

FAITH OVER FEAR, OBEDIENCE OVER SACRIFICE, Pt2 (1 SAMUEL 12:20-13:14)

Today we're going to look at the tragic story of King Saul who did not choose **faith in God** (putting His trust in God) over his own fear. Nor did he choose **obedience to God** over sacrifice. Although he thought what he was doing was the right thing to do as a leader of the Israelites, it turned out to be a stupendous fall from grace (favor of God). If there is a how-to guide on what not to do in one's faith in God, or more relevant for us today- as a Christian, a follower and believer of Christ Jesus, this story would be a forerunner of them all. It is up there with Cain when he killed his brother Abel out of jealousy. Esau when he gave up his birthright (the blessing that went along with being the firstborn), to Jacob, his brother, for a bowl of soup. There are two character flaws of Cain and Esau that was also in King Saul that brought about his downfall. Pride and selfish ambition vs. humbling one's self before the Lord and seeking for and waiting for His Way in His time.

We are though supposed to set our minds on the good and the positive (as God IS good!), just as the Apostle Paul said, "whatever things are true, whatever things are noble [honorable], whatever things are just, whatever things are pure [holy], whatever things are lovely [pro- phileo], whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue [moral excellence] and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." (**Phil. 4:8**) Those are all of God, as He is perfect in all of His Ways (**2 Samuel 22:31**) and His Works (**Deut. 32:4**) of which we then give Him praise and thanks. Nevertheless, we are given many examples in the Bible of not only how we should conduct ourselves before the Lord, as we follow the teachings of Christ Jesus and are then led by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, but also we are given many examples of what not to do. In other words, we don't have to learn everything the hard way. Before we get to Saul, we should be reminded, by the writer(s) of Hebrews, to not forget "the exhortation [parakleseos: a call/urging by one who is close by] which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." (**Hebrews 12:5-6**) Now let's see how Saul reacted:

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1 Samuel 13:1-14 Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose for himself three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash [Mik-mahsh] and in the mountains of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan [his son] in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent away, every man to his tent. And Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba [geh-bah], and the Philistines heard of it. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear!" Now all Israel heard it said that Saul had attacked a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel had also become an abomination to the Philistines. And the people were called together

to Saul at Gilgal. Then the Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude. And they came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth Aven. When the men of Israel saw that they were in danger (for the people were distressed), then the people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes, and in pits. And some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. [how soon the people forgot who got them to that place to begin with and that they were God's people!] Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. So Saul said, "Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me." And he offered the burnt offering. Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him. And Samuel said, "What have you done?[[!]]" Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord.' Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering." And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done 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. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart [David], and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you."

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[King Saul had seemed to have everything going for him. He was a tall good-looking man, as **1 Samuel 9:2** says that he was a "choice and handsome son...there was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people." He was appointed by God to be the King of Israel, the one nation of all the nations that God Almighty, Creator of all things, had chosen to lead, and for them to be His people. Saul had a trusted prophet of God of whom he could depend on to hear from the Lord and would speak the very Words of God, to which he could get God's advise in all matters concerning the kingdom of Israel. What could possibly go wrong? Saul even had a valiant and fearless son (Jonathan) who would prove himself as such in battle. In the previous chapter, chapter 12, even though God was not pleased with Israel for wanting a king to rule over them, which in effect was them rejecting God as their ruler, or King, and even though God gave them a warning of thunder and rain for their act of wickedness in crying for a king (which instilled fear in all the people of Israel), God gave Saul and the Israelites a promise of blessings. Although, it was a conditional promise of blessings. So we can backtrack to:]

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1 Samuel 12:20-25 Then Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but **serve the Lord with all your heart**. And do not turn aside; for then you would go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing. For the Lord will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and **the right way [Psalm 107]**. Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for **consider what great things He has done for you [Psalm 107]**. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

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What is the first thing that is mentioned that God said through the prophet Samuel, to His people? "Do not fear." Ie-"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (**Romans 8:31**) Even though they had acted wickedly, God spoke to them in His great mercy. God still wanted to be their God and their leader, their shepherd, their guide, and their hope. God, despite the hardness of the hearts of the people, He established judges to rule over them after the death of Moses and then Joshua, and even through the hardness of their hearts, God allowed them to have a king to lead them, as God was still wanting to be their God, their Lord, their King of kings. God said "do not fear." Follow ME. Obey ME. Trust ME. "For consider what great things He has done for you." [**REPEAT**] He alone is God Almighty! Samuel is, in this setting, a Christ type. A mediator between God and man. As we know now, there is but One...and He is...God, and His Way IS the Right Way! So for us, as Jesus said, "**I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**" (**John 14:6**) So we too must follow His Way and choose **FAITH OVER FEAR**. As we believe on Jesus being the Christ, the Savior of all mankind, and we are led by God to repentance of our sins against Him, and then to receive the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of promise", as the Apostle Paul says "In Him you also **trusted**, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel [good news] of your salvation [though Christ]; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." (**Ephesians 1:12-14**). Then as the Apostle Paul told Timothy (and now us), "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.[!!]" "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who love[s] us." (**Romans 8:37**) Back to Saul:

As Saul was waiting for Samuel, the prophet of God, to show up, to offer the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, Samuel had not shown up yet in the seven days that he said he would. The Israelites were fearful and began to abandon King Saul and Saul was getting nervous as the Philistines were getting near. Just as Saul had

finished the offerings of sacrifice Samuel shows up. When Saul said he felt compelled to do the sacrifices he was saying OUT OF FEAR he did the sacrifices. Another thing that was going on with Saul is in his disobedience. Samuel, was a prophet of the Lord, whose words carried the weight of the Word of God, as being the authoritative Word of God. He told Saul to wait until he got there. Then Samuel would do the sacrifices. Yet Saul disobeyed. While it is not specifically mentioned that Saul was also operating in pride or arrogance, he nevertheless was. Later in **1 Samuel 15:12** Saul is said to have set up a monument for himself, and not for the glory of God. He had decided he didn't need to obey God and he would do things his way and God will just have to understand and get over it. If only King Saul had taken it to heart of what is said of Christ Jesus, "who being the brightness of His [God's] glory and the express image of His person, and **upholding ALL THINGS by the Word of His power**, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." (**Hebrews 1:3**) And then as Jesus said, "**I AM the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**" (**John 15:5**)

How similar are God's people of today to the Israelites of the time of King Saul? Worrying about the affairs of this world, fretting over what one will eat and wear, getting all worked up about the fear that is being promoted in the news. Higher taxes, more corruption and evil. Jesus said, "**Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness [anomia] will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.**" And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." (**Matthew 24:4-14**) Now we are given the very Word of God to guide us. We are given the Holy Spirit (Parakletos, **John 14:26**) to lead us into all truth and to comfort us, and the parakalountes (**Hebrews 10:25**), where we are encouraging one another in our faith in Christ as He is our Shepherd who leads us into all His ways as it was with the Israelites. **Psalms 23** says, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will **fear no evil**; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they

comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely **goodness and mercy** shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." It is interesting to note that King David wrote that. He was the one who God would replace King Saul with as David was a man after God's own heart. King Solomon, David's son, while not perfect, as David wasn't either, nor are we, echoed the heart of David saying, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (**Proverbs 3:5-6**) Are we trusting in the Lord with all of our heart or are we taking it upon ourselves to straighten things out? Are we leaning not on our own understanding or are we reacting to what annoys us? Are we acknowledging Him in all of our ways or are we just focusing on the problems?

King Saul had the very promise of God that He would be with them and that He was their God, and then to not fear, that they were His people, that they just needed to follow Him, obey Him, and trust Him. He needed to only consider what great things God had already done for His people and trust Him. Instead Saul and the other Israelites gave into fear and chose to do things their way. They hadn't waited upon Samuel. In other words, they hadn't waited upon the Lord their God as David had said in **Psalms 27:14**, "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!" Sadly, as Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you."

OBEDIENCE OVER SACRIFICE!

Now as Jesus said in **John 14:15**, "If you love Me, keep My **commandments**." Summed up, Jesus also said "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.'" (**Mark 12:30-31**) Love is the first of what we know is the fruit of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (**Galatians 5:22-23**) Are we truly following the lead of our Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ? What can appear to be doing the work of the Lord, such as was with Saul, leading the Israelites to battle against the bad Philistines, offering sacrifices as a supplication unto the Lord, so it can be with us. In our self-righteous defiance against what we deem as evil, taking things into our own hands kind-of-way, we ourselves can be disobeying and dishonoring God. What may appear as though we are standing against evil may be just the rebellion of Saul. If we were all being obedient to God, bearing the fruit of the spirit, what a difference that can make in our homes, workplace, and community. Especially if we are also obeying Jesus when He said, "**You have heard that it was said,**

'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 5:43-45) Then, as the Apostle Paul says that love hopes all things and believes all things (1 Corinthians 13), it has not been determined that anyone in the flesh is our enemy. Our enemy is in the spiritual realm. We should be praying for them and when possible encouraging them in the faith that we have in Christ. Consider the church of Ephesus whom Jesus said had lost their first love (in the book of Revelation) who was at one time very outreach oriented. We are called, all of us to share and show the love and the gospel of Christ. That is our calling and mission (also Romans 12:1-2). With the specifics, we seek the Lord and wait on Him! The gospel of Jesus Christ is that Jesus died on a cross for our sins and then conquered death, sin and evil so that we can have eternal life in Him, to all those who believe. Yet, if we will not follow Jesus, our Shepherd, if we will not obey His voice, as Jesus said "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27), then we are acting in disobedience just as Saul and the Israelites.

In the final dialogue that Samuel had with Saul, God spoke through Samuel these words, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." As the story continues in the succeeding chapters in 1 Samuel, Israel was victorious that time against the Philistines and then against the Amalekites. But, that was not because of Saul repenting and God restoring Saul to a right relationship with Himself. In fact, God's Spirit ended up leaving Saul and Samuel the prophet ended up vowing to never see Saul again. God still allowed Israel to succeed because they were His people although as it was in times past and in future times God eventually gives the Israelites over to their own desires which leads them into bondage and misery. Saul did not choose obedience over sacrifice nor faith over fear.

We read last Sunday from Psalm 107 that says, "Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness." While that speaks to God's provision for our soul, Jesus also had said, concerning our needs for food and clothing, "do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles [other nations] seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Matt. 6:31-34) Let us too then consider what great things He has done for us and choose for ourselves obedience over sacrifice and faith over fear.