

LESSONS SAUL NEVER LEARNED

When we study the Old Testament,
we want it to be more than just to learn a history lesson.

That's one of the reasons
the NT speaks to us
about the role of the OT.

The NT says of the OT:

⁴ *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.* (Rom 15:4)

¹¹ *These things happened to them [the Israelites] as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.* (1 Cor 10:11)

So we go back to the book of 1 Samuel today
to be taught and to be warned.

We are going to do that
by looking at the life of King Saul.

I really hope you read 1 Samuel for today
as I want to try to congeal many of his activities
so that we can learn something applicable to us.

Saul's life teaches us
that we don't have to experience
every failure for ourselves
to learn the lessons
that God would have us learn.

So let's learn some of the lessons
that Saul failed to grasp in his life.

There are probably many that we could consider,
but today I want us to look at five of them.

I. **Sin is Serious. [Sin is what separates us from God.]**

A. Saul never really took sin seriously.

B. This is evident for a number of reasons.

1. He always made excuses
rather than
confessing his sin before God.
 - a. For instance, in chapter 13,
Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost at Geba.
 - b. So the Philistines assembled to fight Israel
with soldiers
as numerous as the sand on the seashore.
 - c. Saul and all his troops were quaking in fear (13:7).
 - d. Samuel had told Saul to wait seven days
and he would come to offer a sacrifice
to the LORD.
 - e. But, Samuel didn't arrive at Gilgal
soon enough for Saul
because his army was beginning to scatter.
 - f. Saul became terrified and unnerved.
 - g. So he said to himself,

⁹ *“Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings.” And Saul offered up the burnt offering. (1 Sam 13:9)*

h. Is it the king’s place to offer burnt offerings to the LORD or the prophet’s?

i. Samuel did arrive. Look at verse 10,

¹⁰ *Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him.(1 Sam 13:9-10)*

2. But Saul didn’t take responsibility for his actions;

and he was quick to blame others for what he himself had done.

¹¹ *“What have you done?” asked Samuel. Saul replied, “When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, ¹² I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD’s favor.’ So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.” (1 Sam 13:11-12)*

a. Do you ever feel compelled to do things your way?

b. Do you ever run ahead of God?

3. We never find Saul repenting...

4. Sure, he wept from time to time, but never turned to God in repentance.

If you don't turn to God in repentance,
one of your alternatives is to do what Saul did.

C. Saul thought he could cover up his sins,
but that will never work.

- a. Some do it with work,
- b. Others do it with drugs and alcohol.
- c. And yet others with denial.

¹³ *He who conceals his sins does not prosper,
but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.* (Prov
28:13)

- 1. By comparison,
David committed more serious sins than Saul,
but there was a difference.
- 2. David is found repenting time and again before God.
- 3. And God's plan for dealing with sin is clear.
- 4. Confession - Repentance - Forgiveness
- 5. But Saul never learned this lesson.

II. **Spiritual Decline is Gradual**

A. Saul's failure was not immediate.

- 1. At first Saul was humble,
 - a. When Samuel treated Saul with respect, Saul said,

²¹ *Why do you say such a thing to me?"* (1 Sam 9:21)

- b. When Saul's uncle asked him what Samuel had told him, he didn't even mention that he was anointed king of Israel.
- c. When Saul was confirmed as king, and others spoke against him, he spared their lives.

But later pride and envy began to work on him.
-- hatred followed envy
-- and murder followed hate.

- 2. He began as an obedient servant of God, but soon he became stubborn and independent.

B. Spiritual decline is usually gradual.

- 1. It is possible for our spiritual life to deteriorate without our realizing it.
- 2. You know, God sends us warnings through His Word in situations and circumstances, so that we can take inventory from time to time and see where we are.
- 3. Remember Genesis 3:9?
- 4. As the Lord walked in the Garden, he asked them, "...*Where are you?*" (Genesis 3:9)

- a. Where are you this morning?
 - b. Are you where God wants you to be?
 - c. Are you where you need to be?
5. If Saul would have listened to the warnings sent from God, he could have avoided the shame and disgrace that came upon him.
- a. God warns us.
 - b. That's another reason Christians need to at worship on Sundays.

III. **Integrity is Essential**

A. Definition of Integrity

1. The Hebrew word for integrity is translated as 'completeness', 'full', 'upright', and 'perfect'.
2. Someone has said that integrity is what you are in the dark all alone when no one else is around.
3. Saul was incomplete, and he was certainly not upright before God.

B. He was what James called a 'double-minded man'.

1. That is, he's

⁸ *unstable in all he does.* (James 1:8)

C. Look at his progression.

2. At the beginning he served God.
3. Then he began to serve God and himself.
4. Finally he began to use God to serve himself.
5. Jesus made it clear...
we cannot serve two masters!

You'll hate one had love the other!

IV. **Obedience is the Key to Victory and Success**

A. God must be the Lord of our lives.

1. God made Saul king...
2. He anointed him and empowered him...
3. But it was up to Saul
to allow God
to have control in his life.
4. The same is true for each of us.
5. God never forces Himself upon us,
we must yield ourselves to Him
and allow Him to have control.

² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Rom 12:2)

B. In other words, we must make God's will our will.

1. We can't argue with Him
nor should we rebel against Him.
2. We shouldn't run ahead of Him or lag behind.
3. We need to obey immediately
all that we know God
would have for us to do.

C. Sacrifice is no substitute for obedience.

1. Saul failed to understand this truth.
 - a. Samuel told Saul to destroy the Amalekites
and all their livestock completely.
 - b. But he didn't. Look at 15:9.

⁹ He spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed. (1 Sam 15:9)

2. We often try to rationalize what we do
and
unilaterally make deals with God.
3. But the only sacrifice God wants is an obedient heart.

4. Samuel explains this in 15:22-23,

²² *“Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*
²³ *For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.” (1 Sam 15:22-23)*

Sacrifice is no substitute for obedience!

V. Spiritual Lives Must Be Built

A. Spiritual growth doesn't come automatically.

1. There is no quick and easy path to spiritual maturity.
2. It must be determined and comes as a result of effort.
3. We never find that Saul ever really built anything...

B. Saul trusted in his natural gifts and abilities more than in his spiritual gifts and in the power of God.

This is a temptation for all of us.

1. Some can go for a while in their own strength...
2. But eventually failure will come.
3. Saul's failure could have been avoided if he had only built his spiritual life.

C. We must build our lives spiritually.

²⁰ *But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.* ²¹ *Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.*

²⁴ *To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy. (Jude 1:20-21; 24)*

1. God will keep us from falling,
if we will build our spiritual lives.
2. Faith - Prayer - Love - Mercy
3. We must have these things in our lives,
and we must allow the Holy Spirit
to teach us the truths of His Word.
4. Look at the next verse in Jude...

²⁵ *to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. (Jude 1:25)*

- a. When we live for the glory and majesty of God
it will make a difference in our lives.
- b. Saul was more interested in his glory
than in God's glory.
- c. The result was that he lost his crown.

¹¹ *I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. (Rev 3:11)*

Closing

Invitation