

The Flaws Of Saul

Introduction. God records both the great men and women who trusted in Him, as well as those who were flawed and failed to be faithful. Saul is one of the latter.

When the people gathered at Ramah and told Samuel they wanted a king (1 Samuel 8:4-6), God gave them Saul (1 Samuel 9:17; 10:1). When he began, Saul had everything in his favor: (1) a strong body; (2) a humble mind; (3) a new heart; (4) spiritual power; (5) loyal friends; and, (6) the guidance and prayers of Samuel.

Yet in spite of these advantages, he failed miserably. There were deep issues in the heart of Saul, and these issues can also be in the heart of God's children and can wreck us spiritually.

We will look at the flaws of Saul today, and as Saul turned himself into something that God did not want, we need to be careful that we do not turn ourselves into something God does not want either.

I. Saul Made Rash Decisions And Promises

- A. He rashly offered the sacrifice, not waiting for the prophet Samuel (13:8-9). He made a decree that anyone who touched food before a certain time would be killed. When it came time to enforce it by killing his son Jonathan, he did not (1 Samuel 14:24, 43-45). He made a bad decision by disobeying God in sparing Agag and the spoils of war (15:7-9).
- B. Saul was foolhardy, reckless, and irresponsible. The Christian is sober (Titus 2:12; 1 Peter 1:13; 4:7; 5:8) and self-controlled (Acts 24:25; 1 Corinthians 9:25; Galatians 5:23; 2 Peter 1:6).

II. Saul Was Overly Influenced by Others' Opinions

- A. To keep His army happy, Saul usurped Samuel's position (1 Samuel 13:8-9). He reneged on his vows (14:43-45). He disobeyed the direct command of God (15:24). He was afraid of not being honored by the people (15:27-31).
- B. When we care more about people's opinion of us than God's favor, we are in trouble (John 12:43; 1 Thessalonians 2:4; cp. Mark 15:9-15).

III. Saul Let Success Go To His Head

- A. At first Saul was aware of his humble origin (1 Samuel 10:20-23), but as he became more successful in warfare, he became more filled with pride. After his defeat of the Amalekites, he built a monument to himself (15:12).
- B. Pride is a recipe for spiritual failure. A faithful Christian is humble (Psalm 51:17; Proverbs 12:15; James 4:6), submitting to God and

looking out for the interests of others (1 Corinthians 8:9-13; 10:24; Philippians 2:4).

IV. Saul Often Showed Little Or No Interest In God

- A. Jefferson Scott said, "Saul is never said to have anything resembling a personal relationship with God." As you read 1 Samuel, it is apparent that Saul did not show the close relationship to God as did David (1 Chronicles 29:10-12) or Solomon (1 Kings 8:56-58).
- B. It is spiritually dangerous to confuse a knowledge of God with growing close to God, and developing intimacy with God (Deuteronomy 5:27; Hebrews 7:19; 10:22; cp. Jeremiah 3:20-21; Zephaniah 3:1-2).

V. Saul Could Not Handle Anyone Receiving More Praise Than He

- A. Saul was a jealous man, most notably in his attitude toward David (1 Samuel 18:7-8). John Maxwell is fond of saying, "There is no success without a successor." King Saul clearly did not want to see David as his successor.
- B. Any people's capacity to achieve is determined by their leader's ability to empower. Saul did not empower God's chosen successor. It hurt Israel, David, and Saul himself. Do not allow the sin of envy to hurt your work in the kingdom (Ecclesiastes 4:4; Romans 1:29; 13:13; Titus 3:3). Paul was so good to promote people: Titus (2 Corinthians 8:16, 23; Titus 1:4), Timothy (Philippians 2:19-20, 22; 2 Timothy 1:5), and Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21).

VI. Saul Failed To Show Courage When Challenged By His Enemies

- A. The Bible showed two examples of Saul's failure to demonstrate courage when his people needed it most. The first one was in his reluctance to trust God in fighting the Philistine giant, Goliath (1 Samuel 17:11). The second was at the end of his life during the Philistine war (1 Samuel 28:5). "What is courage? Courage is fear that has said its prayers," wrote Karl Barth. Saul had not said his prayers.
- B. Standing for the Lord requires courage. The product of trusting God is courage (Psalm 31:24; Isaiah 51:7; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Philippians 1:27-28). It takes courage to stand for truth, to say "no" to sin, and not be conformed to the world.

Conclusion. If David was the king "after God's own heart," Saul was the king after the people's own heart. What they had asked, they obtained; and what they obtained, must fail; and what failed would prepare for what God wanted. If these attitudes are in the heart, one cannot overcome the wicked one.