

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## 1 SAMUEL 12-15

It's been said, "People usually get the leaders they deserve."

This was certainly the case with ancient Israel. Their first king, Saul, was a microcosm of the nation. Israel wanted an earthly king to be like the nations around them. They inherited a king who lived to please people – not God.

Saul begins to show his true colors in tonight's chapters.

After Saul defeats the Ammonites the people go to Gilgal to celebrate their victory, and offer God thanksgiving. Chapter 12 records Samuel's message...

"Now Samuel said to all Israel: "Indeed I have heeded your voice in all that you said to me, and have made a king over you. And now here is the king, walking before you; and I am old and grayheaded, and look, my sons are with you.

I have walked before you from my childhood to this day." Imagine spending a whole life in the fishbowl of public ministry. Samuel grew up under the scrutiny.

He wasn't just the neighbor - but the pastor next door. He wasn't just the Little League coach – but the pastor/coach. People drove by his house, and thought, "*the pastor lives there.*" Samuel had always been measured by a higher standard.

He adds, "Look, my sons are with you..." My kids know what kind of man I am.

“Here I am. Witness against me before the LORD and before His anointed: Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I received any bribe with which to blind my eyes? I will restore it to you. And they said, "You have not cheated us or oppressed us, nor have you taken anything from any man's hand."

Here’s an example for us... Samuel ordered his life so God’s enemies wouldn’t have any dirt to throw at his reputation. He lived his life above reproach.

Samuel’s life was a witness to the Lord’s faithfulness and keeping-power.

“Then he said to them, "The LORD is witness against you, and His anointed (the king) is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand."

And they answered, "He is witness."

In verse 6 Samuel begins a history lesson... “Then Samuel said to the people, "It is the LORD who raised up Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt.” God’s past works are a predictor of His work in the future.

“Now therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did to you and your fathers: When Jacob had gone into Egypt, and your fathers cried out to the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place.” The exodus was an answer to the people’s prayer.

“And when they forgot the LORD their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them.”

Remember the cycle that repeated itself throughout the book of Judges...

The people follow false gods and **sin**. God punishes Israel by making them **slaves** to their enemies. They repent and offer **supplication**. God raises up a Judge - a **savior**. **God's Spirit** empowers Israel to victory. The triumph is followed by a period of peace and **serenity** – *which is interrupted by another round of sin...*

“Then they cried out to the LORD, and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD and served the Baals and Ashtoreths; but now deliver us from the hand of our enemies, and we will serve You.'

"And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you dwelt in safety.”

Notice, Bedan is listed among the judges, but he's not mentioned in the book of Judges... Some scholars take the name “Bedan” as a variant spelling of “Barak”.

“And when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the LORD your God was your king. Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the LORD has set a king over you.” Saul the Benjamite.

“If you fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the LORD your God. However, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as it was against your fathers.

Samuel’s warning is confirmed by God with a miracle. Verse 16 "Now therefore, stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes: "Is today not the wheat harvest? I will call to the LORD, and He will send thunder and rain, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking a king for yourselves."

The time of the wheat harvest was late May, early June. It was the dry season in Israel. Yet at Samuel’s command, God will send a good ole thunderstorm. God will add some special effects to Samuel’s sermon to hammer home its importance.

“So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves."

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.” Here’s a good word - don’t go after empty stuff - like drugs, sex, money, fame – that doesn’t profit or deliver.

“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.”

After Samuel’s sermon - and God’s stormy affirmation... the people repent.

And in verse 19, they ask Samuel to intercede for them. Samuel assures Israel he will. Vs 23, “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.”

Guys, did you realize there is such a thing as *the sin of prayerlessness*?

This comes as a shock to most Christians. Prayer is not an elective – an optional activity - rather its part of Christianity’s required curriculum.

Prayer is an incredible privilege – to touch the hem of Jesus’ garment – to communicate with the Almighty... but prayer is more than a privilege, it’s a responsibility. It’s our duty to pray... and to pray for each other!

Verse 24 “Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.” I hope we’ll all consider what great things God has done for us! “But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.” The warning is as needed as the encouragement.

Chapter 13, “Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose for himself 3000 men of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in the mountains of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent away, every man to his tent.”

After Saul’s victory over the Ammon he disbands his standing army. He keeps a small militia to protect the king – and a special ops force under Jonathan.

And this Jonathan was a feisty general – ready to take on Israel’s enemies.

“And Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, 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, 30,000 chariots and 6000 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.” Jon stirs up the Philistines. They camp in Saul’s backyard – in the hills of Benjamin.

“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.” They were so frightened they abandoned the battlefield. They went AWOL.

“As for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.”

Verse 8 “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.” Saul is being tested... does he trust in God – or does he trust in his military might?

Samuel told Saul to wait so he could offer a sacrifice to God, and pray for Israel’s victory. But from a military standpoint Saul needs to act!

The longer Saul waits to launch his strike against the Philistines the more his troops unravel. Every day he delays the panic spreads and the pressure mounts. More and more Hebrews chicken out and disappear into the countryside...

Saul doesn’t dare go into battle without committing the battle to God – but a sacrifice is not a king’s privilege. It takes Samuel, a priest, to initiate a sacrifice.

FB Meyer once said, “God can only use those who trust Him absolutely; and He often tests them by long delays.” A prerequisite for Christian service is the willingness to wait on God. Get ahead of God and you’re on your own.

Saul reveals his character – or lack of it – in verse 9, “So Saul said, “Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me.” And he offered the burnt offering.”

The blood is still dripping from his knife, when Samuel

shows up.

“Now it happened, as soon as he had finished offering 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?"

And 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.” This was Saul’s problem – he “felt compelled” and acted. He couldn’t control his compulsions. Saul acted on feelings not faith. Feelings, and pressures, and snap decisions get us into deep trouble.

An externally motivated person tends to respond to whatever outward stimulus applies the most pressure. We should tie our feelings to the anchor of God’s truth.

Samuel has ominous words for Saul. His impatience has cost him dearly...

Verse 13 “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, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."



This was a defining moment. Saul fails the test, and God concludes he can't be trusted. Saul continues to sit on Israel's throne, but God's choice sits elsewhere.

Verse 14 tells us God wanted **“a man after His own heart.”** In chapter 16 He finds him in a shepherd boy named David... Saul thought, *what does this do for me?* David thinks, *how can I please God?* Here's a poem, **“When conducting the band you'll find it's allowed; you're expected to stand with your back to the crowd.”**

This was Saul's problem in a nutshell. He couldn't lead with his back to the crowd. Every move he made played to the crowd. His only goal was to enhance his image. Saul was so insecure he lusted for people's approval at all costs.

What about you? Do you allow the winds of circumstance to drive your ship - or are you anchored to principle? Are you an *internally-motivated person* or are you an *externally-motivated person*? Does your insecurity cause you to cave in to the opinions of others, or do you trust God to make you strong? *Is image everything*, or are you determined to please the Lord? *Are you a Saul or are you a David?*

Verse 15 **“Then Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people present with him, about 600 men. Saul, Jonathan his son, and the people present with them remained in Gibeah of Benjamin.**

**But the Philistines encamped in Michmash. Then raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies. One company turned to the road to Ophrah, to the land of Shual (northward), another company turned to the road to**

Beth Horon (west), and another company turned to the road of the border that overlooks the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness (eastward).

These commando raids were intended to immobilize Saul. Their mission was to cut off travel and prohibited Saul from rallying and supporting his troops.

Verse 19 “Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, “Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears.”

But all the Israelites would go down to the Philistines to sharpen each man's plowshare, his mattock, his ax, and his sickle; and the charge for a sharpening was a pim for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to set the points of the goads.” And you can be sure no Israelite left with a really sharp edge. The Philistines didn't want the Israelite farmers turning tools into weapons.

The Philistines held a monopoly on the latest technology. Remember the Philistines were a sea-faring people. They'd imported the ability to smelt and sharpen iron from Greece. It was an advantage they wanted to keep.

Verse 22 “So it came about, on the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people who were with Saul and Jonathan. But they were found with Saul and Jonathan his son.” Only the royal family had a sword or spear. Any army Israel might muster would be vastly unarmed.

“And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.”

While Saul is sulking, the Philistines are on the move. Their three commando units have cut off supply lines and stalled troop movements. The Israeli army has been immobilized. Saul is providing no leadership in the face of this aggression.

Jonathan abhors Saul's silence. Israel should retaliate. He takes it on himself to conduct a secret offensive... Chapter 14  
“Now it happened one day that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who bore his armor, "Come, let us go over to the Philistines' garrison that is on the other side." But he did not tell his father.”

An armor bearer was more than just a servant who carried your helmet and shield. He was a sidekick - a brave and trusted accomplice in combat.

“And Saul was sitting in the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron. The people who were with him were about 600 men.”

Saul was sitting under a tree sulking - feeling sorry for himself - licking his wounds. He's self-absorbed – while the Philistines wreak havoc in Israel.

Verse 3 “Ahijah the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, was wearing an ephod.” Evidently, Ahijah was the High Priest. Saul could've sought his guidance and prayer, but he didn't.

But the people did not know that Jonathan had gone.”

“Between the passes, by which Jonathan sought to go over to the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on one side and a sharp rock on the other side.”

During his reconnaissance, Jonathan noticed two sharp rocks that formed a narrow passage between them. Here a few men could fend off a multitude.

The rocks even had names... “And the name of one was **Bozez** (which means *glistening*), and the name of the other **Seneh** (which means *thorny*). These two rocks were called *shiny* and *sticky*. “The front of one faced northward opposite **Michmash**, and the other southward opposite **Gibeah**.” They were strategic.

Verse 6, you’ve got to love Prince Jonathan’s daring faith, “Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, “Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us.

For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few.” Rather than prop up the status quo - let’s take a step of faith – let’s see what God might do!

As the old saying goes, “Nothing ventured nothing gained.”

Hey, we all need to be willing to take some *ventures of faith*. God blesses people who are not content to sulk and sit back - but look for a challenge...

Are you a warrior for God who crosses back and forth through enemy territory - on the lookout for opportunities to count for Jesus? Saul was stuck on himself. He was massaging his bumps and bruises. God wants men and women of faith, like Jonathan, who are not afraid to take the initiative, and go on the offensive.

Hey, sense a need – get a direction – then go for it - and see if God will bless.

Jonathan's armor bearer is also up for the challenge... He "said to him, "Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you, according to your heart."

Jonathan and his sidekick are about to venture out in faith, but notice they don't want to be presumptuous. They pose a test to make sure the Lord is with them.

"Then Jonathan said, "Very well, let us cross over to these men, and we will show ourselves to them. If they say thus to us, 'Wait until we come to you,' then we will stand still in our place and not go up to them. But if they say thus, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up. For the LORD has delivered them into our hand, and this will be a sign to us." They're hoping they get invited into the camp.

So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines.

And the Philistines said, "Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden." Then the men of the garrison called to Jonathan and his armorbearer, and said, "Come up to us, and we will show you something."

In other words, "Come on over and we'll teach you a lesson!" It was a threat.

The Philistines are trash-talking, but the two Hebrews take it as God's green light. "Jonathan said to his armorbearer, "Come up after me, for the LORD has delivered them into the hand of Israel." And Jonathan climbed up on his hands and knees with his armorbearer after him; and they fell before Jonathan." We learn elsewhere Jonathan was an archer. Evidently he picked them off with his bow.

“And as he came after him, his armorbearer killed them.”  
Those Jonathan didn’t hit with an arrow – charged him and his armorbearer finished them with a sword.

“That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armorbearer made was about 20 men within about half an acre of land.”  
1089 square feet per dead Philistine.

Before we move on, let me sum up the five components of Jonathan’s venture of faith. To take initiative and win new ground for God – here’s what’s involved...

First, **a daring faith...** Second, **a deliberate plan...** Third, **a discernment of God’s will...** Fourth, **a discreet approach...** They didn’t just charge into the camp kamakaze style. Jonathan climbed discreetly to the top of the rock where he could gain an upper hand. And fifth, **a divine intervention...** God joined the venture.

Hey, take a venture of faith, and see what great work God might do!

News of Jonathan’s victory - coupled with a well-timed God-orchestrated earthquake - produced hysteria and panic in the camp of the Philistines.

Verse 15 “And there was trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. The garrison and the raiders also trembled; and the earth quaked, so that it was a very great trembling. Now the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and there was the multitude, melting away; and they went here and there.

Then Saul said to the people who were with him, "Now call the roll and see who has gone from us." And when they had

called the roll, surprisingly, Jonathan and his armorbearer were not there. And Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God here" (for at that time the ark of God was with the children of Israel).

Now it happened, while Saul talked to the priest, that the noise which was in the camp of the Philistines continued to increase; so Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand." Evidently, Saul asked the priest to seek God's will. He was reaching in his breastplate to pull out the sacred stones – the Urim and Thummin.

But Saul already knew God's will. You don't seek an answer that's obvious! It's time for Israel to fight. The faith of two men had stirred up a whole nation.

"Then Saul and all the people who were with him assembled, and they went to the battle; and indeed every man's sword was against his neighbor, and there was very great confusion. Moreover the Hebrews who were with the Philistines before that time, who went up with them into the camp from the surrounding country, they also joined the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan."

"Likewise all the men of Israel who had hidden in the mountains of Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, they also followed hard after them in the battle. So the LORD saved Israel that day, and the battle shifted to Beth Aven.

"And the men of Israel were distressed that day, for Saul had placed the people under oath, saying, "Cursed is the man

who eats any food until evening, before I have taken vengeance on my enemies." So none of the people tasted food."

Once again, Saul had taken a rash vow to fuel his own ego. Instead it deprived the people of the fuel and energy they needed to sustain and finish off the battle.

"Now all the people of the land came to a forest; and there was honey on the ground. And when the people had come into the woods, there was the honey, dripping; but no one put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath.

But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath; therefore he stretched out the end of the rod that was in his hand and dipped it in a honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his countenance brightened."

Here's an important spiritual lesson. Don't get so busy fighting battles for the Lord, that you don't take time to feed their own soul. If you're always giving out, and never replenishing - you'll grow weak. Like Jonathan, every Christian needs a little honey from God's Word if they're going to finish the battle

"Then one of the people said, "Your father strictly charged the people with an oath, saying, 'Cursed is the man who eats food this day.' " And the people were faint. But Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land. Look now, how my countenance has brightened because I tasted a little of this honey.

How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now would there



not have been a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?" Jonathan is right in his assessment, but he's wrong to criticize his father in front of the people. It provides them an excuse to break their vow. Unlike Jonathan, the people had agreed to Saul's rash oath.

Verse 31 "Now they had driven back the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. So the people were very faint. And the people rushed on the spoil, and took sheep, oxen, and calves, and slaughtered them on the ground; and the people ate them with the blood." Spurred on by Jonathan's example the people not only break Saul's oath - but God's Law. They eat meat along with the blood.

According to the Jewish dietary laws the blood was drained from the meat.

"Then they told Saul, saying, "Look, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood!" And he said, "You have dealt treacherously; roll a large stone to me this day." And Saul said, "Disperse yourselves among the people, and say to them, 'Bring me here every man's ox and every man's sheep, slaughter them here, and eat; and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.' "

So every one... brought his ox... that night, and slaughtered it there. Then Saul built an altar to the LORD. This was the first altar that he built to the LORD." He's been king several years and this is his "first altar". It shows his lack of devotion.

Verse 36 "Now Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and plunder them until the morning light;

and let us not leave a man of them."

And they said, "Do whatever seems good to you."

Then the priest said, "Let us draw near to God here." So Saul asked counsel of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You deliver them into the hand of Israel?" But He did not answer him that day. And Saul said, "Come over here, all you chiefs of the people, and know and see what this sin was today." Saul assumes that God's silence is the result of some specific sin in the camp.

"For as the LORD lives, who saves Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die." But not a man among all the people answered him.

Then he said to all Israel, "You be on one side, and my son Jonathan and I will be on the other side." And the people said to Saul, "Do what seems good to you."

Therefore Saul said to the LORD God of Israel, "Give a perfect lot." So Saul and Jonathan were taken, but the people escaped." Imagine Saul's surprise. The secret sin in the camp was either committed by him or his son... "And Saul said, "Cast lots between my son Jonathan and me." So Jonathan was taken.

Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." And Jonathan told him, and said, "I only tasted a little honey with the end of the rod that was in my hand. So now I must die!"

*You can't be serious... execution over a little honey?*

"And Saul answered, "God do so and more also; for you shall surely die, Jonathan." Saul should've realized the rashness of his oath and admitted his mistake. But now he's

made such a big deal over the matter he'll lose face if he doesn't follow through... *Hey Saul is so concerned about public perception he would rather slay his own son - than look weak in the eyes of the people.*

Verse 45 “But the people said to Saul, “Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great deliverance in Israel? Certainly not!

As the LORD lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day.” So the people rescued Jonathan, and he did not die.”

This is unbelievable! The people rise up to save their national hero from the pride and impulsiveness of his own father. The people save Jonathan. Saul's goal is to save face. Eventually, Saul's insecurity caused him to lose his grip on reality.

“Then Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place. So Saul established his sovereignty over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, against the people of Ammon, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines.

Wherever he turned, he harassed them. And he gathered an army and attacked the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them.

Verse 49 gives us Saul's family tree... “The sons of Saul were Jonathan, Jishui and Malchishua. And the names of his two daughters were these: the name of the firstborn Merab,

and the name of the younger Michal.

The name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. And the name of the commander of his army was Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. Kish was the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel.

Verse 52 tells us that Saul's army employed an interesting form of the draft.

Rather than Uncle Sam – it was *Uncle Abner wants you...* “Now there was fierce war with the Philistines all the days of Saul. And when Saul saw any strong man or any valiant man, he took him for himself.” In Chapter 8, when Israel first asked for a king, Samuel warned them a king would take their “finest young men”. His warning is now coming true... Israel had underestimated the “ferocity of kings.”

Chapter 15 marks the beginning of the end for King Saul. God gives him a mission. God has an old score to settle with the Amalekites.

As soon as Israel exited Egypt the opportunistic, Amalekites, attacked the newborn nation. At the time Israel had no army. They were a band of slaves.

Amalek saw them as easy pickings – and tried to pounce on God's people. God remembered the Amalekites outrageous strategy. It's now payback time.

Which brings up a point... You've heard the old saying, “Time heals.” That might be true with cuts and scrapes – even bruised feelings – but it certainly doesn't apply to sin and forgiveness. Time alone never atones for sin.

Not even 400 years caused God to forget the sin of an unrepentant Amalek. He's about to treat them with the same harshness they handed out to Israel.

Verse 1, "Samuel also said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt.

Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' " So Saul gathered the people together and numbered them in Telaim, 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah.

And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and lay in wait in the valley."

"Then Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart, get down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt." The Kenites were descendents of Moses' father-in-law, Jethro. There's no need to punish the innocent along with the guilty... "So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt." In other words, it was a complete and savage slaughter.

"He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly

destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. 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 unwilling to utterly destroy them.” Saul’s orders were to take no prisoners! Every Amalekite - every animal with an Amalekite brand – should’ve been killed.

Instead, Saul keeps King Agag as a trophy – and holds on to the best of the herds as a reward for a job well done. He figured *why waste good barbeque?*

“But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.”

Verse 10 “Now the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, “I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments.” What sad words, for the God of all patience to regret setting you up in ministry – either as a pastor, or a servant, or a parent, or a spouse... “And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night.”

“So when Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, it was told Samuel, saying, “Saul went to Carmel, and indeed, he set up a monument for himself; and he has gone on around, passed by, and gone down to Gilgal.” Remember at the end of chapter 11, after Saul defeated the Ammonites he was careful not to detract from God’s glory. Now he sets up a memorial to promote himself.

Hey, when you measure your own worth by what others think you either shy away from attention - or clamor for all you can get. At times Saul did both.

"Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD." He says this while the sheep and goats he kept back from the slaughter are bleating in the background.

*Samuel catches him red-handed...* "But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." And notice his religious justification... *We plan to use these animals as sacrifices.* As if God will be please with illegal contraband.

It would be like pouring moonshine in the communion cups.

"Then Samuel said to Saul, "Be quiet! And I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night." He'd grieved until daybreak. Perhaps the tears were still in his eyes.

'And he said to him, "Speak on."

So Samuel said, "When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel?"

Now the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.'

"Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?"

“And Saul said to Samuel, “But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.” Saul disobeys, but he blames it on the people. Saul was king. People do what the king tells them.

Verse 22 is a famous passage. “Then Samuel said: “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.”

Saul had confused sacrifice with obedience. *Many people do.* Folks assume you can do as you please as long as you throw God a bone... They figure God can be pacified - or bought off - by offering Him some kind of suitable sacrifice.

*They don't know God...* Almighty God could care little about our sacrifices.

He wants *us - our hearts, our devotion, our submission.* He wants an *attitude* of trust and obedience. An occasional tip of the hat is no substitute. Samuel tells Saul “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.”

Verse 23 “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.” There are people - just like Saul - who crowd the pews in churches today. Outwardly, they're so sacrificial. They show up each Sunday – they have an offering in hand - they serve as an usher - they keep the nursery.



Their sacrifice is on the altar, but there's rebellion in their heart.

God has demands on their life they stubbornly resist. Outwardly, they've got it all together. No one would call them "a sinner"... let alone a *witch* or **an idolater**.

But God grades on a different scale... On the surface, you're not a diabolical person. You're not into witchcraft – no idols sit on your mantle – yet to God *rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry*.

And **next comes** the words Saul will regret the rest of his life... **"Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king."**

And look at Saul's explanation for his disobedience, verse 24, **"Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice."** Again Saul cared more about people's approval, than God's rejection. **The king – the one person who has no peers – ended up succumbing to peer-pressure**

Saul was externally-motivated **person** to the **bitter** end.

Saul asks for a pardon in verse 25 **"Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD."** But Samuel said to Saul, **"I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned around to go away, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore."**

Remember Saul's insecurities **were** always right below the

surface.

Suddenly, the humiliation of losing his position is more than he can handle. It's such an assault on his fragile ego, he loses his composure. He wants his way no matter what - so as Samuel turns to walk away, he grabs and tears his robe.

“So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.”

What an interesting name for God, “the Strength of Israel”. Hezbollah, and Syria, and Iran need to know the true God, is named “the Strength of Israel”.

After such a devastating announcement most people would've hung their heads, and walked away - *but not Saul*. He's still worried about his image...

For Saul and Andre Agassi *image is everything!* Remember that commercial...

Saul asks Samuel, verse 30, "I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD your God." He's asking the prophet to help him maintain his image.

“So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD.” But Samuel's concern is not Saul's image - he has some unfinished business.

“Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me.”

So Agag came to him cautiously. And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." *Let's let bygones be bygones.* But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women."

And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal."

"Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul. And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death.

Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel." To this point Saul has been king over Israel for ten years. He'll remain king for 30 more - but the Lord is no longer with Saul - and as a result nothing significant happens **through Saul** for the next 40 years.

Author Phillip Keller sums up the career of King Saul, "He was forever a man determined to protect his own self-interests. Ultimately he simply became a pathetic castaway. His end was a dreadful alienation from God."

Saul's replacement enters the picture next week in chapter 16...