

1 Samuel 13

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[0 : 00] Amen. If you're looking in a Bible, turn to 1 Samuel chapter 13. That's what we're going to be looking at tonight. If you're looking in one of the Pew Bibles, that's page 234, 1 Samuel chapter 13.

It's a bit of a long chapter, so we're going to read it section by section and go through it. But as you're turning there, let me ask you this question. Have you ever been spiritually tested? Been in a situation where you're put under pressure? You find yourself in a situation where trusting and obeying God seems like the hardest thing in the world to do. Maybe you're dealing with a difficult or even a toxic environment at work, where your co-workers are constantly gossiping or cursing or cutting people down or slacking off or lying to the boss or whatever. And if you don't join in with what they're doing, you feel isolated.

You get ostracized. Or maybe when you go home or go back to wherever you're staying, there's somebody who provokes and irritates you. Maybe it's your roommate who never cleans the bathroom, never washes the dishes.

Maybe it's your brother or sister who always criticizes and teases you. Maybe it's your husband or wife who has some annoying habit that they don't seem to care enough to stop.

[1 : 33] One of your kids is in a particularly difficult stage. Or somebody else is just getting on your nerves all the time. And it just seems to go on and on. And it doesn't seem to get any better.

And so you're tempted to lash out in anger or to withdraw in bitterness because you feel frustrated and disrespected.

Maybe you're battling an addiction. Drugs, alcohol, pornography, compulsive eating. And you're dealing with cravings. And the cravings feel overwhelming.

And maybe your sponsor or your accountability partner is falling into the same stuff as you. Maybe they've fallen off the wagon completely. And maybe you think it's just not worth it to fight anymore. Maybe I should just give in. Indulge a little bit. Now in this passage what we see is King Saul being tested.

[2 : 33] Put under pressure. So let's read. Chapter 13. I'm going to read verse 1 to 8 to start. Saul lived for one year and then became king. And when he had reigned for two years over Israel, Saul chose 3,000 men of Israel.

2,000 were with Saul and Michmash and the hill country of Bethel. And 1,000 were with Jonathan and Gibeath of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent home, every man to his tent. Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba.

And the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land saying, Let the Hebrews hear. And all Israel heard it said that Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines. And also that Israel had become a stench to the Philistines.

And the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal. And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped in Michmash to the east of Beth-Avon. When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble, for the people were hard-pressed, the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns.

[3 : 42] And some Hebrews crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal. And all the people followed him, trembling. He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel.

But Samuel did not come to Gilgal. And the people were scattering from him. Now what we've seen in the last few chapters of this book is Saul rising to power.

So he was chosen by the people. He was anointed by the prophet Samuel. And he was used powerfully by God to defeat Nahash in chapter 11, who is the king of the Ammonites, who is coming against the people of Israel and attacking them and causing all kinds of chaos.

The beginning of chapter 13, he begins his reign as king. The first verse is sort of a typical verse that's used in the rest of the Old Testament where it talks about the kings, where it says they, you know, lived for so many years and then they became king and were reigned for so many years. Now if you have different translations of chapter 13, verse 1, there's a little question about how many years exactly did he reign. I'm not going to get into that right now. If you want to ask about that in the question and answer at the end, I can explain that a little bit more.

[4 : 59] Acts chapter 13 says he reigned 40 years in total. It seems like perhaps this is just saying this happened two years after he started to reign. But anyway, how long he reigned is not that important.

But he, so he faced, let's see, back in chapter 11, right, he had faced Nahash, king of the Ammonites, coming in from the east, and God had used him to push him back.

Verse, but now the Philistines were coming from the west. So he'd been attacked from one side, and then he got attacked from the other side. And so verse 2 tells us he gathered an army, not a huge army, but a decent one, and sent the rest of the guys home to be with their families.

Verse 3 goes on. His son Jonathan, Jonathan is Saul's son, won the first victory over the Philistines. The Philistines got mad, and so Saul called all the people to join him.

So basically, they have these enemies who are coming at them, and Jonathan wins this little victory, and so they get even madder. It's like stirring up a hornet's nest.

[6 : 08] And so Saul says, let's come together. And then verse 5 we see that the Philistines are this huge army. 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, troops like the sand on the seashore, too many to count.

I mean, just imagine yourself. You know, Saul has 3,000 people, or maybe it's three companies of people, but 3,000 people, and he faces 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and so many troops they can't even count.

He's totally outnumbered. And so the people get afraid. Verse 6 and 7, it says some of them basically play dead.

They go hide in caves and tombs and cisterns. They try to hide in the ground because they're just totally freaked out.

Some of them ran away. They go east across the Jordan River. So they basically ran away. And then the people who stayed with Saul at Gilgal says they were trembling, trembling with fear. So facing this overwhelmingly powerful enemy and feeling like, how in the world are we going to defend ourselves?

[7 : 21] In verse 8, we see what Saul does. So first he waited. Verse 8 says he's waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. Now, Samuel was the prophet of God who had anointed Saul king, leader of the Israelites.

And Samuel and Saul were meant to lead the people of Israel sort of as a team. Samuel would basically hear God's word and give the direction to Saul.

And Saul would lead the people of Israel in carrying it out. Sort of like we have different branches of government. And the president is sort of the executive office to carry out what the legislator and the judiciary decides.

A little bit like that. So Saul and Samuel were supposed to work as a team. And Saul was supposed to listen to Samuel because Samuel was a prophet who was hearing God's word. And it seems like Samuel had made an arrangement with Saul.

So if you'll actually look back at chapter 10, verse 8. This is a little bit further back. But Samuel says to Saul, in chapter 10, verse 8, he says, Go down before me to Gilgal.

[8 : 33] And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings. That was offerings of dedication to God and sacrifice peace offerings to celebrate God's provision.

Then he says, seven days you shall wait until I come to you and show you what you shall do. So it seems like there's a similar arrangement going on here. Samuel basically said, wait for me.

You know, basically if there's big trouble, I'll be there within seven days. You know, that was pretty fast when you're traveling the way they did back then. So Samuel would come within a certain time and give Saul directions.

Then Saul would carry it out. That's how they would lead as a team. But verse 8 says, Samuel didn't show up. And it seems like it was the middle of the seventh day. Saul's thinking, man, people are afraid.

Some of the people have run away. Some of the people are hiding in caves. And the people who are with me are completely afraid. And Samuel's not showing up.

[9 : 40] And he said he'd be here. Here's where we see Saul being tested. Because he knows what he's supposed to do. He's supposed to wait for Samuel to come.

That was the plan that God had made with him. That Samuel had made. As the prophet of God. But he's in a situation where he's put under pressure. He's got enemies coming from the outside.

And then he's got his own people who are... Don't believe... They just... They're just losing hope. So what's he going to do? Well...

You know... I mean... Think about that. Have you been in a similar situation? You feel pressure from the outside? You feel pressure on the inside? You feel pressure from the people who you think are close to you and are on your team?

And some of them seem to be turning tail and running away. And you think, what am I going to do? Verse 9.

[10 : 42] So Saul said, Bring the burnt offering here to me. And the peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came.

And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. Samuel said, What have you done? And Saul said, When I saw that the people were scattering from me and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, I said, Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the Lord.

So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering. And Samuel said to Saul, You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God, with which he commanded you.

For then the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart.

And the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you. And Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal.

[11 : 51] The rest of the people went up after Saul to meet the army. They went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. Now, when you first read this, you read verse 9, you might think, So why does it matter that Saul offered the burnt offering?

You know, I don't get it. Why does Samuel get so mad at him? Right? It just doesn't seem to make sense to us. Why does he offer the burnt offering anyway? But the problem was, Samuel and Saul had a clear arrangement.

They were supposed to lead as a team. And Saul was supposed to listen to Samuel, because Samuel was a prophet who was given God's word. And that was the one clear command that Saul had.

And it's the one thing they didn't do. He didn't wait until Samuel came. He went ahead on his own. Other people were terrified, and so Saul panicked.

And you know, sometimes fear can lead us to do all kinds of foolish things. And that's what Saul did. What Saul did is he took matters into his own hands, and he did what Samuel was supposed to do, to offer the burnt offering.

[13 : 05] The burnt offering was basically a sacrifice of dedication or consecration to God, sort of expressing submission to God. The problem was, he was offering this, making this offering, going through this ritual that was supposed to symbolize submission to God, but he wasn't following the directions of Samuel, who had said, wait till I come, and I'll tell you what to do.

Instead of trusting and holding on to God's promise when it seemed like everything else was falling apart, Saul latched onto this ritual. And he believed that the ritual, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, was the key to winning the victory.

You know, sometimes that's what fear can drive us to do. It can drive us to latch onto rituals, or even superstitions.

Even some things that God hasn't commanded us to do at all. But we hold onto these things. Lucky charms. Whatever it might be.

Little patterns. Things that make us feel some kind of peace. Make us feel like it's going to be okay. But those are really substitutes for God himself.

[14 : 31] So that's the problem of what Saul did. Saul said, you know, I can't trust that God's going to come through for me, so I've got to take matters into my own hands. And I've got to act because I don't believe that God's going to do anything for me.

And that was the beginning of Saul's downfall. You see, what Saul did here, he did the very same thing that Adam and Eve did way back in the Garden of Eden.

You know, the one clear command that God gave Adam and Eve was what? He said, you can eat any tree, but don't eat from this one tree, the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

And if you eat of it, you will surely die. And then Adam and Eve are going for a walk one day and they happen to be going near the tree and Eve gets into a conversation with this serpent who says, who says you shouldn't eat from this tree?

You won't really die. Actually, it'll make you wise. It'll make you like God. It'll give you something that you don't have already.

[15 : 46] And so she listens to that serpent and she says, hmm, well, let me judge for myself. The fruit looks good. Looks like it'll give us wisdom.

Looks ripe. Let me try it. Adam's standing right there beside her. She gives some to Adam. Adam's been just quiet the whole time.

And he eats it too. And what happens? Everything falls apart. Because that was the one tree that represented that God was the owner of the garden.

And they were trying to take over God's place as the owners of the garden instead of just the managers. And everything fell apart after that.

Right? They ran away and hid. And God came to them and said, where are you? Just like Samuel came to Saul with a simple question.

[16 : 50] What have you done? And then, just like Adam, Saul starts making excuses. Right? What did Adam say? She made me do it. The woman you gave me, she made me do it.

That's what Adam said back in the garden. What does Saul say here? Verse 11. The people were running away. You didn't come. You were late.

So I didn't want to wait for you any longer. The Philistines are coming to get me. And then he says, so I made, I forced myself.

In other words, I did this reluctantly. Saul makes all kinds of excuses. He blames everybody else. The Philistines, Samuel, his own people, he blames everybody else.

He doesn't take responsibility. He doesn't confess his sin. He doesn't say, I'm sorry. I was wrong.

[17 : 59] That's the one thing he doesn't say. You see, Saul's failure here wasn't just that he disobeyed the initial arrangement with Samuel.

But it's also that he responded to Samuel confronting him by blaming everyone else and by refusing to say, I was wrong.

I'm sorry. You know, maybe, maybe you failed in a time of temptation. Maybe like Saul, you've been tested, you've been put under pressure and it was a hard situation and you turned away from God. and you latched onto something else and you know it. And maybe someone confronted you. Maybe someone has come to you and they said, look at what you did.

You really messed up. That really wasn't right. How have you responded to that? Do you know that's God's mercy?

[19 : 11] Sometimes we don't think it's God's mercy. You know, when my wife comes to me and says, Greg, you've got to stop doing this or that wasn't really kind what you just said or you were being impatient with our kids.

I don't see that as God's mercy coming to me, right? I'm defensive. I'm like, no, but do you realize how I feel? Do you realize how many people I've had to deal with already today?

Do you realize how tired I am? Do you realize how early I had to get up this morning because I got up with the kids when they woke up at 5, 10 a.m.? That's my response.

Often. Like Saul. Like Adam. I get defensive. I don't want to, I don't want to hear criticism.

Even when it's by the one person who loves me more than anybody else in the world. But it's God's mercy because he wants us to come to that place where we say, I did it.

[20 : 22] I'm sorry. I was wrong. And he wants us to come to that place not so we can beat ourselves up and stay in a place of despair, but so we can come to him and be forgiven and be restored.

That's the good news. But Saul doesn't, Saul never gets there because he stays in that defensive, self-justifying place.

And the response from Samuel, Samuel basically says, your kingdom isn't going to last. You're not going to have a dynasty that goes on and on forever and ever.

God's going to choose someone else to replace you. someone who has no relation to you. And then Samuel gets up and leaves.

Let's go on and read the rest of the chapter starting at the end of verse 15. We'll see the results of Saul's response. Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about 600 men compared to 3,000 at the beginning.

[21 : 37] So it's a lot smaller by then. And Saul and Jonathan, his son, and the people who were present with them stayed in Geba of Benjamin, but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. And raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies.

One company turned toward Ophrah, which was in the north, in the land of Shual. Another company turned toward Beth Horon, which was to the west, and another company turned southeast toward the border that looks down on the valley of Zeboiim toward the wilderness.

So basically, we see the Philistines are just swarming throughout the whole country. They're going in every direction, north, west, southeast. They're taking over the place. Verse 19.

Now there was no blacksmiths to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears. But every one of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, or his sickle, and the charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares and the mattocks and a third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and setting the goats.

You can ask about the prices if you're interested. But on the day of the battle, there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan, but Saul and Jonathan, his son, had them, and the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.

[22 : 56] The point of this last paragraph is the people of Israel are now powerless. They're powerless to defend themselves. They have no weapons. They can't even sharpen their farm tools without going and paying the Philistines.

They become almost completely dependent and helpless. And you know, that's what happens when we fail to obey the Lord and when we refuse to admit our guilt.

It's a warning. We gradually lose our spiritual vitality and energy. And when we... First, it seems... First, we chose to indulge our sinful appetite and then gradually more and more we become slaves to our sin. Chapter 13 is the beginning of a downhill slide for Saul and for his kingdom.

And what we see is that Saul won't be the promised Messiah. He's not going to be the promised deliverer of God's people because he failed the test.

[23 : 57] And when he was confronted with his failure, he refused to admit his guilt. He didn't own up to it. So he becomes powerless. And that's a warning to us.

But you know, thankfully, the story of the Bible doesn't end here. Aren't you thankful that the story of the Bible doesn't end here and in other passages like this which show us our failure?

Verse 14 gives us a word of hope. It says, The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart. In other words, according to God's own will.

God is seeking out a man to lead his people. And soon, in a couple of weeks, as we go through this book of Samuel, we'll see who it is. It's David. And David is that king that God promises.

But then, you know what happens? You keep reading the book of Samuel. You go into 2 Samuel and you see that David fails too in some ways. And David repents unlike Saul. He confesses his sin.

[24 : 57] That's one of the differences between David and Saul is David owns up to his mistakes where Saul never does. But the good news of the Bible is not just about David.

David, who lived a long time ago, but about David's great-great-great-great-great-grandson, Jesus. Right?

Jesus is the promised deliverer, the Messiah. And in the New Testament, it says that Jesus has been tested, he has been tempted in every respect.

Every kind of temptation that you face, whatever it looks like, Jesus has faced every kind of temptation and testing that we face as human beings.

Jesus. And it says, he has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Jesus faced the most intense pressure imaginable.

[26 : 01] He was in the desert, hungry and alone, and he was tempted by the devil himself. The devil says, hey, you must be hungry. Why don't you use your power to turn these stones into bread?

Why don't you make your life easy for yourself and use your power to make yourself comfortable? And Jesus says, no. Man doesn't live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

He says, I've come to live a life in dependence on God's word, not to use my power to make myself more comfortable and get whatever I want right away. And Satan says, well, you know, not many people really believe in you.

Why don't you show off and dazzle them all? Why don't you jump off the temple and call on the angels to rescue you so that you can say, ta-da!

I'm Superman. Look, believe in me. And Jesus says, don't put the Lord your God to the test. That's not what I've come to do either.

[27 : 19] And then the devil says, look, see all the kingdoms of the world. All the kingdoms of the world and all their glory and all their wealth and all their power just bow down to me and I'll give it to you.

It'll be so easy. I'll give you everything. Just swear loyalty to me. And Jesus says, worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

Of course, the greatest test that Jesus faced was when he was in a garden of Gethsemane and his disciples had gone to sleep and he knelt down and prayed.

He prayed, Father, if there's any other way, take this cup away from me. But not my will, but yours be done. You see, Jesus knew all the time that God's will for him was that he would lay down his life on a cross and bear the sin of the world.

That was a heavy burden. That was the most intense pressure imaginable to take all of our sin on his shoulders and to take the punishment that we deserved and to hang there on the cross.

[28 : 41] We can hardly even imagine what it was like physically, let alone emotionally and spiritually to hang there and to trust and obey God the Father all the way to the end.

But he did it. He did it for you. He did it for me. He did it for us. Jesus held on. He wasn't like Saul. Saul gave in and it all went downhill. Jesus persevered to the very end. It says to bring many sons and daughters with him to glory.

That's why he did it. To bring us with him to glory so that our sins could be forgiven and so we could be brought from death to life.

So we could be brought out of the pit and into his presence forevermore. So Hebrews says this.

[29 : 55] It says we don't have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin. So let us then with confidence draw near to his throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need.

So let me come back to the question I asked at the beginning. Where are you being spiritually tested? Is that work? Is it at home or wherever you're staying right now?

Are you feeling impatient like Saul and wondering if God's ever going to do anything for you? you know you know Jesus if you have turned to Jesus and put your faith in him the Bible says he will never leave you nor forsake you.

When you walk into work tomorrow morning or whenever you go there Jesus is living in you by his Holy Spirit. You are not alone. When you have to deal with all that gossiping or cursing or dishonest behavior or whatever you're dealing with at your work Jesus is right there with you.

You are not alone and he will strengthen you and he will empower you to be faithful to him and to put your hope in him and know that you are not alone there.

[31 : 24] Maybe it's at home or wherever you're staying and the people around you, the people you're living with, just drive you up a wall. You know, do you know that Jesus knows how that feels like?

Because Jesus dwells within every Christian believer. Do you know what Jesus has to deal with every day? Think of all the worst things you've said in the last year.

All the crazy things you've done or that you've seen other people do who believe in Jesus. Jesus has had to deal with all of those very personally because he lives in those people. And he doesn't give up on us.

He's patient with us. And sometimes he sends someone to confront us and say, what have you done? But he says that to us out of his love because he loves us and he's going to bear with us. And he's going to carry us through. So that's the kind of savior we have. That's the kind of king we have. Not a king like Saul here, but we have King Jesus.

[32 : 31] Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you are faithful, that you are faithful even to the point of death on the cross for us.

And we thank you that you are faithful to us, that you dwell in us by your Holy Spirit. So we pray that you would help us where we are facing temptations and trials and testings.

Lord, I pray that we would know that we are not alone. I pray that we would not act in panic or fear or act as if you aren't there because you are.

You were, you are. Lord, thank you that you are the God of second chances that you, Lord, as Samuel came to Saul and confronted him and gave him an opportunity to acknowledge his sin. Lord, as later on you would send the prophet Nathan to David to confront him. Lord, you call us to turn from our sin and to repent and to confess and to say I was wrong.

[33 : 53] I'm sorry. Lord, thank you that when we do that, when we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive us and to purify us from all unrighteousness so that we can continue walking with you and know that we are not alone.

We pray that we would know that tonight in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing one more song to close and then we'll have about five minutes where you can ask questions so if you have questions or thoughts you can think about those as well.

We've got about five minutes. If you have a question feel free to raise your hand or brief comment and I'd love to hear it and I'll do the best I can to respond. this is a time when we can interact a little bit over what we've just talked about.

Any questions? Anyone? Anyone? Anyone? Anyone? Anyone? Anyone? Anyone? Jonathan? I just have an obligation to talk about it all. It seems like the punishment that Saul got seems so strong when you compare the way he's portrayed to some of the other kings of Israel later on who basically didn't listen the prophet at all didn't care about the prophet at all and you know so I was just kind of surprised to hear the reason why his lineage was cut off when it seems like such a minor thing compared to the other kings.

[35 : 59] Yeah. Yeah. So basically Saul's punishment seems pretty strong for what he did. You know, he sort of gave in under pressure and then he got his whole kingdom taken away.

So and then other kings did a lot worse things and they didn't seem to have as bad a punishment. So what's going on here? So one thing you'll see is that Saul's kingdom is not actually taken away from him here.

What Samuel says to him here is that your kingdom won't endure forever. So what we'll see is Saul's son Jonathan does not become a king, does not become leader of Israel.

God chooses David. He goes to a whole other family line. And so what Saul lost here in this chapter was particularly that legacy of his family carrying on this role of the king or leader of Israel.

And then what happens as we can and we'll see this over the next couple weeks is that Saul sort of keeps going downhill. Saul. So Saul starts, it's interesting, it starts with this sin that you think, is it really such a big thing that he offered that burnt offering and he went ahead without Samuel and he didn't listen to the prophet.

[37 : 20] But you know, isn't that how sin often starts? Sin often starts with things that we think are sort of insignificant. you know, not listening to God's word, not being in fellowship with other Christians and just going it alone.

And then it sort of grows and it gradually goes. I mean, an addiction is a great example, right? Nobody picks up their first cigarette and says, I'm going to smoke for the next 30 years and get lung cancer.

nobody does, right? And most of the time people smoke their first cigarette and they're like, ah, it doesn't, ah, it makes me cough, right?

But where do you, how do you get to that point where you're like, man, I need two packs a day, right? And isn't it that, isn't that true with all kinds of sins, not just the things that we think of as

addictions, but things like pride, pride, not wanting to, just wanting to do things my own way and I don't really want to listen to anybody else's advice.

And that sometimes, sometimes that's the root issue when, and down the line it causes all kinds of chaos and relationships break apart and it goes back to that root issue of pride.

[38 : 52] pride. So often, I would say, sin often starts in ways that we don't, that we think are very small. And yet, if it's not acknowledged and confessed, and if we don't turn back to God and ask His forgiveness and ask Him to change us, then it just keeps growing like a cancer.

you know, like an infection. You get a little infection, it doesn't seem like a big deal, but if you never deal with it, and if it just keeps spreading, it'll cause, you'll have to have surgery someday.

So it's, anyway, so I think that's how sin works. And often, you know, it's true, other kings did things that seemed like they were a lot worse, and it seemed like they got away with it, or at least didn't have as bad consequences in this life.

And that's also true, that we don't, you know, God's judgment on sin is not fully carried out in our earthly lives. And so, and God's, and also God's, you know, we don't see the full picture.

And so we can't ever look at somebody and say, oh man, like, their life is awesome, they must be perfect, you know, in God's sight.

[40 : 18] Well, no. And we also can't look at somebody and say, oh man, they're having such a hard time, they're having all kinds of disasters in their life, they must be the worst sinner of all.

That's not true either. Because in this world, things are mixed up.

We live in a fallen world, and so, you know, sometimes, you know, with Saul, the, you know, Saul was the first, the other thing is Saul's the first king.

And so, the way God deals with Saul is a warning for those in the future. And so I think that may be also part of why it's so severe in the beginning. Because if you don't deal with something seriously from the start, then the pattern just easily carries on in the future.

So, so that's a little bit, but that's a good question. All right. One more question. I rambled on a little longer than I need to.

Go ahead, Nord. I want to ask the opposite question. Yes. Why was Saul's question so light?

Because the sons of Aaron were killed immediately when they offered a strange fire and the sons of the world were eaten by the earth.

[41 : 26] Yes. So I thought it was quite a versatile happenstance that does it happen to Saul. Yes. So just to keep you thinking. Yes. Yes. Yes.

That's a great question. He says, you know, what about the opposite question? Why was Saul's punishment so light? Some other people were killed right away by God. Right?

You know, the Bible says the wages of sin is death. I mean, think about our own lives and the way that we sometimes treat God or each other.

God. And why doesn't God wipe us out? Thankfully, you know, the Bible says his kindness is meant to lead us toward repentance.

You know, his kindness is meant to lead us to the place where we turn to him and say, forgive me.

And he's made provision for that forgiveness. That's the best news of all. Is he's made provision for our forgiveness from every sin when we turn to him.

[42 : 33] So, thanks Lord. All right. Anybody else? I said one more, but if you have one, yes, one more.

One more. So, this story talks about, I think Saul is very lucky to have a prophet like Samuel speaking in his life and to give him such a clearly distinguishable instance of disobedience.

But for those of us who aren't as lucky to have prophets, speaking into alliance on a regular basis, how do we apply this blessing more directly and in a way that is discernible?

Yeah. Yes. So, Saul had a prophet Samuel who was giving him pretty clear directions and it was a very specific arrangement. And so, Saul had some very direct guidance on how to carry out some of his responsibilities.

You know, what about us? We don't have someone exactly like Samuel who's, you know, giving us the same kind of direct divine guidance every day. So, a couple things.

[43 : 45] One is, what we have that Saul didn't have is the Bible. Now, Saul had probably some parts of the Bible, the law of Moses in particular.

But that was only the beginning of God's revealing himself to his people and to the world. And so, what we have with the whole Bible showing the story of not just God's dealings with the people of

Israel, but also how that was, how his plan for Israel was fulfilled in Jesus.

So, we have so much more in here than Saul had back then. So, one application would be, let's really take seriously and dig into what God has said to us in the Bible.

Because it's a great blessing that we have it and that it's so available to us. And that wasn't true for Saul and even less for the people of Israel. Let's see, in terms of more specific guidance.

And the other thing I would say is that there's a lot of, even with the people who heard, you know, even with Saul, or with David, or with Abraham, or people who heard the voice of God in the Bible, in the Old Testament, you know, if you look at how many times, even someone like Abraham, who heard the voice of God quite a few times directly, Abraham maybe, there's probably like 10 recorded instances in the Bible where Abraham heard the direct voice of God telling him to do something.

[45 : 38] But Abraham lived for 130 years. So think about that. That would have been maybe like, the first time was when he was about 70, probably. So from 70 to 130, he heard the voice of God 10 times.

That's on average once every six years. So most of his days, even someone like Abraham, who heard the voice of God, most of his days, he had to carry out his life in response to what God had already said, not with a new special word every day.

And so that's, you know, and I think that's true for us often. There's a lot of decisions that we face that the Bible doesn't tell us, you know, should I marry this person, or should I, you know, choose this career, or should I, you know, go here, or do this.

A lot of really important decisions that the Bible doesn't tell you directly one way or the other, but it gives us a lot of wisdom in how to approach them. And I think the most important issue is God wants to shape our hearts with his wisdom and his priorities so that we approach our decisions out of a character that loves him above everything else.

God is a God so anyway, that's a lot. And we can talk more if you have further questions. All right, let me close us.

[47 : 08] Yeah, look at your bulletin if you got one on the way out. There's a list of small groups on the back which are Bible study groups that meet during the week. I encourage you to consider one of those if you're interested in that.

But let me pray for us as we leave. Lord, we thank you for your word and thanks for this time to dig into it tonight and to discuss it a little bit. And we pray that you would help us to keep asking good questions that you would give us a hunger to know more about you.

And that you would give us a humility to trust you and to live by what you have shown to us. And we pray that you would bless us and keep us this night and this week ahead.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen.