

# ■ SAMUEL REBUKES SAUL

Week Three | June 18, 2017 | Stories of Our Faith

## PREPARATION

### ■ MONDAY THROUGH WEDNESDAY

Read through 1 Samuel 13:1-15. Pray the Holy Spirit would bring to life the truths of this text and allow you to teach it well to those in your care.

### ■ THURSDAY THROUGH SATURDAY

Many questions have been included in this week's guide. Read through this lesson to determine which questions will work best to encourage, push, and grow your group.

### ■ DAILY

As you prepare, pray for the preaching of God's Word this coming weekend. Pray also for your time in this week's study.

## THIS WEEK

### ■ KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

God desires us to be spiritually loyal to Him, and when we are impatient and disobedient, the result is often strong rebuke and removal from privileged positions.

### ■ THEOLOGY APPLIED

Like Saul, if we entertain impatience and disobedience in our own lives, we will face devastating consequences. When we allow ourselves to remain in these types of sin, God has every right to disqualify us from the roles and positions He has given us.

### ■ MEDITATE

*"And Samuel said to Saul, 'You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, 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 commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.'" (1 Samuel 13:13-14)*

## GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

Q: How do you usually respond to confrontation when you are in the wrong, but not ready to admit it?

Q: Why do you think impatience is one of the defining characteristics of our culture today?

Q: Think of a time when you or someone you know was removed from an important position. What do you think are appropriate grounds for removal?

Some of the biggest blockbuster movies are those set in wartime. The opposing themes of good and evil, bravery and cowardice, loyalty and betrayal are heightened in these storylines. We are often on the edge of our seats wondering how the main character will respond in a moment of crisis. We can all think of a movie moment when a military leader or soldier has to make an impossible decision in a life-or-death situation, and we root for him to make the right one.

1 Samuel 13:1-15 drops us into this very type of war story in Israel's history. In the midst of fear, anxiety, and horrible odds, King Saul must make a difficult decision. Though he has experienced some military victory so far, the enemy has suddenly come back in staggering numbers, threatening to level a serious blow to God's people. As the enemy presses in, Saul's soldiers flee in fear. Saul is left facing a moment of truth: will he choose to trust in God or act in fear? He can either prove his loyalty to God by waiting patiently for His help, or he can make a rash decision in the heat of battle and choose to act out of fear. Let's keep moving forward in this lesson to see how the story unfolds.

Q: Think of a time when you were forced to make a split-second decision in a chaotic situation. How did you respond?

Q: Share a time when you saw someone who was remarkably obedient in a time of crisis.

## ■ ■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

In 1 Samuel 13:1-15, we will see King Saul dealing with a difficult situation. His choice will reveal if he is the true king that Israel desperately needs, or if he is unfit for the throne. As we study this passage in depth, we can learn three things from Saul's wartime choices:

### 1. THE DANGER OF IMPATIENCE

### 2. THE NEED FOR REBUKE

### 3. THE RESULT OF DISOBEDIENCE

## GOING DEEPER

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## THE DANGER OF IMPATIENCE

### ■ ■ 1 SAMUEL 13: 1-12

Q: *What situation has left Saul and the Israelites trembling in fear? (v.1-7)*

Q: *What is Saul's first response when he comes to terms with this situation? (v. 8) Is his first response faithful or fearful (1 Sam. 10:8)?*

During this dark time in Israel's history, God's people demanded a king. The problem with this request was not that they desired a king, for God had a plan to give his people a king long before this point (Gen. 17:16, 49:10-12; Deut. 17:14-19). The problem was the type of king that they wanted. Instead of a spiritual leader who was unlike the surrounding kings of other nations, God's people wanted a military leader just like the kings of other nations. They didn't want a king who would help them walk with the Lord and abide in his laws. They wanted a king who would help them become more like the ungodly nations around them (1 Sam. 8:5, 19-20).

Saul, whose name in Hebrew means "the one who was asked for," proves to be the military king Israel always wanted. As we see in 1 Samuel 13:1-12, Saul is a military success, winning in battle with the Philistines. However, the Philistines then regroup and come back stronger than ever, sending the Israelites running back in fear. The enemy

appears undefeatable, and Saul is understandably scared. He knows that to have victory in such an impossible situation requires supernatural favor and intervention from God, and he desires to hear from the Lord.

At this time in Israel's history, the only way to hear from the Lord directly was through a prophet. While we seek the Lord's instruction through Scripture, Israel's kings in Saul's time had to seek out instruction through a specially chosen man of God. This dependence between the prophet and the king helped maintain the balance of power. Saul knows that this is God's way of doing things, and even in his great fear, he obediently waits seven days for Samuel the prophet to come and mediate on his behalf. This was the right thing for Saul to do, proving that he knows the importance of God's instructions.

🔗: *What is Saul's second response when Samuel does not arrive on time? (v.9)  
What does this second response say about Saul's character?*

🔗: *According to this story, impatience tempts us to do what?*

While everything up until this point shows a king who does the right thing in the face of chaos, things take a turn for the worse in verse 9. Though Saul has waited, Samuel still has not arrived. Saul knows it is Samuel's job to perform the burnt offerings and seek God's favor, but in his impatience, he chooses to take matters into his own hands.

He has an army waiting and an enemy on the way. There is no time left to wait for God's appointed prophet. Saul needs God's favor right now, even if it means violating a clear command. In this moment, he must choose what matters most: military success or loyalty to God and His instructions. When push comes to shove, Saul chooses the former. Unfortunately, the pressures of battle reveal the cracks in Saul's character, and he turns out to be exactly the ruler that Israel asked for—one who would put political success over obedience to God.

In verse 10, we see that Samuel arrives immediately after Saul has finished performing the burnt offerings. Help was just around the corner! Had Saul been patient for just a few more moments, things could have been done correctly and God would have been honored. However, Saul couldn't see the bigger picture because he was living in fear of his circumstances. When it comes time to give an account for his actions in verses 11-12, Saul makes excuses, and even blame shifts his sin onto the prophet.

*Everyone was running from me! The army was shaking in their boots! The enemy was on our tail, and you were nowhere to be found, Samuel! God wants us to seek his favor, right? I had to do it myself to get it done!*

Through Saul's response, we see just how dangerous impatience can be and how easily impatience can lead to outright disobedience. We also see how easy it is for disobedience to make excuses and justifications. As we read, we may easily judge Saul for his actions, however, we must instead use his story as a test for our own lives.

How many times do we, on a daily basis, take matters into our own hands because we're tired of waiting on God? While we may not be able to blame war or a prophet, how often do we, too, justify our disobedience? When pressures run high in our own life, how often do we make the expedient choice instead of the obedient one?

Q: *What life situations have tempted you to try and force God's hand?*

Q: *What common excuses do you give for your impatient or disobedient behavior?*

## THE NEED FOR REBUKE

■ ■ 1 SAMUEL 13:11, 13

Q: *Once he arrives, what does Samuel immediately ask Saul? (v. 11)*

Q: *What does Samuel's direct question tell you about his character?*

In verse 11, we see that Samuel wastes no time in confronting Saul about his disobedient actions. Where Saul failed to follow God's protocol because of fear, Samuel stood firm in God's instructions. One of the roles of a prophet was to hold the king accountable to these instructions. Here, we see Samuel doing just that. In fact, Samuel has the boldness to ask the most powerful person in Israel "What have you done?"

We must remember that confronting Saul was no small feat. He was a brutal and fearsome military leader who also held the highest seat of power in all the land. However, none of these things matter to Samuel, because his ultimate loyalty is to the Lord. Samuel does not fear the king, the people, or the enemy at their heels. He fears God alone. With God as his support and his first priority, the lowly (but faithful) Samuel has the power to rebuke someone as powerful as King Saul. Both the king and the prophet made crucial decisions out of fear—one fearing men, and the other fearing God. Through this lens, we must examine ourselves: what, or who, do we fear most?

**Q:** *How does Samuel respond once he hears Saul's version of the story? (v.13)  
How does this challenge you?*

**Q:** *Samuel reminds Saul that he did not keep the command of the Lord. Who does Samuel say this command came from, according to verse 14?*

In verse 13, Samuel has listened to Saul's excuses and rebukes him a second time; this time with a clear statement instead of an open-ended question. When Saul justifies his disobedience and impatience, Samuel boldly puts a stop to it, calling it foolish. Imagine the courage it takes to approach a king in the midst of battle to call him a fool! After this statement, Samuel explains why Saul's actions were foolish. It's not because Saul has gone against God's prophet, but because he has gone against God Himself. Notice that Samuel tells Saul that he has not "kept the command of the Lord your God, with which He commanded you." In other words, the commandment you broke came from God's mouth, not mine!

While Saul has tried to deflect by blaming Samuel for taking too long, Samuel cuts to the heart of the matter. This issue isn't about Samuel or his travel-time. This is an issue between Saul and God. God commanded Saul to follow the offering protocol, and Saul did not. The king has no more room to blame anyone but himself, and he must take his argument before God.

From this, we learn a great deal about the need for rebuke in our lives. Sometimes we are the "Saul" in our circumstances, going off-track in our spiritual lives. And when this happens, we're tempted to justify and make excuses for how we got there. Like Saul, we may even blame others for our own disobedience. We desperately need someone fearless like Samuel to call out our wrongdoing, see through our excuses, and force us to deal with our sin before God. On the flip side, when we notice that a brother or sister is veering off-course, we must also be willing to be the "Samuel" in their life by speaking truth and fostering repentance.

**Q:** *Why is it difficult for us to hear a direct rebuke?*

**Q:** *How do you usually respond when someone calls out your disobedience? How often do you call out disobedience in others?*

## THE RESULT OF DISOBEDIENCE

■ ■ 1 SAMUEL 13:14-15

**Q:** *If Saul had obeyed the Lord, what would his future have looked like? (v13)*

**Q:** *What is the unfortunate consequence of Saul's disobedience? (v14)*

After Saul's sin has been committed and Samuel has been faithful to rebuke him, verses 13-15 reveal the devastating results of his choice. Saul's disobedience has disqualified him from his privileged position, and God takes his kingship away. Though Saul may have been the ruler Israel wanted, he wasn't the one Israel needed. His actions showed he was clearly unsuited for the job.

At first glance, it may be easy to think that one poorly-performed offering shouldn't have uprooted an entire monarchy. But, we must remember that this offering-gone-wrong was not due to ignorance of the law or an issue of mere oversight. Saul originally waited seven days because he knew this was what God himself had personally commanded of him. This was not an issue of the king's offering, but rather an issue of the king's heart. The offering was simply the outward sign of his inward rebellion. God knew that when times got tough, this king could not be a spiritual leader for His people. Saul cared most about success in the same terms that surrounding pagan nations cared about success. This kind of king would not do as the head of God's people, and God intended to replace him.

**Q:** *Does the Lord abandon His plans to give Israel a king? (v. 14)*

**Q:** *Explain the difference between the type of king Israel wanted and the type of king God wanted for His people.*

So far, we've seen that impatience often leads to disobedience, which often leads to painful rebuke and even more painful results. Though this entire ordeal between Saul and Samuel seems gloomy and unsalvageable, in verses 14-15 we see another response from God that brightens the story. While Saul's place as a king would not be restored, the monarchy itself would not be totally abandoned.

God does not give up on His plans to give His people the king they need. He has removed an unsuitable king, yes, but not without a promise attached to that removal. He will replace Saul with a better, more suitable king, "a man after his own heart" (v14). In the moment when Israel needed a king who cared about the things God cared about, Saul failed. However, the new king God promises will be one who holds God's favor and Word as his highest priorities. Saul was the people's choice of a leader. The new king will be God's choice.

We can learn much about our seasons of failure and defeat through this story. Though tough consequences may come our way, God does not give up on his good plans for us. God remains faithful and always provides what we need, even when what we originally wanted fails us. And more than providing the things we need, He has already given us the king we need. A king better than Saul, Samuel, and even David. He's given us King Jesus, the one who is faithful in all the places we fail.

🔗: *Explain how Saul progressed from one instance of impatience to the loss of his kingly role.*

🔗: *How is Jesus foreshadowed in this story?*

## NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

🔗: *How can you proactively fight against the temptation to make excuses for your sin?*

🔗: *How can your group practice Samuel's courage with one another?*

🔗: *In a column, list out the life circumstances with which you are most impatient. Beside them, list out the likely consequences that will result if you allow that impatience to lead to disobedience.*

🔗: *Discuss practical ways you can be a spiritual leader, as opposed to a worldly leader, in your spheres of influence.*



## PRAY

+ *Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.*

- God, give me eyes to see when I, like Saul, fear my circumstances more than I fear you.
- God, grant me grace to repent when I'm impatient so that it does not turn into disobedience.
- God, create in me a soft heart that receives rebuke when I'm in sin.
- God, empower me to speak into the lives of other believers, as Samuel did, if I see sinful trends in their lives.

## COMMENTARY

**1 SAMUEL 13:8-12:** Here the text shows the kind of king that Saul is: one tossed around by his circumstances instead of firmly rooting himself in the guidance of God. It also shows that he relies on empty religious rituals to appease God instead of trusting and obeying his sanctioned Word.

**1 SAMUEL 13:13-14:** Samuel says that Saul has broken a commandment that God himself had given him. Some scholars interpret this as violating what God had instructed earlier in 10:8, namely, that Saul was supposed to wait seven days for Samuel to come perform the offering. However, other scholars think that God's instructions in 10:8 happened many years earlier, and that Saul is currently violating another unrecorded command of God. Still others base this command in Numbers 18:7, that only a priest should offer sacrifices. Another option is based on the general principle known throughout Israel's history that kings should wait to learn God's will through an appointed "mouthpiece" or prophet. Regardless of the exact command Samuel is referencing, it is clear that Saul knows he has done wrong, for he starts making excuses immediately. We know the important point from the text itself—he had been told by God not to make any moves until Samuel arrived with the word of the Lord.

*\*All commentary resourcing for Lesson 6 was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes and the NIV Compact Bible Commentary.*

