

1 Samuel 13:1-15a - One and Done

One of the scariest warnings we have in all of Scripture is the warning against being a fraud. Being someone who says they love the Lord, someone who appears outwardly obedient, someone who maybe people even look up to, only to be found out that none of it is true.

Titus 1:16: They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works.

1 John 2:4: Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Matthew 7:21-23: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

All of these are examples are people who claim to know Jesus, maybe even earnestly claim to know him. But they are frauds. They don't know Jesus at all. In fact, this theme is one of the earliest topics Jesus preaches about and one of the topics he most constantly preaches about.

And we know that it's not just isolated to Jesus' ministry. Religious fraud is timeless. We think of people we know in our own lives who we've been encouraged by, maybe family members, maybe friends, people who were maybe to us in our own walk and now they don't follow Jesus at all.

And by the way, believing in eternal security - that a person cannot forfeit their salvation - doesn't mean we don't have to deal with this. The classic expression "once saved, always saved" is often one of the most deceptive phrases that we recite to ourselves. Just because you know someone who made a profession of faith long ago, who was involved in church, memorized scores of Scriptures, loved Sunday school, does not mean they were every truly saved to begin with.

And just like the Israelites who cried out for a king and thought Saul would be amazing, we often want to console ourselves with superficial elements in a person's life that really have nothing to do with true regeneration at all.

People can be very, very deceptive. There were people that Paul ministered alongside with for years, who he had no idea were not regenerate. Hymanaeus and Alexander made a shipwreck of their faith (**1 Tim. 1:19-20**). Paul didn't see that coming. Phygelus and Hermogenes turned away from Paul. (**2 Tim. 1:15**) - they betrayed him. The apostle John didn't know that Diotrephes was going to want to always be the star of the show (**3 John 9**).

Nobody suspected Judas was a fraud. Jesus made him the treasurer. It was an utter shock to everyone but 2 people: Jesus and who? Judas. Judas knew he was a fraud. Isn't that amazing? Judas saw God every day for 3 years and still put on a show. How sad.

Can I just stop for a minute before we get to our text? If you know that your faith is a fraud. If you know you don't really follow Jesus. If you know that your life is really just a show, and not truly committed to Jesus, I am pleading with you to turn to Jesus in true faith.

No one is going to be mad at you. No one is going to hate you. If you came to me in a couple of weeks and said, "Jason I've been thinking about what you said and I think I've just been putting on a show for 20 years and all I really want is to truly follow Jesus" I would be the first to rejoice with you! And I promise you there's a whole congregation of people here who would rejoice alongside of you. And all the angels of heaven would rejoice.

It would be 5 minutes of humiliation. And it would be an eternity of glory. I still remember when I was 14 and walked back into the chapel after receiving Christ and my camp counselor stood up and announced that God

had saved me. I thought I was going to vomit standing there in front of 100 kids. You know what they did? They cheered. God in his mercy had saved a wretch like me.

If your faith is not genuine, I am pleading with you to come to Jesus.

Why do say all that? Because here we find out that Saul is a fraud. Saul does not a man after God's own heart. That's OT verbiage for "Saul is not a believer." He's a fake.

And we probably wouldn't have known that just on a quick read of the chapter unless Samuel told us that in **Vs. 14**. If you're tracking what has happened so far in Saul's life this chapter seems to come out of nowhere. His rule as king of Israel has barely gotten off the ground when he is basically told he has been rejected by God as king.

Chap 8: Israel demanded a king.

Chap 9: Introduced to Saul who was looking for donkeys - the Lord had Samuel to anoint him as Israel's first king.

Chap. 10: Confirmed his kingship with a series of miraculous events.

Chap. 11: Saul's first act as king is to defeat the Ammonites

Chap 12: Is Samuel's farewell address.

And then here in chapter 13 we have the second battle of Saul's reign. He sacrifices when he shouldn't have. And as a result his kingdom is gone. That should come as something of a surprise to us. That's pretty harsh.

That doesn't seem to be all that bad to us. Is it really an impeachable offense for the king to sacrifice rather than Samuel?

Num. 18:1-7 says that only the sons of Aaron from the tribe of Levi were to sacrifice. Actually it's the death penalty if anyone else does. But think of David. David committed premeditated adultery with Bathsheba, committed willful murder of her husband Uriah, was given to anger, overlooked cold-blooded murder, and his household was a train wreck. But David is called a man after God's own heart and Saul is not. How is that possible? Is an unlawful sacrifice really that bad?

Well, it was sin. The wages of sin is what? Death. So it is bad even though we might not think so.

But really, what this sacrifice revealed a whole host of spiritual problems with Saul. And all of them pointed to the reality that Saul was not following the Lord with his whole heart. **Vs. 14** makes it clear that Saul's heart is really the central issue. **Read 14**

This is central point of this whole section. The events surrounding this sacrifice proved that Saul was not a man after God's own heart. What does that mean? It means to be someone who has essential characteristics of someone else.

My sons love meat and potatoes dinners. They are boys after my own heart. They are like me in that essential characteristic. My daughter likes to ride around on motorcycles. She's a girl after my own heart. She likes what I like.

And where we usually use the term lightly and for fun, the Bible uses the phrase "a man after God's own heart" as the most important aspect about the person. This is the thing that determines whether God looks on someone with favor as a child or with disfavor as not his child. It is the difference between the genuine follower of God and the disingenuous follower of God.

Look over at 16:7-8. This is where Samuel is sent to anoint David as the new king of Israel. Most of us know this little passage well. **Read 7-8**

This is the issue. God doesn't care what our outside looks like. Being beautiful does not make you more like God. Being healthy does not make you more like God. Being charming or funny or "deep" doesn't make you a

man or woman after God's own heart. Knowing a bunch of Bible terms and theology and memorizing a bunch of passages doesn't make you a man or woman after God's heart.

It's what's on the inside. It's an internal compulsion to please the risen Lord Jesus that matters to God.

It's someone, as David says in the Psalms, who delights in the Law of God and meditates on the day and night.

Psalm 1:2

So with the rest of our time, what I want to do back in **1 Sam. 13** is take a look at this section and really point out several ways that this seemingly benign sacrifice revealed that Saul really was a fraud. He really didn't love God.

With each I want to show how it exposes his sinful heart. But also with each point I want to mention what the alternative would be.

1) Saul fails to fulfill his responsibilities. Read 1-3

Now there's a fair amount of technical issues we could spend time on in just these 3 verses. I'll only touch on a couple things but the main point here is that Saul fails in his kingly responsibility as a warrior. Jonathan, Saul's oldest son, is really the warrior in Saul's household. Saul is not a great warrior, he farms it out to others, and then he takes the credit. We'll come back to that.

But first, in **Vs. 1**, we have something of a technical difficulty. We don't actually know what the original version of **Vs. 1** says completely.

NIV / NASB: Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years.

ESV: Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years over Israel,

Why such a difference? Well, there are some places in the Bible where we are not 100% sure what the original text said. This is one of them.

We know the Bible is without any error in the original manuscripts, but we actually don't have any of those. We have copies or translations. Usually we can pinpoint exactly what the original manuscript said based on the copies. But in a few cases we can't. And this is one of them.

We should be quick to point out that **none** of the passages we are unsure of affect any critical doctrine. No verse puts the Trinity in doubt. No verse undermines that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. No verse disputes the resurrection of Jesus. None of that.

Here, the only thing that is impacted is how old Saul was when he began to reign and when exactly this event occurred. The NIV and NASB attempt to do a little detective work and solve the problem for us. The usual age of maturity in Israel was 30. So the part of the text that may be missing is that he was 31, not just 1. And this event happened 2 years later when he was 33. But we have to be honest and say we just don't know for sure.

Here's what we do know: the Philistines have crept back into Israel. There was a time back in chapter 7 under Samuel's leadership that the Philistines were utterly defeated and their forces were pushed back into their own land along the Mediterranean Sea. But apparently they have come back in on Saul's watch.

So Saul prepares for battle, dividing up the troops between him and Jonathan. And Jonathan goes and he defeats the Philistines in Geba.

Now, on the surface that doesn't seem to be a bad thing. But as we keep reading through 1 Samuel we're going to find out that Saul isn't much of a fighter. He takes credit for fighting, but he's not fulfilling the role that God set him up for which was a king who was a military leader. Look at **Vs. 3-4. Read**

So who gets the credit for the defeat of the garrison? Saul does. The Philistines knew it was Jonathan. But the Israelites heard a different story: they heard it was Saul. So they come out to join Saul.

There's also an interesting phrase in here "Let the Hebrews hear." What does that mean? Saul is talking to Hebrew mercenaries who had actually switched over to the Philistines. **Chap. 14:21** talks about Hebrews who had deserted to the Philistines. Genetically they were Hebrews but they weren't acting for Israel. They were undercover mercenaries for Philistia and Saul is putting them on notice that he's going to defeat the Philistines and they should rejoin him.

Well, he hasn't done anything. He is fantastic at making himself look good while not doing a thing.

The Kingship was designed to protect the people and fight for the people. He was very much a general. But he continually fails at this one task.

This is really the beginning of a long string of not fulfilling his duties. This will be Saul's legacy. He never stepped up to do what God called him to do.

When people continually fail to fulfill the responsibilities God has given them, it's an indication that there's a problem with their heart. And let me be clear: I'm not talking about someone who is really trying with all their heart and they just feel like they're missing it. Or someone who is discouraged and is struggling to keep going. Those are different issues.

I'm talking about someone who at every turn makes some sort of excuse for not doing what God has called them to do. Someone who continually complains about what God has given them in life. Someone who lives life like the victim of circumstance.

What's the opposite? Someone who does everything in their power to fulfill the obligations God has given them. They know God has sovereignly given them their responsibilities and situation in life. They know they are weak and completely dependent on the Holy Spirit and work to fulfill what God has given them.

One of my favorite commands in the NT is **1 Cor. 16:13**: Paul says "act like men." He's not saying go be a cage fighter with big biceps and bad attitude. He's saying grow up; man up. Act like a man of God and get done the things God has called you to get done.

The man - or woman - of God will continually strive to fulfill the obligations God has given them especially when it's difficult. Maybe they won't get everything done they want to get done. Sometimes godly responsibility is prioritizing things

God wants someone who not only fulfills the responsibilities he has given them but is willing to take more as time and ability allow.

2) Saul is more fearful of men than of God. Read 5-7

Now, just as a heads up: along with the scribal error of **Vs. 1** with numbers about Saul's age, there seems to be a scribal error with the amount of chariots here. 30,000 chariots is really just inconceivable. A chariot in ancient times was like a tank. They were devastating and expensive to build or buy. When Solomon was at the peak of his military might and had more money than any nation on the planet he only had 1,400 chariots.

So most scholars - even conservative scholars - believe that there were probably only 3,000 chariots. The reality is, that even with 3,000 chariots - if that's what it was - that's a lot of chariots. Plus horsemen, plus standing troops. This is an incredibly large standing army that is stationed in the middle of Israel about to attack Saul and his men. Saul only had 3,000 troops in the area.

It's so large, in fact, that Saul's men are fleeing. They are running away in fear of the army. And it appears that Saul is afraid as well. The other sad traits that we'll see with Saul really spring from his fear of men.

The reality is that although Saul's first battle against the Ammonites was a victory, he probably felt confident because of the sheer numbers of his troops. He had 330k troops to go to battle. Yes the Lord delivered them into his hand, but it seems as though he took courage because he had resources, not because he was trusting God.

In the past, God had delivered Israel over and over with just a fraction of the army that their enemies had. Sure there were a lot of troops here, but really Saul had nothing to be afraid of.

See, a lot of times we're like Saul. We feel confident about how we can serve God when everything is going well. When we can take on the obstacles in life in our own power and give God a little head nod.

But really, a man after God's own heart is not afraid when things don't seem to be going their way. Sometimes trusting God for provision or direction looks like foolishness to the world. Gideon going to war with just 300 men would have been foolish to the world. But actually it showed his faith in God's ability to be victorious despite insurmountable odds.

David killed Goliath when everyone was afraid. Jonathan, Saul's son, is the same way. **Read 14:6**

That's a man after God's own heart. Not afraid of any one or any obstacle. God can save by many or by few. Functionally, we often think that God **can** save! But only by many. Only when we have all the resources we need. Only when our lives look outwardly impressive to other people. And other people don't think we're crazy.

But a heart like God's heart is one that is not afraid of what other people think. We should listen to counsel and submit to the Word of God, but we don't operate out of the fear of man. We don't orient our lives around what other people are thinking of us.

Psalms 118:6-7: The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? The Lord is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

Had Saul had feared God as much as he feared the Philistine army he may have seen God do an amazing work that day. But actually his fear of men drove him further into sin.

3) Saul is impatient. Read 8-9

This is obvious overflow of his fear of men. He's been waiting for Samuel for 7 days. Samuel said he would come and offer sacrifices before the battle. But he's not coming. And Saul gets impatient.

Impatience is not something we would probably put up there on the list of grave sins. It's not even something we might consider a sin. But consider that patience is actually one of the chief signs of following God.

Gal. 5:22: The fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, what? Patience. The manifestation of the Spirit in someone is a life that is patience - and growing in patience.

1 Cor. 13:4 - the love chapter. What's the first definition of love? Love is what? Patient! If you are not patient you are not loving someone.

A lot of people flaunt their impatience as though it's just a personality tic. As though God is not concerned with whether or not we are patient. "Oh that's just my personality." No, it's a sin.

Now I'm going to give you a controversial illustration about how we really don't think of the seriousness of impatience. And I'm not pointing at anyone, but I want you to think through this with me.

When my wife has been pregnant people have asked me "do you know what you're having?" When I tell them "No, it'll be a surprise" I can't tell you how often people say, "I'm not patient, I'd have to find out." Now, it's okay to find out if your baby is a boy or a girl. That's great. You want to plan your nursery colors or buy baby clothes that aren't all yellow. Go for it!

But what is amazing is that it's not even on our radar that impatience is unloving and sinful. It's just like drunkenness and slander and greed and lust and murder. But we often think of it as not really mattering to God. But it does matter to God and is one of the chief signs that God is in us.

How does the Spirit work in us for patience? When we are struggling with road rage or outbursts of anger or holding to talk to a representative...what truths do we remember to fuel patience?

We remember that God has been supremely patient with us.

2 Pet. 3:9: The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

If you are a believer it's because God was patient toward you.

Rom. 2:4: [God's] kindness and forbearance and patience...led us to repentance.

If God has been patient with us, if he has worked in us, then we can wait for others.

4) Doesn't Obey Authorities. Read 8

This is a quick point, but an important one. Saul didn't do what Samuel told him to do. Yes, Saul is king. But Samuel is the spiritual leader. Samuel is the one who sacrifices. In the OT, when it came to worshipping the Lord, Saul was to defer to Samuel.

Yes, it's impatience. Yes, it's fear of man. But there's a simple aspect of defiance here that we can't overlook. One of the themes the Bible continually drives home is that everyone is under some kind of authority. If you're a child, it's your parents. If you're a wife, it's your husband. If you're at school it's your teacher.

5) Makes Excuses. Read 12-14

Saul makes 2 excuses. The people were leaving me, I had to do something! It's the people's fault. And Samuel, **you** didn't come when you said. It's your fault. You know who Saul sounds like? He sounds like Adam in the Garden after God confronts him with his sin. "The woman you gave to me did this!"

Actually, the Hebrew emphasizes Saul's accusation against Samuel. "When you didn't come!" Oh, Saul's disobedience is Samuel's fault. Saul wanted to obey, but forced himself to disobey.

The irony here, of course, is that Saul thought he could gain God's favor by disobedience.

But what Samuel brings up over and over again is the command of God. Four times he says Saul disobeyed the **command** of God. Saul can make all the excuses he wants, but the bottom line is he did not obey God and God will not accept any excuses.

You ever met people who just can't seem to own up to their own failings? People who will look for anyone and anything to point to as the reason they didn't do what they knew they were supposed to do? That was Saul.

I mentioned that David's sins seemed to have far outweighed Saul's. You what made David a man after God's own heart? When he was confronted with his sin he confessed it. He repented from his sin. He realized the gravity of it and did everything he could to fix it. Sometimes he couldn't. You can't bring Uriah back from the dead. You can't undo adultery. But you can do everything in your power to take ownership and obey going forward.

That's what God really wants. God doesn't want excuses he wants ownership. People who will own up to their sins. Confess their sins. Be honest with their failings and fall on the mercy of God.

Can you imagine how different Israel's history would have been if Saul had said, "Samuel, you're right. I have failed. I listened to the people when I should have listened to God. I sacrificed when I should have waited.

Please forgive me and help me.” We would be talking about how Saul was a type of Christ, not David. But he doesn’t do that. Ad Samuel walks away and the people scatter.

You remember when we started 1 Samuel I mentioned that there are types of Christ in the Bible and especially in 1 Samuel. David is a type of Christ. Interestingly, Saul is what’s called an anti-type. He is the polar opposite of everything our Savior is.

Saul was a king who failed to lead, a king who made an unlawful sacrifice, a king who was not a man after God’s own heart, a king whose dynasty was rejected and a king whose men fled from him.

You know what we have in Jesus? We have the true King - the King of kings - whose heart is always after the Father’s heart. He does everything he sees the Father doing. He makes the perfect sacrifice accepted by the Father. A King whose kingdom shall not pass away and a King whose followers run to him, not from him.

But he is a king who first and foremost who wants our hearts. Not a game, not a show, not power. He wants us, from the inside, out.

Pray