

Lessons From Kings - Saul

King Saul was Israel's first earthly king. He was the man that God anointed as king...and if you know anything about Saul, you might question whether God knew what He was doing, because Saul wasn't even a good man, let alone king!

But how did Israel get in this position of being ruled by a king? They had been governed by judges and it was a mess...

1 Samuel 8:4-5 (NKJV)

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 5 and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

Israel...God's people...who have already had a King they didn't want to follow (God)...go through hundreds of years of poor government and finally ask for a king. Why? They wanted to be like all the nations.

Do you know that Israel was supposed to be different from all the other nations? Do you realize that many of the laws were to separate Israel from the rest of the people? They were supposed to stand out...God's people!

Yet they ask to be like everyone else. We want a king because they have a king! We want to be like the world!

Samuel prayed and God responded:

1 Samuel 8:7-9 (NKJV)

And the Lord said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.

8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. 9 Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them."

Samuel would go on to describe how this king would rule over them and the might cost it would be to the people and not just possessions and finances, but they would cry out to God BECAUSE of the king they chose and the Lord will not hear them in that day.

They respond "No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations"

There was a man, Kish who was a mighty man of power, and he had a son...

1 Samuel 9:2 (NKJV)

And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. 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.

Saul's father had some donkeys that got lost and Saul was sent out to find them. He ends up coming to Samuel and God tells Samuel that Saul is the one, the man that will rule over Israel.

He's anointed as king. Then he is announced to the people. And they shout "Long live the king!"

So we have Israel who wants a king like the other nations. What is it called when we want what others have? Envy.

What does envy appeal to? Our feelings. Someone has something that we don't and we feel like we have less, like we are missing out or being short changed. We feel like we deserve the same!

This is what Israel saw when they looked at other nations and their kings. So God gives them Saul. But WHY Saul? We don't really know anything about him other than how he looked!

But that is the entire key to why Saul was anointed. It says he was handsome, in fact there wasn't a more handsome person in Israel! This was the best looking dude they had. Why is this important?

That Hebrew word for handsome is actually better translated "goodly", not a word we use much today but it means pleasant to the senses. When they looked at Saul it would please their senses...their feelings were gratified.

God gave them what they wanted, what they asked for...

There are times when I look around and wonder if the US is getting what they have been asking for. See Israel had a king....God...but they didn't want His ways. They wanted to satisfy their own feelings and they asked for a king from among them. "God not your ways, but ours.."

With the wickedness in government passing laws to make it easier and easier to kill babies, trying to change God's definition of marriage, and removing God from everything they can...are we just getting what most of the people actually want?

This is what happened to Israel...they wanted a king so God gave them one....There's only one big problem. All Saul had going for him was his looks. He had major character flaws that were not good for a leader!

He was only worried about himself and how people saw him and he was deceived about the reality of it.

Saul thinks he knows better than everyone else, even God. Yet he is blind to his arrogance and always believes he's right. Sound like anyone you know? Don't say their name out loud!

Disobedience

In 1 Samuel 13, we find Saul in a battle with the Philistines. They are outnumbered, outmatched, and troops are starting to abandon Saul. So Saul is waiting on the prophet and priest, Samuel to seek God's help and blessings.

Saul waits on Samuel for 7 days which is when Samuel said he'd be there. And when Samuel doesn't show up on time, Saul offers a burnt offering to the Lord on his own...and as soon as he does...Samuel comes.

Not only did Samuel instruct Saul to wait for him, but it was God's commandment that only a priest could offer the sacrifice. So Samuel rebukes Saul and tells him that God would remove the kingdom from him and give it to one who would obey Him.

But I want you to see this exchange when Samuel comes. Why did Saul act on his disobedience...

1 Samuel 13:11 (NKJV)

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

"When I saw"...or better translated "because I saw"

How often do we react based on what we see instead of what God said? Don't we see difficult things every day...all around us? But do we believe God? Do we trust God?

As Saul was in a tight spot in life...as the king of God's people...he was supposed to be waiting but he reacted to what he saw!

1. He saw the people scattering from him

Who are the people? They are the troops...his army....his support! This is who is fighting alongside Saul. And here as he waits on God, they start to leave him.

When the people who are supposed to be for you and with you, begin to walk away...are you still going to trust Jesus? Are you still going to obey Him...do what He called YOU to do?

How many times in life do we stray from what God has for us in order to please people?

We have a greater fear of losing people than we do of God. But people WILL leave...Jesus won't

2 Timothy 4:16-17 (NKJV)

At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.

17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

If people start to scatter...trust the Lord. He will stand with you and strengthen you so that you can do all He's commanded you! Jesus said He'd never leave you! Do you believe Him?

The second thing that Saul saw, that lead to his disobedience was:

2. He saw that Samuel was not there

Samuel said he'd be there...He told Saul to wait seven days. Samuel was God's prophet. This is how Saul hears from God. It's important for Samuel to be there yet Saul doesn't see him and takes things into his own hands...."how can I solve this problem myself?"

Proverbs 3:5 (NKJV)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;

In Saul's mind, Samuel didn't show up on time, so God didn't show up on time. He leaned on his own understanding. He said "bring me the sacrifice!" I'll do it myself!

But Saul acted on what he saw...just a minute too soon! Of course Samuel would show up right after Saul presented the offering on his own. Something he wasn't even supposed to do!

Sometimes God has you wait until the last possible second before He shows up...for a reason!

1 Peter 1:7 (NKJV)

that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

See when your faith is "tested" by fire...you're sweating it out...getting nervous...is God going to show up...what am I going to do...THIS is to prove your faith, TO YOU!

God is never late...but He's also never early...He's always right on time because He knows what you need and when you need it!

So when it “looks” like He’s not going to show up...WAIT...He’s coming!

The third thing that Saul saw, that lead to his disobedience was:

3. He saw the Philistines gathered

This is what pushed Saul over the edge of disobedience...his support people are leaving him...God is not showing up...and if those two things weren’t enough...they enemy is gathered.

Naturally, if you felt alone, no friends, no presence of God, and you see the enemy that’s ready for you...what would you feel? FEAR

And the problem with fear is that when it takes over, it shoves faith out the back door. Fear causes you to act irrationally but even more importantly, fear causes you to act unspiritually...

2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

If God has given us a spirit of power...this means He has given us the spiritual resources that we need to overcome every single trial and threat!

If God has given us a spirit of love...this means He has given us the ability God centered because God is love.

If God has given us a spirit of a sound mind...this means He has given us the ability to exercise a self-controlled mind, one that does not give way to disorder and confusion but focuses on our confidence in Jesus for every situation!

We can’t react by what we see...no matter what it looks like.

Hebrews 11:1 (NKJV)

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

People will fail you. God will seem to be late. The enemy will gather before you. You will experience all of these things...how will you react?

Saul let what he saw, drive him to disobedience. And He continued in a pattern of disobedience throughout his life and rule. But that doesn’t have to be the case for you! You don’t have to let your flaws define you. In Christ, you have the power to overcome!

Jesus loves you. He understands your weaknesses and He can be your strength! He offers new life in Him and He offers abundant life. Life filled with the power of the Holy Spirit...who directs your path...and your path is the path of obedience that leads to victory!