

Saul's Foolish Disobedience

I Samuel 13:1-23

Introduction:

- This will not be the last time that Saul botches an attempt at sacrificing and worshipping God.
- Sacrificial rituals without God's direction or presence is empty and meaningless
- You can be guilty of doing the right thing, the wrong way- obedience is better than sacrifice- I Sam 15:22

I. Saul takes credit for Jonathan's victory- 1-7

a. Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines: Jonathan was a remarkable military leader. He repeatedly demonstrated the ability to lead a successful attack. Yet this attack merely wakened the Philistines. Israel had enjoyed the "peace" of subjected people: everything will be fine as long as you take your place of subjugation.

i. By the way don't be discouraged if you have enemies that consider you an abomination

ii. When you are standing up for Jesus, the enemy never likes that!

iii. This is the first mention of Jonathan, a great character in the Bible

iv. Saul takes credit for Jonathan's victory-3-4

b. V. 5- The Philistines, angered by the Israelites, gathered a huge army to crush Israel.

c. The men of Israel went into hiding- Jonathan was bold enough to launch the initial attack against the Philistines but the men of Israel were not bold enough to now stand strong against their enemy. In great fear (the people were distressed) they hid anywhere they could (in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes, and in pits) or they fled across the Jordan River (to the land of Gad and Gilead). This was a low point for Israel.

d. V. 7- The people followed Saul to Gilgal, trembling

- II. Saul's foolish disobedience- 8-14
 - a. Saul's unlawful sacrifice- 8-9
 - b. The days dragged on and Samuel didn't come. The troops were losing confidence in Saul as a leader, and beginning to scatter. Saul felt he was in a lot of trouble.
 - c. And he offered the burnt offering: This was plainly sinful. First, Saul plainly disobeyed Samuel. Second, Saul was a king, not a priest, and only priests were to offer sacrifices. Saul had no business doing what only a priest should do.
 - i. God would not allow the kings of Israel to be priests and the priests to be kings. In 2 Chronicles 26, King Uzziah tried to do the work of priest and God struck him with leprosy.
 - ii. Apparently, Samuel was a little delayed and Saul was too impatient
 - d. Saul's response is a classic example of excuse making and failure to trust God
 - i. I saw that the people were scattered from me: "I had to do something to impress the people and gain back their support." But if Saul had obeyed and trusted God, God would have seen him to victory
 - ii. Placating to men- illustr –modern churches today/seeker friendly
 - e. 1Sa 13:13-14- Samuel proclaims God's judgment upon Saul's household.
 - i. You have done foolishly: This is a strong phrase condemning Saul
 - ii. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever: The whole point in being a king was to establish a dynasty, where one's sons sat on the throne afterwards. God told Saul that his descendants would not reign after him
 - f. But now your kingdom shall not continue: From these words we might expect Saul to be "impeached" as king right then and there. But Saul would actually reign another 20 years. He will still be on the throne as a king, but it will never be the same, because the end of his kingdom is certain.
 - i. Consider: "Because the actual judgment for this sin was so far off we should regard Samuel's pronouncement of judgment as an invitation to repentance. Many times when God announces judgment, He will relent if

His people repent. "Though God threaten Saul with the loss of his kingdom for this sin, yet it is not improbable that there was a tacit condition implied, as is usual in such cases." (Poole)

- g. A man after God's own heart- David
 - i. God rejected Saul, not Israel
 - ii. David sinned more out of weakness and Saul more out of a disregard for God.
 - iii. When David was confronted with his sin he repented- II Sam 12:13
 - iv. God is still looking for men and women after His own heart.
- III. Israel helpless against the Philistines- v. 15-23
 - a. About six hundred men: Earlier, Saul had about 3,000 in his regular army (1 Samuel 13:2). Now he is down to 600 because many soldiers scattered while Saul waited for Samuel (1 Samuel 13:8). The loss of so many men was probably the reason why Saul offered the sacrifice without Samuel, and it displayed a heart of distrust and disobedience to God.
 - b. (1Sa 13:19-23) The technological superiority of the Philistines.
 - c. V. 19-There was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel: The Philistines had superior military technology and they wanted to keep it that way. Since they were a seafaring people, the Philistines traded with the technologically sophisticated cultures to the west, especially the Greeks. They imported weapons and know-how from those distant lands.
 - d. It was bad enough to be outnumbered so badly. Now, we see God allowed the Philistines to have a huge technological advantage over the Israelites. The only way the Israelites could ever win was to trust in God for everything.

Conclusion:

- We may feel helpless, but we are never hopeless in the Christian life
- We must remember the importance and the power that comes from total obedience!
- God would eventually find a man after His own heart who was willing to obey. How about you? Will you be obedient to all that God asks you to do?