

Title: Ruinous Sin
Scripture: 1 Samuel 13
Series: God, the True King!

1. Introduction:

- a. After chapter 12, we had much reason to be hopeful. Because of the preaching of Samuel and the mighty signs of God, the Israelites had finally realized the depth of their depravity. They had understood that their idolatry, compounded with the asking of a human king and the rejection of God’s authority, was a grave sin. They had openly repented and begged God for forgiveness. God, in His mercy, calls the people to renew the covenant that they had broken. We found much hope in verse 22 of chapter 13, which reads, “For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great namesake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself.”
 - i. Beloved, we stay in a covenant relationship because of the faithfulness of God.
- b. Our chapter concluded with the following words:
 - i. **1 Samuel 12:24-25** Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you. (25) But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.”
 1. Whatever hope for Saul being a godly king quickly disappears in chapter 13 because Saul

would behave wickedly, the promise of God to sweep him away would now become a sad reality.

- c. Today, then, we are warned that spiritual ruin can come quickly. At least, that is the impression that 1 Samuel 13 makes on us right away. Even though the king had been warned in chapter 12, we find the king unwilling to heed God's commands in chapter 13. Thus, begins Saul's downward spiral into the sinful abyss.
- d. Chapter 13 hits hard. We are unprepared for the dark story of royal failure that we encounter. But this is what happens when we step outside of God's provision. We are left spiritually shattered.
- e. Today we take a glimpse at Saul's kingdom. We find a man who was highly religious but not very obedient. This passage teaches us that disobeying God is one of the greatest sins any professing believer can commit.
 - i. Remember, it was the disobedience of our forefather that subjected all of creation to the curse. We read in **Romans 5:19A** For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners...
- f. Beloved, it is my sincere prayer that God would use today's passage to instruct us unto gospel fidelity.

2. Verses 1 and 2: Saul's Standing Militia: Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years over Israel, (2) Saul chose three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with

Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent home, every man to his tent.

- a. When we first read verse one, we have trouble understanding the numbers accounting for Saul's reign. We have a problematic passage that very few seem to understand. We encounter a transliteration error from the original.
 - i. Notice, beloved, I did not say there was an error in the scriptures, but a translation error into our tongue today. The verse most probably reads that Saul was between 30 and 40 years old, and he reigned 32 years in Israel. This is who other godly versions have translated this verse. No matter the numbers, what we have before us is a tragic tale.
- b. Our passage opens with Saul gathering a standing army of about 3,000 men. This was not a formidable army. The weakness of Israel is here exemplified for us. If an army of 3,000 is going to be victorious, it must be so because of God's power. Israel is outnumbered.

3. Verses 3 and 4: The Evil of Self-promotion: Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear."
(4) And all Israel heard it said that Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become a stench to the Philistines. And the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal.

- a. This is the first time that we hear about Saul's son. Our first glimpse tells us that Johnathan went near and struck down either the governor or a Garrison of the Philistines. We get the impression that Jonathan was a great man of war. As we read further into 1 Samuel, we will get a better glimpse of this young man and come to love him for the godly man that he was. Jonathan was a man to be admired and emulated.
- b. However, our passage begs the following question: why hadn't Saul taken the initiative of attacking the philistines? It was his duty to do so.
 - i. It would seem that saul's failure to act is a first indication of the condition of saul's heart.
 - ii. But, it is good to understand that God's purposes are never frustrated. God always has someone else that he can use to bring about glory to his name. If the designated man does not stand, then God will lift another.
- c. What is even more troubling is that upon hearing the news of his son's victory, Saul blows the trumpet before all of Israel. It is proclaimed throughout Israel that Saul had brought about a great victory. In essence, Saul purposely takes credit for what his son has done
 - i. Here we see the first glimpse of Saul's most significant weakness. Saul had to be in the limelight. He had to have the attention focused on himself. Saul would come to resent anyone elevated above himself.

ii. The pride of self-promotion is an evil sin that lives within the hearts of men. It is a sin that will destroy any careless man. It is the sin of Satan and a sin that the Scriptures frequently warns against.

1. **Romans 12:3** For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to believe, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.
2. **Philippians 2:3** Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

4. Verses 5-14: The Evil of Abandoning God’s Word: (5) And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. (6) When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble (for the people were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns, (7) and some Hebrews crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. (8) He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. (9) So Saul said, “Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings.” And he offered the burnt offering. (10) As soon as he had finished

offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. (11) Samuel said, “What have you done?” And Saul said, “When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, (12) I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD.’ So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering.” (13) And Samuel said to Saul, “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. (14) But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.”

- a. Our passage starts with a disproportionate response from the Philistines. If Saul has 3000 men, the Philistines will attack with 30,000 Chariots and 6,000 horsemen. Although Jonathan had bravely fought against the enemy, he had also provoked them greatly.
- b. The people become aware of the advancing army coming to exact revenge for the killing of their citizens.
 - i. At this point in history, Israel was subject to the Philistine rule. Johnathan’s attack and victory were seen as an act of rebellion.
 - ii. The Israelites are consumed with fear so much that they begin to defect and hide.

- iii. Saul becomes desperate. His small army is getting smaller every second. He looks to the horizon, but he does not see Samuel coming. Although he does not see Samuel, he can see his men abandoning him.
 - iv. Now God had instructed Saul to wait for Samuel for seven days. Samuel would arrive and offer up the burnt sacrifice. Then Samuel would reveal God's strategy for victory. Saul waits, but he does so impatiently.
 - v. When Samuel does not arrive early on the 7th day, Saul takes the responsibility of offering the sacrifice himself. He does this to encourage the people to remain united.
- c. In God's Providence, Samuel came as soon as Saul finished the sacrifice within the appointed days. The impatience of king Saul is compounded by the fact that he had almost nearly waited the appropriate amount of time.
- i. King Saul goes out to meet Samuel, but he immediately hears the rebuking words of the prophet. **“What have you done?”**
 - 1. Samuel's tone reveals bitter disappointment. It also shows the hot displeasure of God.
 - ii. Beloved, let us look at Saul's response. He states in **1 Samuel 13:11B-12** ...And Saul said, “When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, (12) I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at

Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD.’ So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering.”

1. Saul’s explanation seems plausible to us.
- iii. We tend to identify with King Saul. Understanding the facts, we conclude that something had to be done. The enemies were approaching, and the people were fleeing. Samuel had not come, as promised. Saul had to do something to unify Israel. But if we think this way, we do not understand the gravity of the sin committed by Saul, and we open our hearts to commit a similar sin. May God the Holy Spirit open our eyes to the true nature of the sinfulness listed in our passage.
 1. First, Saul blames Samuel for his disobedience. He blames shifts. According to Saul, Samuel should bear the responsibility for the sin committed; after all, Samuel had not come when Saul had expected. Beloved, this is the sin that we see back in the garden of Eden when the man blamed the woman, and the woman blamed the snake for the fall of humankind. It comes from a sinful place within all of us. We desire to view ourselves as victims of sin and not the perpetrators. It’s everyone else’s fault that I am the way that I am.
 - a. **James 1:14** But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

2. Secondly, Saul seems to have waited until the seventh day but not the whole day. He had become impatient with Samuel and therefore had become impatient with God. He thought he had waited long enough for God to act. If God does not operate when and where I want Him to, I will take matters into my own hands.

a. But the bible tells us in **Proverbs 3:5** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

3. Thirdly, Saul was supposed to wait for the prophet to receive the instructions of God for the battle. Samuel was the bearer of God's word. For Saul, the sacrificial ritual was essential but prophetic direction was dispensable.

a. Saul committed an act of insubordination, a failure to submit to God's word through his prophet. Through his actions, Saul proclaims that certain emergencies make God's word unnecessary. Saul believed that he could live outside of God's Word yet still enjoy God's presence. Beloved, this is a grave sin.

i. **Psalms 119:1** Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!

1. Saul had been commanded to walk in the word and warned of the consequences of failure.

- d. In verse 13, we encounter the judgment of God on such behavior.
- i. First, Saul is told that his actions were foolish. Foolishness is defined as acting in an indefensible manner, without reason, in haste, especially when it comes to disobeying God's instruction.
 - ii. Secondly, God informs Saul in verse 14 that his kingdom will not continue. Saul would not have an ongoing dynasty. God does not reject Saul, that will happen in chapter 15, but God discards Saul's line from reigning over Israel forever. Sin forever affects Saul's posterity. The consequences of sin are far-reaching.
 - iii. Thirdly, we read in verse 15 that Samuel rises and leaves Saul. Saul is abandoned by the prophet and therefore abandoned by God's word. If Saul will not wait on the Lord or give importance to the word of God, God will take His word from him.
 1. King Saul is left alone. As we will read, he has no weapons, the raiders from Philistia were coming against him, and his troops were demoralized and fleeing. However, that is not the worst of his problems. The worst of king Saul's problems was that he was now without the guidance of God. To be stripped of the Word of God is to be genuinely impoverished and open to destruction. It is one thing to be in terrible distress; it is another to be alone in that distress. Saul had isolated himself

from what he needed the most-the word of God to illuminate his way.

5. Verses 15-23: Hopelessness and Yet Hope: And Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal. The rest of the people went up after Saul to meet the army; they went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men. (16) And Saul and Jonathan his son and the people who were present with them stayed in Geba of Benjamin, but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. (17) And raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies. One company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual; (18) another company turned toward Beth-horon; and another company turned toward the border that looks down on the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness. (19) Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, “Lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears.” (20) But every one of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, or his sickle, (21) and the charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads. (22) So on the day of the battle there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan, but Saul and Jonathan his son had them. (23) And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.

- a. So this chapter ends with the hopelessness of Israel's current situation. Philicia keeps Israel disarmed. Israelites even have to go to the philistines to get their farm tools serviced- for a fee, of course. No doubt about it: Israel is finished.
- b. However, we cannot end with this sour note. We have seen this scenario before. God loves his people. The total helplessness of God's people proves to be the backdrop for God's deliverance.
- c. God had been faithful so many times that even here, God will be faithful was again.
- d. All we need to do is look forward to just a few chapters to see a new king. The king after God's own heart! In King David, we are promised the greatest king of all. The true King that will never disappoint. The King that will save God's people once and for all. In other words, Saul's failure gives way to the rise of king Jesus!
 - i. Even amid tragedy, God's plan is going forward.

6. Benedicton:

- a. **Romans 8:28** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Public Reading
Philippians 2:1-11