

Old Testament Lessons

OT Stories That Teach Us About God and Faith

August 02, 2020

- I. Introduction
 - A. Today we will look at Israel's king Saul.
 - B. Prayer
- II. Saul's distrust of God, impatience, pride and need for approval harm him.
 - A. **1 Samuel 8:1** . . . When [the prophet] Samuel was old he appointed his [two] sons judges over Israel. [3] His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice. [4] Then all the elders of Israel came to Samuel [5] and said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations."
 1. Though Samuel saw this request as evil on the part of Israel's elders, he took it to God, and God said He would give Israel a king. However, Samuel was to warn Israel what a king would cost them. Yet in spite of this warning, they still wanted a king.
 - B. **1 Samuel 9:1** . . . Now there was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, a Benjamite, a mighty man of valor. [2] He had a son whose name was Saul, a choice and handsome man, and there was not a more handsome person than he among the sons of Israel; from his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people.
 1. God had a man selected to fill the role as king over Israel. And though God gave Saul the Holy Spirit and empowered him to rule over Israel, He kept silent about His intentions for Saul's throne to be in his family forever.
 2. In the next part of this story, God uses Kish's lost donkeys to bring Saul and Samuel together in order for Samuel to inform Saul that he was God's choice as king, and to anoint him as king.
 - C. **[9:15]** Now a day before Saul's coming [to where Samuel was] (*Saul was out looking for his father's donkeys*), the LORD revealed Saul's coming to Samuel saying, [16] "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over My people Israel; and he will deliver My people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have regarded My people, because their cry has come to Me." [17] When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, "Behold, the man of whom I spoke to you! This one shall rule over My people."
 - D. **[9:18]** Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate and said, "Please tell me where the seer's house is." (*Earlier in the story, Saul's servant*

recommended asking the prophet Samuel to tell them which way to go to find the donkeys since they had been looking for three days and had not found them.)

- E. [19] Samuel answered Saul and said, "I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and in the morning I will let you go, and will tell you all that is on your mind. [20] As for your donkeys which were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found. *(Then Samuel asks Saul a question that was a veiled reference to Saul being the new king.)* And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? *(Or, who is he who all Israel is looking for? Who will have the wealth and honor of Israel?)* Is it not for you and for all your father's household?"
1. [21] Saul replied, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me in this way?" *(It is important to the whole story to see Saul's humble honesty here. He knew he was not from a tribe or family that had any right to think one of their own should be selected as king.)*
 2. [25] When they came down from the high place into the city, Samuel spoke with Saul on the roof. [26] And they arose early; and at daybreak Samuel called to Saul on the roof, saying, "Get up, that I may send you away."
- F. **1 Samuel 10:1** . . . Then Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it on Saul's head, kissed him and said, "Has not the LORD anointed you a ruler over His inheritance? [2] When you go from me today, you will find two men close to Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah (*ZEL-zuh*); and they will say to you, "The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. Now your father has ceased to be concerned about the donkeys and is anxious for you, saying, 'What shall I do about my son?' [3] Then you will go on further from there, and you will come as far as the oak of Tabor (*TAY bawr*), and there three men going up to God at Bethel (*BETH-uhl*) will meet you, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a jug of wine; [4] and they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from their hand. *(Notice the detail in God's plan, and the extent to which He went to empower and install Saul as king.)*
- G. [5] Afterward you will come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is *(This is an interesting place to send Saul, especially since God said Saul was chosen to deliver God's people from the hand of the Philistines – 9:16)*; and it shall be as soon as you have come to the city,

that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and a lyre, and they will be prophesying. [6] Then **the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you mightily** (*Saul was commissioned by God to war against the Philistines, and God gave him the tools to do it well – including the Holy Spirit for wisdom and power. In the same way, God gives us the Holy Spirit for wisdom and power so we can battle our ungodly thoughts and desires, temptations, and the attractions and ways of the world.*), and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man. (*This is similar to the change that takes place when we repent and are born again. However, as with Saul, so with us. Though God gives us everything we need to get started right – including becoming a new creation, we must maintain the change and pursue further growth in keeping with the change for the change to last. If it doesn't last, it is not God's failure, but ours.*)

- H. [7] It shall be when these signs come to you, **do for yourself what the occasion requires, for God is with you.** (*God chose Saul, but He had no intentions of controlling Saul – and He doesn't control us. Like Saul, we are to use our intellect and the wisdom that comes from God and His word to assess situations and do what we deem best, knowing that God is with us.*). (*Then Samuel gives Saul explicit directions.*) [8] And you shall go down before me (*that is, before Samuel*) to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. **You shall wait seven days until I come to you** and show you what you should do."
- I. In **10:9-13**, Samuel's prophecy played out exactly as spoken: the donkeys had been found and were safe, Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he prophesied.
- J. In **vs 20-24**, we learn that though Samuel knew Saul was to be king, God chose to make His choice public by going through the process of casting lots to see who would be king. And so, lots were cast until Saul was singled out as Israel's new king. But when they looked for him, he could not be found. [22] So they inquired of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" And the LORD said, "Behold, he is hiding himself by the baggage." (*We don't know if this was humility or shyness on Saul's part, but whatever it was, he soon found pride and sought public approval to his own hurt.*) [23] So they ran and took him from there, and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. [24] Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see **him whom the LORD has chosen?** Surely there is no one like

him among all the people." So all the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!" (*Outwardly, Saul looked like a king. Inwardly, Saul had some felt-needs to overcome and difficult choices to make before he would become the kind of king God chose him to be.*)

K. **1 Samuel 11:1** . . . It was only a few days after Saul was crowned king that Nahash (*NAY hash*) the **Ammonite** besieged Jabesh-gilead (*JAY besh-GIL ih uhd*), [an Israelite city]; so all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a covenant with us and we will serve you." [2] But Nahash said to them, "I will make it with you on this condition, that I will gouge out the right eye of every one of you, thus I will make it a reproach on all Israel." [3] The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Let us alone for seven days, that we may send messengers throughout the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to deliver us, we will come out to you."

1. Saul heard about the plight of Jabesh and he raised an army to rescue Jabesh. [11] The next morning Saul put the [soldiers] in three companies; and they came into the midst of the [Ammonite] camp at the morning watch and struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day. The Ammonites who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

L. In **chapter 12**, Samuel chastises the people for rejecting God's rule over them and wanting a king. He then tells them what they will need to do to have a godly nation. We read this in –

1. **1 Samuel 12:13-14** . . . "Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen, whom you have asked for, and behold, the LORD has set a king over you. [14] If you will fear the LORD and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the LORD, then **both you and also the king** who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God."

2. God makes it clear that the people are as responsible for the godliness of the nation as the king. The principle is this: the more godly the people, the more godly the king. I believe this is also true in the church today – because it is the people who ultimately select the pastor and other leaders. Therefore, the more godly the people, the more godly the leadership, because that is the kind of leadership the people will choose and follow.

3. Of course, the opposite is also true. Less godly church attendees will choose less godly leadership.

M. **1 Samuel 13:5** . . . Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and [soldiers] like the sand which

is on the seashore in abundance; and they came up and camped in Michmash, east of Beth-aven (*beth-AY vuhn*). [6] When the men of Israel saw that they were in [what appeared to be a no-win situation], the people hid themselves in caves, in thickets, in cliffs, in cellars, and in pits. [7] Also some of the Hebrews crossed the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead. But as for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

N. **1 Samuel 13:8** . . . Now Saul waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel (**10:8**), but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and **the people were scattering** from him. [9] **So Saul** (*fearing he wouldn't have enough soldiers to fight the enemy, took matters into his own hands and*) **said**, "Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering. [10] **As soon as he finished** offering the burnt offering, behold, **Samuel came** (*If only Saul had trusted God and God's servant, Samuel, enough to wait a little longer. How often do we grow impatient with God, or with waiting for relief, and assuming God is not going to rescue us, take matters into our own hands and do what we believe best?*); and Saul went out to meet Samuel and to greet him. [11] But Samuel said, "**What have you done?**" And Saul said (*Like too many of us, Saul is about to give an explanation for why he did what he did before acknowledging what he did – as if his explanation makes what he did right.*), "Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, [12] therefore I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.' So **I forced myself** and offered the burnt offering (*Or in other words, I knew I shouldn't and I didn't really want to, but the circumstances were such that it was the only thing I could do! Have you used a similar argument to defend doing what you knew you shouldn't?*)."

O. [**13**] 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**.

1. Do you see that God's plan for Saul included establishing his kingdom forever? Saul could have had what David got.
2. But sadly, Saul prevented that from happening by foolishly giving in to his fears, taking matters into his own hands, and acting as if the reason he did what he did made what he did right and good. Yet when God has made His plan clear, and we take matters into

our own hands and go our own way, our way can never be right and good, but rather foolish and sinful.

- P. [14] But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart (*David*), and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." (*The loss was far greater than the gain!*)
- Q. **1 Samuel 15:2** . . . Then Samuel said to Saul, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against Israel on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. [3] Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'"
- R. [4] Then Saul summoned the [fighting men] and numbered them, 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah. [5] Saul came to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the valley. [7] So Saul defeated the Amalekites ...[8] He captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. [9] But **Saul and the people spared Agag and the best** of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but **everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.** (*It is easier to obey God when it doesn't cost you much, but as the cost of obedience rises, the desire to disobey increases.*)
- S. [10] Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, [11] "**I regret that I have made Saul king**, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands." And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night. [12] Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul; and it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul came to Carmel (*KAHR m'l*), and behold, **he set up a monument for himself**, then turned and proceeded on down to Gilgal." (*We see pride and the desire for public praise creeping into Saul's heart and mind.*)
- T. [13] Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have carried out the command of the LORD." [14] But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"
- U. [15] Saul said, "**They** (*the soldiers*) have brought them from the Amalekites (*Saul blamed the soldiers in order to make it look like he was innocent.*), for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, **to sacrifice to the LORD** your God (*Saul offered a noble reason for their disobedience as if a noble reason would make their disobedience okay.*);

but the rest we have utterly destroyed." [16] Then Samuel said to Saul, "Wait, and let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night." And Saul said to him, "Speak!" [17] Samuel said, "Is it not true, **though you were little in your own eyes**, you were made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the LORD anointed you king over Israel, [18] and the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are exterminated.' [19] Why then did you not obey the LORD, but greedily took the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD?"

1. [20] Then Saul said to Samuel, "**I did obey** the voice of the LORD, and went on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Malek (*as proof I defeated the Amalekites*), and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. [21] But **the people took** some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, **to sacrifice to the LORD** your God at Gilgal."
 2. In other words, Saul claimed he did what God told him to do. It was the people who took what God said to destroy. However, they took it for a good reason. Of course, Saul is the king and he could have stopped them, but still, they are the ones who disobeyed, not him. Do you hear yourself in this?
- V. [22] Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? (*Or, has God as much delight in doing what you know is wrong and repenting afterward as He is in obeying?*) Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice (*confession and repentance in our day*), and to heed (*listen and obey*) than the fat of rams. [23] For rebellion (*knowingly disobeying God*) is as [evil] as the sin of divination, and insubordination (*willfully disobeying authority*) is as [evil as] iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king."
- W. [24] Then Saul said to Samuel, "**I have sinned**; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, **because I feared the people** (*Saul's fear of rejection and his felt-need for approval from the people, instead of seeking God's approval, was his downfall.*) **and listened to their voice** (*Again, Saul admits guilt but tries to explain it wasn't his fault because the people pushed him into it. How easily we use blame to look better than we are.*)
- X. In vs 25-30, Saul and Samuel have an exchange that ends with Samuel confirming that God has rejected Saul and will not establish his kingdom over Israel forever.

Y. [30] Then Saul said, "**I have sinned; but please honor me now before the elders of my people** (*tribe of Benjamin*) and before Israel (*the other eleven tribes*), and go back with me, that I may worship the LORD your God."

1. This time, Saul was willing to admit his guilt, but he did not want to be publically shamed or to look bad in the eyes of the people.
2. So, without concern for God's honor or for setting a godly example of how to deal with having sinned, Saul gave way to pride and looked for a way to come out of this embarrassing situation looking good to the people. And he wanted Samuel's help to do it.

III. Conclusion

- A. Saul started out a humble man – even though he was taller than everyone else in Israel, and even though God selected him to be king.
- B. But as with all of us, circumstances came along that tempted Saul to distrust God, become impatient with God's timing, become proud, and feel the need for people's approval. Saul failed these tests, and in so doing lost far more than he gained.
- C. May we learn from Saul to make better, wiser choices as we face circumstances that tempt us like they tempted Saul.