

SAUL: A WASTE OF TALENT

1 Samuel 13:5–14; 16:14–23; 18:5–9



■ THE POINT OF FOCUS

- SAUL HAD JUST BECOME THE KING OF ISRAEL. HE WAS CHOSEN BY THE PEOPLE TO LEAD THEM AND PROTECT THEM FROM THEIR ENEMIES
- SAMUEL, THE PROPHET HAD ANOINTED HIM AS THE KING AND HAD GIVEN HIM INSTRUCTION CONCERNING HOW TO DEAL WITH THE PHILISTINES
- SAMUEL TELLS HIM “GO AHEAD OF ME TO GILGAL, AND I WILL SURELY COME DOWN TO SACRIFICE BURNT OFFERINGS AND FELLOWSHIP OFFERINGS. WAIT SEVEN DAYS UNTIL I COME TO YOU AND TELL YOU WHAT YOU ARE TO DO.”

- IT WAS NOW THE SEVENTH DAY AND THE PROPHET HAD NOT YET SHOWN UP. HIS MEN WERE GROWING IMPATIENT AND FEARFUL AND SOME HAD EVEN LEFT
- THE PHILISTINES WERE AMASSING AN ARMY AND IT LOOKED LIKE HIS FIRST ACT AS KING COULD BE DEFEAT
- HELD. IN PREPARATION FOR BATTLE, HE OFFERED THE SACRIFICE WITH HIS OWN HANDS, FOOLISHLY THINKING HE COULD WIN GOD'S FAVOR BY DISREGARDING THE COMMAND OF THE LORD'S PROPHET
- THE PROPHET SHOWS UP AND ASKS SAUL, "WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?"

- SAUL TRIES TO MAKE EXCUSES SAYING “I THOUGHT, ‘NOW THE PHILISTINES WILL COME DOWN AGAINST ME, AND I HAVE NOT SOUGHT THE LORD’S FAVOR.’ SO I FELT COMPELLED TO OFFER THE BURNT OFFERING.”
- “YOU ACTED FOOLISHLY,” SAMUEL SAID. “YOU HAVE NOT KEPT THE COMMAND THE LORD YOUR GOD GAVE YOU; IF YOU HAD, HE WOULD HAVE ESTABLISHED YOUR KINGDOM OVER ISRAEL FOR ALL TIME. BUT NOW YOUR KINGDOM WILL NOT ENDURE; THE LORD HAS SOUGHT OUT A MAN AFTER HIS OWN HEART AND APPOINTED HIM LEADER OF HIS PEOPLE, BECAUSE YOU HAVE NOT KEPT THE LORD’S COMMAND.”

- SAUL BECAME DEPRESSED AFTER THIS AND SOUGHT SOMETHING TO HELP HIS DEPRESSION. HIS ADVISORS SUGGESTED LETTING A YOUNG MAN NAMED DAVID PLAY ON HIS HARP. AS DAVID PLAYED HIS HARP THE EVIL SPIRITS WOULD LEAVE SAUL.
- DAVID WAS PROMOTED IN THE ARMY BY SAUL AND SOON WAS A LEGEND. PEOPLE WOULD SING, “SAUL HAS SLAIN HIS THOUSANDS AND DAVID HIS TEN THOUSANDS!!” THIS CAUSED SAUL TO GROW VERY JEALOUS OF THE MAN WHO WOULD BECOME KING.



SAUL'S LIFE

- SAUL WAS CHOSEN BY THE PEOPLE AND ANOINTED BY THE PROPHET BUT HIS SUCCESS COULD ONLY BE ASSURED BY SAUL'S PERSONAL OBEDIENCE TO THE THE DIRECTION OF GOD.
- WHEN CONFRONTED BY THE PROPHET ABOUT HIS DISOBEDIENCE HE MADE EXCUSES
 - "YOU DIDN'T COME!"
 - "THE PHILISTINES WERE ABOUT TO DESTROY US."
 - "I FELT COMPELLED TO OFFER THE SACRIFICE."
 - "WE SAVED THE BEST OF THE SHEEP AND CATTLE TO SACRIFICE TO THE LORD, BUT WE TOTALLY DESTROYED THE REST."
 - "GOD WON'T TALK TO ME, AND I NEED TO KNOW WHAT TO DO."

- SAUL DOESN'T TAKE OWNERSHIP OF HIS MISTAKES AND HE IS ESTRANGED FROM GOD.
 - HIS KINGDOM SUFFERS FROM HIS DISOBEDIENCE
 - HIS FAMILY IS BROKEN APART BECAUSE OF THEIR LOVE FOR DAVID
 - HIS PARANOIA FINALLY TAKES OVER HIS LIFE AND HE DOES THE UNTHINKABLE. HE TRIES TO HAVE THE MAN OF GOD DAVID KILLED.
 - HE LOST MORE THAN A KINGDOM, FORFEITING EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS IN LIFE—HIS FAMILY, HIS FUTURE, HIS OWN INTEGRITY.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. PUT YOURSELF IN SAUL'S SHOES FOR A MOMENT. FACING A HUGE FORCE OF WELL-ARMED PHILISTINES, THE ISRAELITES BECAME TERRIFIED AS THEY WAITED DAY AFTER DAY FOR SAMUEL TO SHOW UP. HOW WOULD YOU HAVE REACTED UNDER THIS PRESSURE??
2. DO YOU THINK GOD STILL TESTS US TODAY AS HE TESTED SAUL AND OTHERS IN BIBLICAL TIMES? HOW HAS GOD TESTED YOU? DESCRIBE THE SITUATION AND YOUR RESPONSE??

3. SAMUEL SAYS THAT GOD HAD REJECTED SAUL AND “SOUGHT OUT A MAN AFTER HIS OWN HEART” TO BE LEADER. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MAN OR WOMAN AFTER GOD’S OWN HEART? (SEE ACTS 13:22.)
4. WHY DO YOU THINK SAUL FAILED TO OBEY THE INSTRUCTIONS TO DESTROY THE AMALEKITES AND ALL THEIR BELONGINGS?
5. SAUL WAS QUICK TO DEFEND HIS DISOBEDIENCE BY RATIONALIZING IT (VV. 13–21). WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM SAUL’S STORY ABOUT OUR OWN TENDENCY TO

GOING DEEPER READ 1 Samuel 28

6. SAUL'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE MEDIUM AT ENDOR IS ONE OF THE STRANGEST AND SADDEST PASSAGES IN SCRIPTURE BECAUSE IT DISPLAYS THE DISINTEGRATION OF A MAN WHOM GOD HAD INTENDED FOR GREATNESS. BUT SAUL'S INCLINATION TO TRUST HIS OWN INSTINCTS RATHER THAN TO TRUST THE LORD UNDERMINED GOD'S PLAN FOR HIS LIFE.

INSTEAD OF BECOMING A STRONG AND ABLE LEADER, SAUL BECAME MORALLY AND EMOTIONALLY WEAK, A MAN WHOSE JUDGMENT CONSISTENTLY FAILED HIM AND OTHERS. WHAT DOES THIS STORY IMPLY ABOUT THE CONNECTION BETWEEN OBEDIENCE AND OUR SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH? ABOUT OUR ABILITY TO HEAR GOD?

THINK ABOUT THIS:

- SAUL OFFERS US A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF HOW A MAN CAN FOIL GOD'S PROMISES AND PLANS FOR HIS LIFE. TORMENTED BY FEELINGS OF DEPRESSION, ANGER, JEALOUSY, AND FEAR, HE FINALLY KILLED HIMSELF BEFORE HIS ENEMIES COULD DESTROY HIM IN BATTLE. WHEN THE PHILISTINES FOUND HIS BODY, THEY CUT OFF HIS HEAD AND TACKED HIS CORPSE ONTO A CITY WALL AS A TROPHY OF VICTORY.

- MEANT TO BE A GREAT RULER, HE INSTEAD BECAME A PITIABLE VICTIM, UNDERMINED BY HIS TENDENCY TO TRUST HIMSELF MORE THAN HE TRUSTED GOD. MEANT TO BE A GREAT RULER, HE INSTEAD BECAME A PITIABLE VICTIM, UNDERMINED BY HIS TENDENCY TO TRUST HIMSELF MORE THAN HE TRUSTED GOD. A LIFE OF EXCEPTIONAL PROMISE DEVOLVED INTO A LIFE OF GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT.



SCRIPTURES TO CONSIDER

- THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH AND MY SHIELD;
MY HEART TRUSTS IN HIM, AND I AM HELPED.
—PSALM 28:7
- YOUR WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET AND A
LIGHT FOR MY PATH. —PSALM 119:105
- NOW THEN, MY SONS, LISTEN TO ME;
BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO KEEP MY WAYS.
LISTEN TO MY INSTRUCTION AND BE WISE; DO
NOT IGNORE IT. BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO
LISTENS TO ME.... FOR WHOEVER FINDS ME
FINDS LIFE. —PROVERBS 8:32–35

CONTEMPLATE

- REFLECT ON: 1 SAMUEL 28:5–20
- PRAISE GOD: FOR HIS WORD IN SCRIPTURE.
- OFFER THANKS: FOR ALL THE WAYS GOD HAS SPOKEN DURING YOUR LIFETIME.
- CONFESS: ANY TENDENCY TO DISREGARD GOD'S WORD AND ITS AUTHORITY IN YOUR LIFE.
- ASK GOD: TO INCREASE YOUR DESIRE TO READ AND PRAY THE SCRIPTURES.

OUR PRAYER

- FATHER, THANK YOU FOR THE PARTICULAR WAYS YOU HAVE SPOKEN TO ME—THROUGH YOUR WORD IN SCRIPTURE, THROUGH OTHER PEOPLE, AND THROUGH THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF MY LIFE. I ASK YOU TO SHARPEN MY SPIRITUAL HEARING SO THAT I WILL MISS NOT EVEN ONE WORD OF WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY TO ME.