

# The Tragic Life of King Saul

by Keith Daniel

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*This sermon delves into the tragic and controversial life of King Saul, highlighting his unwise choices, tragic consequences, and defiance of God's commandments. It emphasizes the importance of genuine repentance, humility, and obedience to God's word to avoid a life marked by grief and shame. The sermon warns against professing faith while living in defiance of God, the danger of seeking approval from man over God, and the need to sincerely seek God's mercy and forgiveness with a contrite heart.*

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 26:21, Jeremiah 29:13, 1 Corinthians 5:8, Matthew 6:1, 1 John 3:20, Psalms 139:23, Hebrews 4:13, Deuteronomy 28:1

**Topics:** "Repentance", "Obedience to God"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I would like today to attempt, or should I say, to dare to attempt, to dare to attempt, to preach on one of the most tragic and probably the most controversial life in the entire Bible, one of the most tragic and probably the most controversial life in the entire Bible, the life of King Saul, who sorrowfully cried these tragic words before he died in grief and shame, I have played the fool. That's a theatrical term. I have played the fool and have erred exceedingly, and have erred exceedingly.

1 Samuel 26 verse 21. And it's almost as if the pages of the sacred book are rent, are rent with grief as they record the incomprehensibly foolish choices he sadly made in his life and their tragic consequences, their tragic consequences. He was anointed Israel's first king in 1050 B.C., but he died shamefully 40 years later in 1010 B.C. After Moses' death, Joshua led God's people across the Jordan River into the promised land.

And after Joshua's death, God ordained judges over his people until the godly Samuel. But then we read in 1 Samuel 8 verse 1, it came to pass when Samuel was old that he, he made his sons judges over Israel. The three but his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after Luke, that is dishonest gain financially.

And they took bribes and perverted judgment. Verse 4, then all the elders of Israel said unto him, behold thou art old and thy sons walk not in thy ways. Now then make us a king, make us a king to judge us like all the other nations.

Verse 6, but this thing displeased Samuel that they said, give us a king to judge us. Samuel prayed, Samuel prayed unto the Lord. Verse 7, and the Lord said unto Samuel, hearken unto the voice of the people.

In all that they say unto thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. Now many biblical scholars suggest that God gave them such a tragic man to sow them their folly in rejecting him and choosing a man to rather rule over them. But I disagree with them.

I truly believe that God mercifully and compassionately chose a man that he hoped would lead his people with integrity, who would fear him and obey his commandments for their well-being. I believe that this shameful record of his tragic life recorded in the sacred book is a grave, a grave and compassionate warning from God to us all to take careful heed that the eventual record of our lives may not also be sadly written with grief and shame. But that we would seek the Lord with all our heart, Jeremiah 29 verse 13, in sincerity and in truth, 1 Corinthians 5 verse 8, and not stoop as Saul sadly did to play the fool with God.

Now we read in 1 Samuel 15 verse 2 that Saul was chosen by God to be Israel's first king when he was little in his own sight. 1 Samuel 26 verse 21 says, staggering words, when he was little in his own sight, before honor, any honor from God. That is, before honor is humility.

Proverbs 15 verse 33 says, Now this is a fearful warning to us all, beloved, and I say to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. Romans 12 verse 3, Saul was chosen by God when he was little in his own sight. We read that he, in humility, hid himself.

He hid himself among the stuff, 1 Samuel 1 verse 22 records, when he realized that they sought to make him their king. This, of course, was one of the many things that endeared him to the nation and swiftly made him the desire that is the delight of all Israel. 1 Samuel 9 verse 20 records, but as we fast forward, as we fast forward across the fearful pages of this sacred book, we read that the Lord soon repented.

That is, he regretted that he had chosen Saul to be king over Israel. 1 Samuel 15 verse 35, It repenteth me, it repenteth me that I set up Saul to be king. He grievously declared in verse 11, for he is turned back from following me.

He is turned back from following me. And friend, God has tragically said those sad words of many people through the ages, perhaps even of some who are sitting here in this meeting today, but how is it possible, you may ask, how is it possible that such tragic shame could have come upon King Saul so swiftly? And even a more fearful question to me is how can one preach constructively or meaningfully on such a tragic life as his? How can one preach meaningfully, constructively on such a tragic life as his, unless, unless one carefully and prayerfully looks at everything in the light of the rest of the scriptures? Firstly, we must remember that Jesus spoke of those that would eagerly hear the word of God, but then he added these fearful words, then cometh the devil, then cometh the devil. Luke 8 verse 11, As earth is the battlefield between God and Satan for the souls of men who have a free will.

If you don't know that, you'll get deranged before you die if you don't know that. Then cometh the devil. Luke 8 verse 11, Satan cometh immediately.

Mark 4 verse 15 warns, and taketh away the word out of their hearts. And Satan is able to do that. Don't doubt it.

We dare not underestimate or scoff at his evil power. He walketh about as a roaring lion. 1 Peter 5 verse 8 warns from going to and fro in the earth, walking up and down in it.

Job 1 verse 7 says, Seeking whom he may devour. Seeking whom he may destroy. Then Christ went on to warn us in Luke 8 verse 13 of those who, when they hear, receive God's word with joy, with gladness.

Mark 4 verse 16 says, But these have no root, which for a while believe, which endureth for a while, endure for a while. Mark 13 verse 21 says, But in time of temptation, that is testing, they fall away. We have to consider the words of Jesus Christ.

Even if we get uncomfortable, we have to. And Satan took everything, everything out of the heart of this tragic man, everything that God and man had initially seen in him and honored him for. Then the godly prophet Samuel sorrowfully told him that God now sought another king.

The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart. Chapter 13 verse 14. God, of course, found David, whose heart proved to be perfect with the Lord.

1 Kings 15 verse 3 records. We read in verse 5 that David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord and turned not aside as Saul did from anything that God commanded him all the days of his life, save only that's apart from the matter of Uriah the Hittite. But Samuel mourned for Saul.

Verse 5 records, And cried unto the Lord for him all the night. Verse 11, the whole night. Now those words, beloved, lifted Samuel to a higher level than most, to a higher level of godliness than most have ever known.

Yes, he had rebuked Saul with fearful gravity, but also with a broken heart. And we need to take heed here, especially preachers, for if your harshest word of judgment against those who fall does not throb with love in and out of the pulpit, your sin is greater than those you condemn, brother. Don't you doubt this.

Samuel mourned for Saul. 1 Samuel 15 verse 35 records, For it grieved Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord all night. Verse 11 records, Until the Lord said, How long wilt thou mourn? For Saul, chapter 16 verse 1. Now in the New Testament, the apostle Paul also experienced great sorrow and grief as the godly Samuel had over such tragic lives, whom he also had at first great joy and expectation in, but eventually wept and mourned over.

He sorrowfully wrote in Philippians 3 verse 18, For many walk, of whom I have told you often, but now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Beloved, brace yourselves, for you also will grieve over many souls who at first you delighted in spiritually. Clouds they are without water, without rain.

Trees, whose fruit withereth, that is swiftly dies. Whose fruit without fruit, that is genuine true fruit. Twice dead, Jews verse 16 says, Tragic fearful words that God gives us in this about people, who gave us hope and even joy, eventually brought us on our faces to weep over and shame.

So the first fearful warning given to us in this record of Saul's tragic life is that many who we delight in today may soon cause us to mourn and even weep as Samuel and Paul eventually did. But this first

warning has two facets to prayerfully consider. For there are those, perhaps even sitting in this meeting here today, who may indeed have received God's word to their hearts, like Saul at first did with joy, but who may need to take heed of Christ's, not my doctrine, of Christ's solemn and fearful words.

Then cometh the devil. Be careful what you do with this message today, friend. If you sense that God is addressing you and warning you right now in his love, or you may also sadly cry as Saul tragically did, God is departed from me and answereth me no more.

He no longer speaks to me. 1 Samuel 28 verse 15. I once heard a staggering testimony of a very godly and very well-loved preacher here in America, who although he had been raised in a God-fearing home, whose father was a conservative evangelical preacher, he as a young man foolishly chose to pursue a life of sin and ungodly company.

But God always spoke to his heart as he sat in meetings under the faithful ministry of his father and other preachers. But he continued to close his heart to God's voice and convicting spirit, and he went back to pursue sin until one fearful night, as he sat in yet another meeting, he was suddenly aware of the deadness in his heart toward the message, and he left that meeting fearfully. As this verse soberly echoed in his mind, he that being often reprov'd and hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Proverbs 29 verse 1. Throughout the night he became more and more fearful, thinking, God is no longer speaking to me. Has he forsaken me forever? He then found himself agonizing, fearfully in prayer through the entire night, seeking God desperately for mercy, until God flooded his fearful heart with overwhelming peace. From that night he began to pursue and serve God with his whole heart.

And he became a preacher who is today valiant for the truth, and I'm honored to know him as a friend. And you shall seek me, and you shall find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you.

Yes, I will be found of you if you will seek me with all your heart. And I will be found of you. Yes, I will be found of you if you would seek me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29 verse 13. So why don't you give him that place in your heart? Shun all the wrong, and from sin now depart. You'll find happiness right from the start if you give him that place in your heart.

But let us be careful here, for this verse that wrought such fear in that young man's heart is staggering. He that being often reprov'd, yet hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Harden not your heart, God warns in Psalm 95 verse 8, my spirit shall not always strive with a man.

Genesis 6 verse 3, woe unto him that striveth with his maker. Isaiah 45 verse 9. These are fearful warnings strewn across the pages of God's sacred word that we dare not take lightly. Don't play the fool with God, but let us return to Saul, for we also need to consider one of the most shameful doctrinal confusions and tragic question marks against God's righteousness that has risen over the centuries through his seemingly merciless dealings with this man.

That he had chosen to be Israel's first king. Many have staggered at and questioned God's seemingly merciless judgment upon him, but we dare not. We dare not allow ourselves to doubt God's righteousness, beloved, not only towards Saul, but toward every soul in history, including Pharaoh, including Esau.

Just go back to the Old Testament to see there's a reason no man will judge God, sir, unrighteously. We dare not allow ourselves to doubt God's righteousness, not only towards Saul, but toward every soul in history. And preachers, always be careful to defend God's integrity and holiness toward all men, or you miss the mark and err greatly doctrinally.

Don't defend a doctrine, defend God's integrity. Don't defend a doctrine, defend God's integrity. And if you don't do that with compassion to every man you speak to in your life, you are a tragedy.

Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Genesis 18, verse 25, God is not unrighteous. Hebrews 6, verse 10, for thine eyes are open unto all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways. Jeremiah 32, verse 19, but at this point, I want us to briefly skim across the pages of the sacred book to look at God's merciful and righteous dealings with later kings, many of whom were also tragic failures in God and man's sight, and fearfully wicked, but who turned in heart-rending repentance to God before the end of their lives, and sought God with all of their hearts, and as a result were forgiven and even greatly honored by God and man.

We read in 1 Kings 16, verse 33, that Ahab did more to provoke the Lord to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him. That's including Saul. There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord.

1 Kings 21, verse 25, records, verse 26, he did very abominably, and God's wrath and righteous judgment was mercilessly declared against him. Verse 27, but it came to pass when Ahab heard of God's anger and fearful judgment, he rent his clothes and put on sackcloth upon his flesh. He fasted and lay in sackcloth and went softly, that is, he went about grieving and mourning fearfully.

Verse 28, the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Wherefore, because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring any evil or judgment upon the land in his days. Then in 2 Kings 13, verse 1, we read that King Jehoahaz also did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. Verse 3, but when he heard that the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel because of his wickedness, verse 4, he besought the Lord, he besought the Lord in such a way that the Lord hearkened unto him and gave Israel a Savior, that is, a deliverer.

He saved them by the hand of Joash, verse 13, and his courageous son Jeroboam, chapter 14, verse 27 records, When they cried unto him, when they cried unto thee, thou gavest them saviors, that is, deliverers, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies, Nehemiah 9, verse 27 states. Then Jotham began to reign, 2 Chronicles 27, verse 1 records, verse 2, albeit but, he entered not into the temple of the Lord. And the people did yet corruptly, that is, they continued to pursue wickedness and grave sin, but Jotham later became mighty, God says, because, because he prepared his ways before the Lord, to him that ordereth his conversation, his life, his conduct, to him that ordereth his conversation, write, will I show the salvation of God, Psalm 50, verse 23 promises, therefore turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, Job 2, verse 13 says, Turn yourselves from all your transgressions, Ezekiel 18, verse 30 cries, humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up, James 4, verse 10, humble yourselves, humble thyself to walk with God, Micah 6, verse 8, but be careful here, be careful here, for there is a fearful verse in Psalm 55, verse 19, that states, because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God, I don't care how religious you are, or what cheap testimony you grabbed through some prayer that was meaningless, because nothing changed, because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God, they fear not God, Hebrews 6, verse 9, speaks of things that accompany

salvation, things that accompany salvation, beginning with the foundation of repentance, Hebrews 6, verse 1, beginning with the foundation of repentance, don't play the fool with God, but why was God so merciless with Saul, why was God so merciless with Saul, you may all be asking, well I believe a holy God looked and saw where no man can, or ever will be able to, I believe God looked into Saul's heart with great grief, and this is a fearful warning to us all here today, by his actions are weighed, beloved, 1 Samuel 2, verse 3, thou art the Lord God who didst choose Abraham, and foundest his heart faithful before thee, and therefore thou madest a covenant with him, Jeremiah 9, verse 8, I the Lord search the heart, I try, that is test the reins, or the mind, the deep thoughts, the hidden agenda, that thou no man knows, but I see, Jeremiah 17, verse 10, to give every man, not just Saul, every man, for there's no partiality with God, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings, and God, God has sadly found in many men, even deeply religious men, that the heart is deceitful, and above all things, desperately wicked, who can know it, Jeremiah 17, verse 9, God searcheth the heart, Romans 8, verse 27, he trieth our hearts, 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 4, he knoweth the secrets of the heart, Psalm 44, verse 21, all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do, Hebrews 4, verse 13, and if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things, does your heart condemn you sitting here, singing the praises of God, with God's people, when you're no longer in God's people's company, where are you, what are you singing, what are you looking at, what are you seeking, God, the moment you walk out the door, don't play the fool with God, sir, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, beloved, and knoweth all things, 1 John 3, verse 20, and beloved, we must not doubt that as God looked into Saul's heart, as God looked into Saul's heart, he saw rebellion that was truly evil in his eyes, as wicked as the sin of witchcraft, he said in 1 Samuel 15, verse 23, and fearful stubbornness that was as evil to God as idolatry, verse 23 records, we dare not question God's righteousness in his dealings with King Saul, or with any soul, even yours, perhaps right now, you also need to pray, search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting, while there's time left, Psalm 139, verse 23, now we read in 1 Samuel 15, verse 3, that God commanded Saul, go, smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass as horses, here God commanded Saul to destroy the gravely, uncomprehensibly evil people of Amalek, and everything they possessed, even their livestock, strongly referring to the dark depravity of bestiality, which God solemnly condemned, in Leviticus 18, verse 23 and 24, 1 Samuel 15, verse 9, but Saul defiantly spared Agag, their king, and most of the livestock, their animals, this was in total defiance and disregard of God and His commandments, 1 Samuel 15, verse 13, and when Samuel came to Saul, Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have performed the commandment of the Lord, and Samuel said, what meanest then this bleating of sheep in my ears, lowing of the oxen, which I heard, verse 20, and Saul said unto Samuel, but I have obeyed the Lord, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and how many, how many to this day, beloved, like Saul, claim to serve God, but the world cries back in disbelief, as Samuel did, then what meaneth this bleating of sheep, 1 Samuel 15, verse 14, Eli, the godly high priest before Samuel, he heard all that his sons did, 1 Samuel 2, verse 22, who shamefully ministered in the priesthood, and Eli said, I hear of your evil dealings, and it is no good report that I hear, my sons, what you are speak so loud, that the world can't hear what you say, they're looking at your walk, not listening to your talk, they're judging by your actions, every day, don't believe you'll deceive, by claiming what you've never known, they'll accept what they see, and know you to be, they'll know you by your life alone, don't doubt that, don't doubt that, and so the third fearful warning given to us from the sad record of Saul's life is, that it is fearfully possible to claim and profess the life of obedience to God, and pursuit of God, while knowingly living in total defiance of his commandments, while they profess to know him, they deny him in works,

Titus 1, 16, and many other verses, but sadly, Saul's only remorse was through the fear of man, and not of God, tragically, his only concern, his only concern was to save face before man, therefore he begged Samuel to make a sacrifice with him, publicly, he pled with him in 1 Samuel 15:30, I have sinned, yet honor me, now I pray thee, I beg thee, before the elders of my people, before Israel, turn again with me.

Here we see another shameful trap, for it is possible to know that your life completely grieves God, yet through pride and fear of man, you attempt to save face publicly, and from then onwards, you endeavor to live for God in pretense only. Christ warns us all of the great grief we are to God if we stoop to confess faithfulness to him only to be seen of men, Matthew 6, verse 10 onwards, all their works they do for to be seen of men, Matthew 23, verse 5, how horrible, how wicked, what do you think it is? And Saul was swiftly feared by all, even Samuel who had delighted in him, was soon fearful for his life, when the Lord said unto Samuel, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided me, I found me a king among his sons, 1 Samuel 16, verse 1, verse 2, Samuel said, how can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me, 1 Samuel 18, verse 15, and when Saul saw that David behaved himself very wisely, verse 16, that all Israel and Judah loved David, he was afraid of him, he was threatened, he felt threatened by him, therefore Saul sought to kill David, 1 Samuel 19, verse 10, and David also fearfully cried, there is but a step between me and death, 1 Samuel 20, verse 3, I was here in America a few years ago, oh quite a few years ago now, and I went to a certain town, I was staying in the home, a very godly man, I won't give you his name, had a lot of children, one of the boys sitting at the table, as they all spoke, touched my heart, the way he was always the one that everybody looked to and delighted in, literally, because he had this amazing zeal, zealousness, and fire, I even asked him to close the meeting in prayer in the church one night, he so impressed me, it was a few months later, the news came through to me that he was in jail, that he committed murder, he killed someone that was at that table, jailed for life, somewhere along the line I looked at this man, I said why did he do that, why would he do that, why would he have committed murder, when he professed that he loved God so zealously, and convincingly, and this preacher looked at me and said, jealousy, brother Keith, so the young Saul, who everyone delights in today, is capable of committing murder tomorrow, and living for the death of anyone that he felt threatened by, and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him, one John tells us, and in 1 Samuel 26 verse 21, Saul eventually, sadly confessed, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly, perhaps there be some of us sitting here today, who also through this message are looking back sorrowfully and shamefully, and they're crying also, if only I hadn't played the fool, and erred so exceedingly, and knowingly, and defiantly, how different my life would have been, a godly woman here in the USA, in Washington, phoned me across the world to my country, a few years ago while I was at home, Cape Town, South Africa, and she said these words, brother Keith, I would like to share a portion of God's word to you if I may, and she went on to read aloud, passionately, at first with zeal, and then with brokenness, before she put the phone down. Deuteronomy 28 verse 1, it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments, the Lord thy God will set thee on high, and all these blessings shall come upon thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of God, blessed shalt thou be in the city, blessed shalt thou be in the field, blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, blessed shall be thy basket and thy store, blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out, the Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face, the Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and all that thou settest thine hand unto, he shall bless thee, the Lord shall establish thee and holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways, and all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of thee, the Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, and bless thee in all the work of thy hands, and thou shalt be above only, and not

beneath, if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, and that thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day to the right hand or to the left.

Verse 15, but if thou wilt not hearken, and don't you doubt this beloved soul knew these words, he had heard them many times, but if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God to observe, to do all his commandments, that all these curses shall come upon thee, cursed shalt thou be, I can't even read them they're so fearful, the Lord shall send upon thee cursing and rebuke in all that thou shittest thy hand to do, the Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and confusion, and astonishment of heart, thou shalt not prosper in any of thy ways, thou shalt become an astonishment right through to three thousand years later Saul, when people preach of you, all these curses shall come upon thee, now maybe it might just be that as a result of this message that I have dared to preach, it may be that you, unlike Saul, will try again like Ahab who was more sinful than Saul, but God immediately forgave, there was no turning, nothing in him said in his mind, let me turn to God in sincerity now, it might be that unlike Saul you can, like Ahab and all the others, you go through all the history of the Old Testament kings who found mercy for one reason, they humbled themselves in the sight of God, they ceased to play the fool with God, oh will you go on singing with your Bible in your hand, attending meetings, praying in prayer meetings, even after this message, I know I preach differently, there's no one more fearful at what has been said in this pulpit than me, there's no one in this building or world that trembles more than me at the words I utter, what on earth am I standing in the pulpit for, apart from being a blasphemous grief to God, if I don't preach the full truth of God's word, even if it makes people get uncomfortable and hate me.

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