activity. You didn't sit around shooting rifles at somebody or firing artillery pieces, most of the battle was active physical combat involving hand to hand combat, which required tremendous amounts of physical energy on the part of the soldiers. Here Saul cuts off the fuel. The fuel is the food that these people were supposed to have; they should have taken pomegranates and every thing else they could get, put in their pockets and move, so they could use this energy to pursue. So in this case Saul makes a disastrous decision.

The premise of his disastrous decision is given in the last part of verse 24, this is Saul's personal vengeance. Now there's several things wrong with that, first of all he lost his army not because of the Philistines. He lost it because of his own failure to trust the Lord to bring Samuel to tell him the Lord's will. That was the failure. So his attitude is wrong. Verse 4 is the proper mental attitude in battle. What is Jonathan's attitude? Whose battle is it? It's the Lord's battle.

Right here you're seeing why these two men did not communicate. Saul and Jonathan failed to communicate for the same reasons as many other people; different spiritual frequencies. Saul is operating with negative volition and so he's interested in #1, Saul. Jonathan is on positive volition, and he's concerned with things of the Lord and it frustrates him to have such a dope for a father. We won't excuse everything in Jonathan's behavior. But it's no accident this whole thing started off with Jonathan taking off without telling his father. Jonathan took off because if he had sat there and said, Dad, how about me taking an armor-bearer and going over there, Jonathan knew his father would say no, I don't want you to do it, we're going to sit here and eat pomegranates.

**1 Samuel 14:25-26** *Now the whole army entered the forest and there was honey on the ground. (26) When the army entered the forest, they saw the honey flowing, but no one ate any of it, for the army was afraid of the oath.*

So this is an oath, not just an order. Saul has also forgotten something else. He is an officer and I think he forgot that when he made this oath. When the messiah-king gives an oath the oath must be upheld by God, even if it's a stupid one like this. Saul will soon realize what a horrible thing he has done.

**1 Samuel 14:27-29** *But Jonathan had not heard about the oath his father had made the army take. He extended the end of his staff that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb. When he ate it, his eyes gleamed. (28) Then someone from the army informed him, "Your father put the army under a strict oath saying, 'Cursed be the man who eats food today!' That is why the army is tired." (29) Then Jonathan said, "My father has caused trouble for the land. See how my eyes gleamed when I tasted just a little of this honey. (30) Certainly if the army had eaten some of the enemies' provisions that they came across today, would not the slaughter of the Philistines have been even greater?"*

"His eyes gleamed" is a Hebrew idiom meaning he was revived physically. Remember Jonathan is in worse

shape than 598 men because he has been climbing up to the garrison, he slaughtered 20 men, he came back down from that garrison, he went across the valley, all the way up to Gibeah, and he's been working for hours and hours. So he's a lot hungrier than anyone else, and he eats.

The Hebrew behind "trouble" in verse 29 is *hakar*, is normally used as a pronouncement made upon a spiritual enemy of the nation. So Jonathan is saying my father is an agent of Satan. That is the strong language Jonathan is using for his father. In verse 31 Jonathan says look, if my father had allowed us to eat we could have completely wiped out the entire Philistine army today, but no, my father is a goofball, he's an agent of Satan who has destroyed this country and has allowed the enemy to get out.

**1 Samuel 14:31-35** *On that day the army struck down the Philistines from Micmash to Aijalon, and they became very tired. (32) So the army rushed greedily on the plunder, confiscating sheep, cattle, and calves. They slaughtered them right on the ground, and the army ate them blood and all. (33) Now it was reported to Saul, "Look, the army is sinning against the LORD by eating even the blood." He said, "All of you have broken the covenant! Roll a large stone over here to me." (34) Then Saul said, "Scatter out among the army and say to them, 'Each of you bring to me your ox and sheep and slaughter them in this spot and eat. But don't sin against the LORD by eating the blood.'" So that night each one brought his ox and slaughtered it there. (35) Then Saul built an altar for the LORD; it was the first time he had built an altar for the LORD.*

The people are so ravenously hungry, they've been fighting and running have not been allowed to eat, except the spoil, and now the battle is over and they just all of a sudden go hog-wild; and they violate the Law left and right. Saul accuses them of breaking the covenant, but of course it was because of his stupid orders that they did so. Saul, as usual, never realizes that he's the one responsible for it. Then he does something that's half-way Biblical, he says all right, bring the food here and we'll eat it according to Scripture. Notice, then, the situation in which Saul builds his first altar. He builds it in a rush, like Saul always does, he just built it on the spur of the moment while he was involved in something else.

**1 Samuel 14:36-45** *Saul said, "Let's go down after the Philistines at night; we will rout them until the break of day. We won't leave any of them alive!" They replied, "Do whatever seems best to you." But the priest said, "Let's approach God here." (37) So Saul asked God, "Should I go down after the Philistines? Will you deliver them into the hand of Israel?" But he did not answer him that day. (38) Then Saul said, "All you leaders of the army come here. Find out how this sin occurred today. (39) For as surely as the LORD, the deliverer of Israel, lives, even if it turns out to be my own son Jonathan, he will certainly die!" But no one from the army said anything. (40) Then he said to all Israel, "You will be on one side, and I and my son Jonathan will be on the other side." The army replied to Saul, "Do whatever you think is best." (41) Then Saul said, "O LORD God of Israel! If this sin has been committed by me or by my son Jonathan, then, O LORD God of Israel, respond with Urim. But if this sin has been committed by your people Israel, respond with Thummim." Then Jonathan and Saul were indicated by lot, while the army was exonerated. (42) Then Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan!" Jonathan was indicated by lot. (43) So Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." Jonathan told him, "I used the end of the staff that was in my hand to taste a little honey. I must die!" (44) Saul said, "God will punish me severely if Jonathan doesn't die!" (45) But the army said to Saul, "Should Jonathan, who won this great victory in Israel, die? May it never be! As surely as the LORD lives, not a single hair of his head will fall to the ground! For it is with the help of God that he has acted today." So the army rescued Jonathan from death.*

Isn't this interesting; Saul's first failure resulted in what? His son could not sit on the throne. Saul's second failure resulted in what? His son was put under a curse. Do you see how you can suffer by being linked up with a person that's out of it? Jonathan is suffering because he's linked with his father and his father is a

spiritual loser. Some of you are in families like this, and Jonathan should be an inspiration to you because you're going to see how God provides every point of the way of Jonathan's life. Jonathan must die, incidentally, the people rescue him here but it's only temporary, the oath must be fulfilled and Jonathan will die in battle as his father dies.

Now what's happening between the commander in chief and his army? Saul's own army violates his authority at this point in saving Jonathan, and you begin to have a whole series of ruptured personal relationships all over the place. And this always follows chaos in the heart. And here we find that Saul will never be able to command the respect that he could have as messiah-king from his army again. His army has seen his foolishness at two points during the day. They have watched his asinine order not to eat; they have watched the enemy escape, and now they have watched this maniac almost kill his own son.

**1 Samuel 14:47-52** *After Saul had secured his royal position over Israel, he fought against all their enemies on all sides — the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. In every direction that he turned he was victorious. (48) He fought bravely, striking down the Amalekites and delivering Israel from the hand of its enemies. (49) The sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malki-Shua. He had two daughters; the older one was named Merab and the younger Michal. (50) The name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz. The name of the general in command of his army was Abner son of Ner, Saul's uncle. (51) Kish was the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel. (52) There was fierce war with the Philistines all the days of Saul. So whenever Saul saw anyone who was a warrior or a brave individual, he would conscript him.*

Notice, verses 47-52 form a summary statement. Remember that when Hebrews write history they always put summary statements first, and after they put the summary statement, then they give you the details of the statement. Thus, there is no conflict therefore between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, as some of you have been told in university classrooms; it's simply not true. It is because Genesis 1 is a summary of the seven days and Genesis 2 is a detail of the sixth day. There's absolutely no conflict. And the same here, we have these verses refer to the summary of Saul's entire life, from the time that we left him at Gibeah, all the way down until the time that he is approaching the end where David is going to be king. So during this interval of his life it's all summarized in a neat little package.

Saul is going to lose his office; the realm over which he reigns, however, is not going to be lost, it's going to be passed on to David, and in fact Saul is going to sit on the throne for many years. Verse 49 gives certain biographical information about Jonathan and the only two names you want to remember there, first Jonathan, and the last one, his daughter, Michal. She is going to be one of David's wives.

## Chapter 15

Chapter 15 concentrates on 14:48 in an expanded form, and it's about holy war. Now please understand, no one likes war. The point, however is that in the fallen world, since Satan is the Lord of it, there's only one means of peace and that is to have a strong military and a strong nation that is willing to fight to win war and not just play games. This is just the way it is. Now if you don't believe me, just read history and ask yourself which nations have remained free. And you say well Switzerland remained free and they don't have a big army. But are we surrounded with the Himalayas to 25,000 feet? The Swiss have an excellent natural barrier, they have never had to worry about invading armies; all the Swiss have to do is just get out and roll rocks. The Swiss are an exception to the rule. But every other nation on the surface of the earth that's had peace for a long time has been a nation that is strong, or has been a nation that existed in an era of history where other nations took the burden of peace, such as times when the British imperialism colonized the world and maintained peace on a worldwide basis.

**1 Samuel 15:1-3** *Then Samuel said to Saul, "I was the one the LORD sent to anoint you as king over his people Israel. Now listen to what the LORD says. (2) Here is what the LORD of hosts says: 'I carefully observed how the Amalekites opposed Israel along the way when Israel came up from Egypt. (3) So go now and strike down the Amalekites. Destroy everything that they have. Don't spare them. Put them to death — man, woman, child, infant, ox, sheep, camel, and donkey alike.' "*

Notice who's giving who the orders? The prophet gives the king orders, the king doesn't give the prophet orders.

**1 Samuel 15:7-9** *Then Saul struck down the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, which is next to Egypt. (8) He captured King Agag of the Amalekites alive, but he executed all Agag's people with the sword. (9) However, Saul and the army spared Agag, along with the best of the flock, the cattle, the fatlings, and the lambs, as well as everything else that was of value. They were not willing to slaughter them. But they did slaughter everything that was despised and worthless.*

Notice the people selected out what they wanted. This is always typical of human good. Why do we bring human good in at this point? Because the Amalekites are a picture of the flesh of the believer. Israel does not meet the Amalekites until after they are redeemed from Egypt. When does a believer struggle with his flesh? After he becomes a Christian, when he wants the sanctification and growth, then the flesh becomes an issue with him. So the Amalekites are a picture of this and God here is ordering the extermination of the flesh, similar for His desire for each of us to eliminate negative learned behavior patterns that we have picked up. God wants all of them eliminated. But if you have human good, what are you going to do? You're going to pick and choose between the behavior patterns, you'll say these are the good ones, and these are the bad ones, and if you're a typical legalistic type you'll get rid of all the ones that are obviously immoral, but you'll keep the ones that look good, put on a good front; all sorts of things that the community at large would accept. And it's the same thing here; God says I don't want any of it.

**1 Samuel 15:10-12** *Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: (11) "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned away from me and has not done what I told him to do." Samuel became angry and he cried out to the LORD all that night. (12) Then Samuel got up early to meet Saul the next morning. But Samuel was informed, "Saul has gone to Carmel where he is setting up a monument for himself. Then Samuel left and went down to Gilgal."*

This, by the way, is the third failure of Saul, the "last straw" with God. Saul really did accomplish so much militarily, this was an amazing thing. He really did slaughter most of the Amalekites, the next time we meet the Amalekites David cleans the rest of them up. The human good, his sense of mercy, his sense of decency got in the way of the Word.

Notice the repentance of God. God is a personal God. God does not change, He is immutable; He doesn't change insofar as His character is concerned, but God does personally respond to us in history, and this means that you as a believer, if you have accepted Christ you are a believer and that gives you authentication to come before God and argue with Him in prayer. You have a right to discuss with God in prayer, to lay a petition to Him and ask that He fulfill it. He may say "no" or "not yet", but you may get a "yes". Samuel does this. He sees that God is changing His mind and it made him angry and he cried out to the Lord all night. He said Lord, this is not right, I do not want you to do this, and he tries to do something here that Moses tried and was successful in Exodus 34.

But Samuel is not going to be successful here. Apparently Samuel admires Saul personally; Samuel has become a very close friend of Saul's. And when he gets this order come down from God and God says all

right, that's it, I'm kicking him out of the office, this grieving of Samuel means that he is just shook up. It takes him hours and hours to work this thing out before the Lord.

Samuel cries in private but when he is finished with the Lord in private he goes out there and he nails Saul to the wall. Samuel on the surface is absolutely hard-nosed when he faces Saul, but I want you to know that before he faced Saul he had an all night prayer meeting over it, it grieved him so much.

**1 Samuel 15:13-16** *When Samuel came to him, Saul said to him, "May the LORD bless you! I have done what the LORD said." (14) Samuel replied, "If that is the case, then what is this sound of sheep in my ears and the sound of cattle that I hear?" (15) Saul said, "They were brought from the Amalekites; the army spared the best of the flocks and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD our God. But everything else we slaughtered." (16) Then Samuel said to Saul, "Wait a minute! Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night." Saul said to him, "Tell me."*

Not only is Saul spiritually dull, but scar tissue begins to develop over the conscience so that he can't even tell when he's doing right and wrong any more. I believe if you gave Saul a lie detector test at verse 13 he would sincerely believe that he had followed the order of God. In verse 15, Saul might have had a lot of pious ideas about what they were going to do with the spoils, but Samuel, in verse 16 cuts off the discussion very quickly. Saul is sitting there blubbing about oh, the people did this, the people did that, I've obeyed the Lord, and Samuel says will you shut your mouth and listen!

**1 Samuel 15:17-21** *Samuel said, "Is it not true that when you were insignificant in your own eyes, you became head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD chose you as king over Israel. (18) The LORD sent you on a campaign saying, 'Go and exterminate those sinful Amalekites! Fight against them until you have destroyed them.' (19) Why haven't you obeyed the LORD? Instead you have greedily rushed upon the plunder! You have done what is wrong in the LORD's estimation." (20) Then Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the LORD! I went on the campaign the LORD sent me on. I brought back King Agag of the Amalekites after exterminating the Amalekites. (21) But the army took from the plunder some of the sheep and cattle — the best of what was to be slaughtered — to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."*

Look at verse 20, parents often get this excuse, well I did what you told me, in other words, the room might be filled with six inches of debris and tell their kid to pick it up and after he gets through with some effort it's reduced to two inches and you say this room isn't picked up, and he says, well, I did what you told me.

**1 Samuel 15:22-23** *(22) Then Samuel said, "Does the LORD take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as he does in obedience? Certainly, obedience is better than sacrifice; paying attention is better than the fat of rams. (23) For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and presumption is like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."*

This is a psalm. If you were writing a drama this would be the place you'd have the orchestra starting in with a song. This forms the backbone for all prophecy in God's Word from this point forward. All the prophets are going to make this distinction. The idea is volition and works. A person has a negative attitude toward the Lord. He can counterfeit works, which we will call human good.

Let's look at giving, for example. It's good to give, everybody thinks. If you're giving to please God, that's positive volition and that counts as divine good, that's credited to your account because you gave with the proper motive. If you give based on negative volition, say you're going to give because Joe has a bigger pledge than I do and I have to show him up, that's giving out of the wrong motive, human good. The act is

the same, there's no difference on the outside, but on the inside there's a tremendous difference. In verse 23, the word "rebellion" means to rebel against God and disbelieve His Word and it does not mean, necessarily, immorality because Saul did not commit any moral sins here. Rebellion means you failed to believe the Word in some area of your life. Failure to apply the Word in your life is worse than the sin of witchcraft, according to Samuel, and you know how much God doesn't have any tolerance for this kind of thing because it leads to demonism. And "presumption" means that you're trying to push God; pushiness means you're trying to cram human good down God's mouth. And this pushiness is like idolatry.

So as we go through Saul's life we are watching a man moving from simple carnality into compound carnality and eventually he reaches the extreme neurotic and psychotic behavior and he was finally destroyed.

Saul has a pattern of human good. Human good is not obvious, it is pious, it always uses religious language, it gives sacrifices, human good says Samuel, God bless you and all the rest of it. Human good is full of human etiquette; it does all sorts of things that pass for spirituality. And therefore it's very hard to detect and so Saul goes on to compound carnality; it's never obvious to him what's happening.

**1 Samuel 15:24-25** *Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have disobeyed what the LORD commanded and what you said as well. For I was afraid of the army, and I followed their wishes. (25) Now please forgive my sin! Go back with me so I can worship the LORD."*

At this point Saul makes a confession, and Saul gets back in fellowship, for all we have to do to get back in fellowship is to confess our sin, plus nothing! You do not do anything else except confess your sin, just as you do nothing else when you become a Christian. When you became a Christian it wasn't because you walked an aisle, it was not because you raised your hand, it was not because of all the gimmicks.

Saul is confronting his sin and he confesses two things, he amplifies how he has sinned. You see, he is naming his sin here, he is identifying what his sin is.

**1 Samuel 15:26** *Samuel said to Saul, "I will not go back with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel!"*

It sounds like Samuel here is very anti-grace; that's not it at all. It sounds there like Samuel is rejecting Saul. But if you will compare carefully verse 26 with verse 25 you see that's not the case. Samuel does not say I will not pardon your sin. Saul is now back in fellowship, but Samuel will not do the next thing, "go back with me so I can worship the Lord." Although he is in fellowship, the Holy Spirit is ready to go to work in his life, he is ready to be restored, he can't move an inch without dealing with these heavy accumulation of extra baggage; he's got to deal with that problem right away.

Now Samuel reacts the way he does in verse 26 because either through divine illumination or revelation, or some other way, Samuel knows that Saul is not going to deal with these learned behavior patterns; they've gotten too big enough for him and he knows enough of Saul to know this guy will confess, he'll get back and he'll ride it out for about five minutes and then Saul will be out of fellowship again. Samuel is saying we're breaking the prophet-king relationship right here. That's it, it's all over, you are now no longer legal king. Now does Saul lose his salvation here? No, he has confessed, and at this moment is back in fellowship.

**1 Samuel 15:27-30** *When Samuel turned to leave, Saul grabbed the edge of his robe and it tore. (28) Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to one of your colleagues who is better than you! (29) The Preeminent One of Israel does not go back on his word or change his mind, for he is not a human being who changes his mind." (30) Saul*

*again replied, "I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel. Go back with me so I may worship the LORD your God."*

This verse clarifies what's really on Saul's mind. The issue of being right with God is secondary to the issue of being honored in front of the people. Human good all over again. All this time Saul's point has been am I or am I not socially acceptable? That's his major concern. So is Samuel justified in turning his back? Yes, because at this point you have a believer in compound carnality, one who has been negative so long, he has all this baggage and he is unwilling to deal with it, even when he is in fellowship.

So, bang, Saul is out of fellowship again. That lasted about five minutes, five minutes of grace, five minutes Saul could have gotten started again on the track, but it didn't last. Now God is going to leave him on the throne for two decades after this point. Why does God bother to leave him on the throne? Legally he does not have title to the throne any more, but God graciously allows Saul to continue as king. For year after year God in His grace allows this believer to go on and hear the words of the various priests, some of the disciples of Samuel, and be faced with many different situations which the Holy Spirit is using in calling him back; Saul, come back, come back.

The only way a believer who is in this form of carnality can get straight is to go on a crash program of taking in the Word and positive volition; taking in Bible doctrine and intense prayer; prayer strengthens your human spirit. There's no simple way of doing it; it requires hours and days and weeks of misery to straighten it out, but God is gracious and He is providing the assets; God never abandons you. You can be in the worst form of compound carnality and God still hasn't abandoned you, He's letting you sit on the throne too, year after year, after rightfully He could have removed you He lets you sit there, hoping that eventually you'll come around.

In verses 28 the "colleague" obviously is David and we'll see in the next chapter how David gets the legal right. So verse 28 teaches us that legally the title has been transferred at this point. To emphasize that the legal title has been transferred, Samuel makes the statement he does in verse 29.

*1 Samuel 15:31-35 So Samuel followed Saul back, and Saul worshiped the LORD. (32) Then Samuel said, "Bring me King Agag of the Amalekites." So Agag came to him trembling, thinking to himself, "Surely death is bitter!" (33) Samuel said, "Just as your sword left women childless, so your mother will be the most bereaved among women!" Then Samuel hacked Agag to pieces there in Gilgal before the LORD. (34) Then Samuel went to Ramah, while Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. (35) Until the day he died Samuel did not see Saul again. Samuel did, however, mourn for Saul, but the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.*