

“Saul, the Troubler of Israel”
1 Samuel 14:24-45
(Preached at Trinity, April 2, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Saul began his reign as King of Israel at the beginning of **Chapter 13**
1 Samuel 13:1 NAU - "Saul was *thirty* years old when he began to reign, and he reigned *forty two* years over Israel."
 - A. It didn't take long for us to find out what kind of king Saul would be. He quickly disregarded the Word of God and God came under God's condemnation. God would strip the kingdom from Saul.
1 Samuel 13:13-14 NAU - "Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. ¹⁴ "But now your kingdom shall not endure."
 - B. **Chapter 9** ends with Saul and his army in what would seem like a hopeless condition. **1 Samuel 13:22 NAU** - "So it came about on the day of battle that neither sword nor spear was found in the hands of any of the people who *were* with Saul and Jonathan, but they were found with Saul and his son Jonathan."
2. As we entered **Chapter 14** we find the great contrast between Saul and his son, Jonathan. Jonathan slips out of the camp to confront the Philistines. The narrator tells us no one noticed—most likely displaying the treat contrast between Jonathan's boldness and Saul's faithlessness. The suggestion is if Saul had known he would have prevented Jonathan from leaving.
3. Jonathan moved with courage and confidence and defeated an entire garrison of the Philistine army. The Philistines were thrown into confusion and there was a great trembling. His example encouraged all of Israel. Those who had hid themselves in fear rose up and pursued after the Philistines.
1 Samuel 14:22 NAU - "When all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines had fled, even they also pursued them closely in the battle."
4. In **Verse 6** Jonathan made his great statement of faith:
1 Samuel 14:6 NAU - "Come and let us cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; perhaps the LORD will work for us, for the LORD is not restrained to save by many or by few."
5. Although Jonathan and his armor bearer fought valiantly there was no mistake the source of their victory. **1 Samuel 14:23 NAU** - "So the LORD delivered Israel that day"

6. All of Israel was encouraged by the faith and boldness of Jonathan
- a. Saul and his men were emboldened
1 Samuel 14:20 NAU - "Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and came to the battle"
 - b. Those who had hid themselves in fear rose up and pursued after the Philistines.
1 Samuel 14:22 NAU - "When all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines had fled, even they also pursued them closely in the battle."
7. What we find next is hard to believe.
- a. Generally speaking, Saul was an able military leader.
1 Samuel 14:47-48 NAU - "Now when Saul had taken the kingdom over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, the sons of Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines; and wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment. ⁴⁸ He acted valiantly and defeated the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them."
 - b. But in a vain display of religious folly Saul put his troops on a fast while in the midst of waging war.
1 Samuel 14:24 NAU - "Now the men of Israel were hard-pressed on that day, for Saul had put the people under oath, saying, "Cursed be the man who eats food before evening, and until I have avenged myself on my enemies." So none of the people tasted food."
 - c. His actions are to be interpreted according to Jonathan's words:
1 Samuel 14:29 NAU - "My father has troubled the land."
8. The Hebrew word for "troubled" is עָכַר. It is found 15 times in the Old Testament. Usually it is used in the context of individuals being troubled. There are three times this word is used in the context of the entire nation being troubled. All three of these are in the religious context of failure in duty to God.
- A. In 1 Kings Ahab accuses Elijah of troubling Israel. Elijah quickly turns the charge back on Ahab because he had forsaken the commandments of God.
1 Kings 18:17-18 NAU - " When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is this you, you troubler of Israel?" ¹⁸ He said, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house *have*, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and you have followed the Baals."
 - B. In 1 Chronicles 2 we read about Achar as a troubler of Israel who violated the ban.
1 Chronicles 2:7 NAU - "The son of Carmi was Achar, the troubler of Israel, who violated the ban."
Further investigation reveals that Achar is none other than Achan who also violated the command of God.
Joshua 7:24-25 NAU - "Then Joshua and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the mantle, the bar of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent and all that belonged to him; and they brought them up to the valley of Achor. ²⁵ Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." And all Israel stoned them with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones."

- C. The third instance is in regard to Saul in this passage. On the surface it would appear that Saul was seeking to honor God by proclaiming a fast. Jonathan, however, tells us that Saul was actually a troubler of Israel.
9. This is something we must give careful consideration. Mere religion is no guarantee that we are right with God. In fact, the opposite may be true. Paul described such religious people: **2 Timothy 3:1-4 NAU** - "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ² For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God"
- I. Saul had great concern for the form of religion
- A. Saul was under a keen awareness of the consequences of sin
1. Samuel announced God's judgment
1 Samuel 13:13-14 NAU - "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. ¹⁴ "But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."
 2. The words "have not kept the commandments" and "The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart" weighed heavy upon Saul. He knew he was suffering under the penalty of sin.
 3. But there was no sign that Saul was penitent in his heart. Instead, he began to perform religious acts in order to gain God's favor
 - a. In **Verse 3** he sought out oracle presumably to determine God's will – only the oracle was the nephew of Ichabod.
 - b. In **Verse 18** he called for the ark to be brought – the exact purpose isn't known. He also had discourse with the priest
 - c. Then we read in **Verse 24** that he put all on a fast during the battle.
Verse 28 - "Cursed be the man who eats food today."
 - d. Saul invoked the name of God when the people consumed meat with the blood.
1 Samuel 14:34 NAU - "do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood."
 - e. He built an altar in **Verse 35**
 - f. In a great display of religious zeal Saul was even willing to kill his son
1 Samuel 14:44 NAU - "Saul said, "May God do this *to me* and more also, for you shall surely die, Jonathan."
 4. It was all just vain religion. Saul had no heart in it. Like all religious lost people, Saul had selfish motives in mind.
- B. Counterfeit religion is only a cheap imitation of the genuine.
1. Like cheap furniture – looks like wood but is only plastic
You have to watch for words like, wood grain, wood tone, veneer
They are cheap imitations

2. Counterfeit Christians come to church, they may tithe, they can sometimes act quite pious, but they have evil hearts.
3. They can sometimes be quite strict in the areas of the law that they prefer and look condemningly upon those who do not conform to their standard

C. The Bible refers to these counterfeits as hypocrites

1 Timothy 4:1-2 NAU - "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ² by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron"

ὑπόκρισις – the acting of a stage player - an actor who dresses up and memorizes his lines to play the part of someone he is not - convincing

It is also interesting that it is made up of two Greek words

ὑπό - under κρίσις - judgment, damnation

1. A religious hypocrite is one who performs an outward religion without an inward conversion. He is only dressed up in a Christian costume – But he is not genuine. It is nothing more than a vain attempt to court God's favor.
2. We can see this demonstrated with Ananias and Sapphira – Acts 5:1-11
 - a. They made an outward show desiring others to see their spirituality
 - b. Their love for money brought them to conspire in hypocrisy
3. We can see it demonstrated with Judas Iscariot
 - a. He too wanted others to think him highly spiritual
John 12:3-6 NAU - "Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, ⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?" ⁶ Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it."
 - b. At no time was Christ fooled by his hypocrisy
4. There are many men who have lied to God. They have made commitments to Him but have only lived in hypocrisy .
 - a. They only put on an outward façade
 - b. They profess to love and honor Christ but their lives demonstrate differently
 - c. This is a great warning against teachers who do not demonstrate personal holiness

5. Such religious hypocrites possess only the outward form
 From the conclusion of Part 1 of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*
 (concerning one *Ignorance* who trusted in the feelings of his heart)
 "Then they asked him for his Certificate, that they might go in and shew it
 to the King; so he fumbled in his bosom for one, and found none. Then,
 said they, Have you none? But the man answered never a word. So they
 told the King, but he would not come down to see him, but commanded
 the two shining Ones that conducted *Christian* and *Hopeful* to the City, to
 go out and take *Ignorance* and bind him hand and foot, and have him
 away. Then they took him up, and carried him through the air to the door
 that I saw in the side of the Hill, and put him there. Then I saw that there
 was a way to Hell, even from the Gates of Heaven, as well as from the
 City of Destruction. So I awoke, and behold it was a Dream."¹

- II. Saul was void of the power of genuine faith
- A. Saul's life was a chasm of emptiness
1. He had no confidence in God as he went into battle.
 2. He had no peace or comfort. In the end his wicked heart haunted him.
1 Samuel 16:14 NAU - "Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him."
- B. Counterfeit religion is religion without the power of the Gospel
Romans 1:16 NAU - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."
1 Corinthians 2:5 NAU - "so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."
1 Thessalonians 1:5 NAU - "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction"
1. We are saved by the power of God – HIM ALONE!
 It is not us plus His power – It is Him and Him alone – His Work, His Power
 2. The counterfeit Christian denies the power of the gospel by proudly relying upon his own merit, good intentions – He has a form of godliness and confuses it for the genuine
- C. Counterfeit religion is void of the indwelling Spirit
1. Power for holiness
 2. Illumination of the truth – This is why it is so dangerous to the church for a counterfeit Christian to become a teacher
 3. A desire for spiritual things – the counterfeit Christian cannot be spiritual. He doesn't have spiritual understanding. He is lacking in spiritual discernment.

¹ Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Reprinted from the edition of 1895). Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009, Page 189.

4. Saul's calling of a fast showed he was completely lacking in discernment. What a foolish decision – all in the name of religion
And to seek the life of Jonathan who acted wisely even heightened his foolishness.

Romans 1:21-22 NAU - "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools"

D. Counterfeit religion can bring great harm to a church

1. Jonathan was a Godly man, but Saul's empty zeal was threatening his life. His empty zeal was threatening the ability of the army to carry out the campaign. Saul was a great troubler of Israel.
2. Carnal people will demand carnal worship. They believe the style of music they listen to on the radio should be acceptable on Sunday morning; music that puts a greater emphasis upon the style than the content.
3. Carnal people demand carnal teaching
2 Timothy 4:3 NAU - "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,"

Conclusion:

1. Mere religion can never be a substitute for a true relationship with God. God's favor can never be purchased. You can not entice God to bless you by merely being religious.
2. True religion always comes from the heart. True religion is always weak, but is infinitely different from the counterfeit. It always rests in God's mercy. True religion flows not from fear but from a true sorrow for sin.

William Blaikie – "Many a Protestant, roused by his conscience into a state of fright, has resolved to be more attentive to the duties of religion. He will read his Bible more; he will pray more; he will give more; he will go to church more. Alas, the spring of all this is found in no humiliation for sin before God. No grief at having offended the Father, no humble desire to be renewed in heart and conformed to the image of *Christ*. And the consequence is, as in the case of Saul, that things go, not from bad to better, but from bad to worse."²

² Blaikie, William Garden. (2005). *Expository Lectures on the Book of 1 Samuel* (p. 215). Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books.