

Through the Bible - 1 Samuel

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon on 1 Samuel emphasizes the power of prayer, the importance of godly leadership, and the need for discernment in fulfilling God's purpose.

Duration: 56:55

Topics: "Through The Bible"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the life of Samuel and the importance of balancing ministry and family. Samuel was a faithful judge of Israel, but his constant traveling left him with little time for his own family. The speaker warns against neglecting the upbringing of children in the ways of God while serving the Lord. The story of David's anointing as king is also highlighted, emphasizing how God chooses those who are faithful in small things. The sermon concludes with a cautionary tale of Samuel appointing his sons as judges, which resulted in corruption and injustice.

Transcript

Let's turn to 1 Samuel. I mentioned that Samuel was the last judge of Israel. And after that, we have the first king.

And the story begins with his mother, who was barren, not having children. And it's interesting to see how in scripture there were many women like this in the Old Testament. Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and now Hannah.

From all of whom, after a period of barrenness, they sought God in prayer and they had a son. Each of them gave birth to a son that had a unique place in God's purpose. They did not accept their barrenness and let it go like that.

They began to seek God earnestly about it. And that's how God's purpose was fulfilled. And there's something in this, when a woman is barren, in those days it was considered very disgraceful not to have a child.

That drove them to God. So we can say that all these children born to these women were born in prayer, intense prayer. Most pregnant wives will pray for their children, but for these people, it was very intense.

And it's very wonderful when a child is born into the world in an atmosphere of intense prayer that the mother has gone through over a long period of time. And that's the beginning of Samuel's life. He was

born with perhaps years of prayer.

And we find Hannah going up and praying to the Lord for this child. And finally, she says in verse 11 in chapter 1, she made a vow and said, Lord, if you will indeed look upon the affliction of your maidservant and remember me and not forget your maidservant, but will give her a son, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life. See, there's a shift in her focus there.

First of all, she was thinking of her need. I need a son. And then she thought, well, if I have one, I'll give it to the Lord.

The Lord has need as well. You know, when the focus of our prayer shifts from our need to God's need, that's when we can get an answer to our prayer. Just like we were considering in an earlier study, the Lord taught us to pray, Hallowed be thy name.

There was a great need at that time in Israel. And if Hannah was a person who was alert to her surroundings, you know how it was in the time of the judges. It was chaos.

God's people were backslidden so badly. There was a great need for someone who could be raised up as a prophet. And Hannah began to think of that and said, Lord, not just I will dedicate my son to you, but a razor will never come on his head.

He will be a Nazirite dedicated to you. And if you can use him to restore this nation back to you, he's yours. Her whole prayer shifted from her own need to God's.

Very often our prayers are not answered because it's focused so much on ourselves. And it's wonderful that Samuel was born into such an atmosphere. And we read that when she did conceive in verse 20, she was very faithful to her promise and brought her son to the temple there to Eli, the high priest, and said in verse 27 of chapter one, for this boy, I prayed and the Lord has given me my petition.

And so I have dedicated him to the Lord as long as he lives. He is dedicated to the Lord. I'm never going to take him back.

And she taught that little three-year-old boy to a four-year-old, whatever he was to kneel down and worship the Lord there. It's wonderful to have a godly mother like that. If you have had one like that, you're blessed.

Samuel was. And she praised this wonderful prayer in chapter two. See, Samuel grew up to be the man who changed the face of Israel from the chaotic situation that there was in the book of Judges that we considered into the glorious reign of David.

Samuel was the link between the book of Judges and the kingdom of David. And Hannah's prayer was what led to Samuel being born. Now, the leader at that time was a man called Eli, the high priest.

And it says in verse 12 that his sons were worthless men, godless men who had no fear of God. It's very sad when a high priest has children who are godless, who have no fear of God. And what is worse, when they begin to take part in the ministry.

I mean, if they are godless and go and do something else, that's okay. But these people were godless, and they were there in the temple, helping their father in the ministry with absolutely no fear of God. They did not know the Lord.

And they would steal from the sacrifices, and they would commit adultery with the women in the temple. And Eli's response to all this was very, very weak. It says in chapter 2 and verse 22, Eli was very old, and he heard all that his sons were doing.

And what does he tell them? He doesn't turn them out of the ministry and say, get out of here, don't dishonor the Lord, if you're going to live like that. No, he says in verse 24, my sons, it's not good what I hear. And he's so spineless and weak in the way he corrects his children.

I mean, forget correcting his children as far as his family is concerned. Here, God's people were involved, and he would not correct his children. But in contrast to those godless children was Samuel, who grew up, it says in verse 26, in stature and in favor, both with the Lord and with men.

And we read further in chapter 3 how Samuel's ministry begins. Because God was fed up with Eli, and he sent a man of God to Eli in verse 27 of chapter 2 and told him that your ministry is finished, because your children are dishonoring me and dishonoring my sacrifice. And verse 29, the middle, he says, Eli, your sin is that you honor your sons more than you honor me.

And then we find this wonderful verse, which is a very good verse for us to remember all through our life. In the middle of verse 30, the Lord says, those who honor me, I will honor. And those who despise me will be lightly esteemed.

It's a wonderful verse to live by. If you honor God, you can be sure that he will honor you. Eli did not honor God in the way he dealt with his children, and therefore he suffered, and his children suffered too.

But Samuel was different. In the midst of all this godless surrounding, Samuel, this little boy, grew up, and he did not allow himself to be influenced by the godlessness around him. And that's the example for all of you and us who are living today, particularly if you're young.

If you can not be influenced by the godlessness you see around you, you may go into a church situation and find compromise. But you should not allow yourself to be influenced by that. And if you can be like Samuel, steadfast in your devotion to the Lord, without being corrupted, God can raise you up to be a voice in that situation.

And that's what we see in the case of Samuel. When he was asleep one day, he heard a voice saying, Samuel, Samuel, and he thought Eli was calling him, chapter 3. And a number of times that voice came, and then Eli realized that the Lord was calling Samuel, and he told him to ask the Lord to speak to him. So in verse 10, the Lord came, chapter 3, verse 10, the Lord came and spoke to Samuel and said, Samuel, Samuel, and Samuel said, speak, for thy servant is listening.

It was in the middle of the night. Here is an attitude that all of us must have all through the day, all through our lives. Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.

God didn't give Samuel a warning saying, tonight at midnight, I'm going to come and speak to you. He had to be alert. Throughout scripture, you find that the prophets, suddenly they would hear God speaking.

On such and such a day of such and such a month, God would speak. And then for two, three months, there'd be nothing. And then you read that on such and such a day of another month, God again spoke to them.

They were in that state of alertness all the time. And God speaks only to those who are eager to hear his voice and who always have this attitude, speak, Lord, your servant is listening. You know, your life and your ministry can be totally different.

If you have that attitude, God may speak to you directly from your, in your heart. In the middle of the night, he may speak to you as you're reading his word. He may speak to you in a meeting.

He may speak to you through a brother or a sister. He may speak to you while you're in the midst of other people. He may speak to you when you're alone.

There are many ways in which God speaks, but we must always have this attitude of Samuel, speak, Lord, your servant is listening. And that's what enables Samuel to grow up, to be a prophet of God. When he listened, he could speak what God told him and God told him, I'm going to judge Eli for his sin.

And in the morning, when Eli called Samuel and said, what did the Lord say to you? Samuel told him verse 18, everything, even though it was bad news for Eli, he told him everything. A true servant of God is like that. Even though Eli had been very kind to Samuel, Samuel did not hesitate to tell him, God says, he's going to judge you for the way you have brought a curse upon yours, the way your sons have brought a curse on themselves.

And you did not rebuke them. And it says in Samuel grew verse 19. This is a wonderful verse.

It's a great challenge for those of us who minister the word. It's, it says here that Samuel grew and did not, and the Lord did not allow any of his words to fall to the ground. Isn't that a great challenge for you and me that we seek the Lord so that when we minister God's word in the different situations, God calls us to whether to unbelievers or believers, that not one word we speak falls to the ground, wasted.

Every word should go straight home to people's hearts, not just in the ministry of the word, but in private conversation as well. Think if in our private conversation, and we have a lot of conversation every day with each other that we are so godly that the words that come out of our mouth are not wasted words, but words that go straight home to people's hearts. The Lord was with Samuel.

That was the secret. We saw that earlier too. The Lord was with Joseph.

The Lord was with Samuel and did not allow a single word that he spoke to fall to the ground. I want to encourage you to yearn for such a form of ministry and conversation. And all Israel, verse 20, knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord.

Now this was a time, as we read in chapter 3 verse 1, the last part of it, when word from the Lord was very rare and visions were infrequent. There was no prophet for years. And when there is no prophet, it is an indication that God has given up on his people.

Throughout the period of the judges, there were kings, but there were no prophets. The last prophet was Joshua, perhaps. And he too was more of a military warrior, Moses perhaps.

And since that time, there was no prophet who came forth with a word from the Lord for years. And then, at last, Israel knew. God had finally raised up a man.

They could listen to him. He was a young man. And that's the thing that encourages all of you young people.

Samuel was not an old man. You don't have to wait till you're 50 years old to serve the Lord. Samuel started serving the Lord when he was so young, less than 10 years old, and grew up.

And by the time he was 20, he was a prophet. What was the secret? He was listening. His attitude always was, speak Lord, your servant was listening.

He had a serious attitude towards the word of God. In chapter 4, we read of a time when the Israelites were fighting the Philistines. And there's just one thing I want to point out here in this chapter, which is interesting.

That when they were defeated, verse 3, Israel, the elders said, why has the Lord, chapter 4, verse 3, defeated us today? Perhaps it's because we have not brought the Ark of the Covenant here. They didn't realize that they were defeated because of their sin. Now when you live in sin and worship idols and live for the things of this earth, even if you have the Ark of the Covenant, that's not going to bring any victory.

That's only a symbol. You can have the symbol without God. You can break bread and drink the cup and not have fellowship with the Lord.

That's only a symbol. And here we read that, so they brought the Ark. And when the Ark came, they shouted so greatly, verse 5, that the whole earth began to tremble.

Now some people think that if you shout a lot, God will be there. No, not necessarily. The first time, it says, the Philistines killed 4,000 people, verse 2. Then Israel brought the Ark of the Lord and shouted hallelujah and praised the Lord and all that.

And then they went into battle. And this time, verse 10, 30,000 Israelites were killed. It was much worse.

Now there's something we can learn from that, that you can't bring God into a situation by bringing the symbols and the rituals and by shouting and praising. Now there are a lot of churches where it's the ritual and the symbol and the shouting, that's the main thing. But they had all this, and they were more defeated at the end of it.

It's a good conscience that God looks for. It's a freedom from worshiping other gods, from living for this world that God looks for. Then only the symbols that God has established have meaning.

Then only our shouting and praising the Lord has meaning. So that's just in passing that we see there. Now we finally read of a time when the Philistines captured the Ark and they got into a lot of trouble because of that, and then they sent the Ark back.

They placed it on a cart, we read in chapter 6 verse 8, and sent it back. Now we read in chapter 7 verse 15, we move towards the end of Samuel's life. Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

And we read that he was frequently traveling. He used to go annually on a circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah, and he judged in all these places, and he was traveling so much that he had not much time for his family. Now I hear it's a warning for those who are serving the Lord and who are traveling so much that they have no time to bring up their children in the ways of God, particularly when the children are small.

And I want you to see what happened here. Samuel was traveling, traveling, traveling, traveling. He was serving the Lord, he was doing so many things, and he didn't have much time for his wife and children, and there he was traveling, traveling, traveling, traveling.

And then he would return to Ramah for his house was there once in a while, and then he traveled again. And what was the result? His sons, it says the next three verses, you must read those three verses together, Acts 1 Samuel 8. It came about when Samuel was old, he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. That was a big mistake.

Samuel made mistakes too. He had no business to appoint his sons as judges. God never called him.

And apart from that, it says in verse 3, his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice. What do we see there? Samuel had preached to Eli how to bring up his children. And now he failed in his own house, in the way he brought up his children.

Now, okay, if his children had grown up and they had left the home and then they went astray, at least he should not have appointed them as judges. He was a man of discernment, a tremendous discernment. He was a prophet.

He was listening. And here is one time he stopped listening. Did he listen to God? Did God tell him in the middle of the night, appoint your sons as judges? Did he say, speak Lord, your servant is listening.

Whom shall I appoint as the next judges? He stopped listening. This is what can happen to people who start so well when they are young, that they grow older and they stop listening to what God is saying because they have a partiality towards their own children. And even though their children are godless and have no fear, at least if those children were godly, appointing them would have been okay.

But imagine appointing corrupt children who had no fear of God, who took bribes and perverted justice and not having the discernment to see that. And you are a prophet of the Lord and appointing them as judges. Now I want to say this.

See, there are many servants of God today whose children are not following in the ways of the Lord. I want to tell you, be very careful not to judge them. You do not know the pressures under which many of God's servants live and work and how much they are the targets of Satan's attack.

I would not judge them. I would not judge people whose children have gone astray because I say, I don't know. The Bible says, don't judge.

If you want to do something for them, pray for them. If you can't pray for them, at least don't judge them. What the Bible does say in 1 Timothy 3 is that when your children are at home, if you cannot control them, you have no business to be an elder in God's house.

You have no business to preach God's word to other people because if you cannot run your own home, how can you run God's house? If you cannot control three or four children in your own home and make them obey you, how are you going to control 100, 200 people in God's house? That is what 1 Timothy 3 says. But when those children have grown up and gone away from home, they have to make their own choice whether they want to follow the Lord or not. There are many outstanding servants of God whose children have gone astray after they left their home.

They controlled them when they were in their home, but once they left their home, they chose their own way. And that does not disqualify that servant of God from ministry. It would disqualify him if when they were in their home, like it says in 1 Timothy 3, he could not control them.

The mistake in Samuel's case was that he appointed those people as the ones to follow him as judges in Israel. And there we see the danger of how partiality and love for your family can blind you from what God is trying to say to you. We can stop listening to God when it concerns our own family members.

Even such a wonderful man like Samuel made that mistake, and that is a warning for all of us. We don't have to judge anybody else, but we certainly can judge ourselves and learn a lot from that. And yet I would say this in Samuel's favor.

Many, many good things about this man. It says in chapter 12, verse 23, Samuel said to the people, when the people were going astray, he says to them, moreover, as for me, 1 Samuel 12, 23, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you, by stopping praying for you. See, Samuel's sensitivity to sin was so great in his own life that he felt if God has appointed me as the leader of this people, and I don't pray for them, I have sinned.

That's what he's saying in this verse. You are the people over whom God has made me a leader. And if I don't pray for you, I sin.

How many Christian leaders believe that? I hope you, if ever God gives you the responsibility to lead others. Many people like to lead many people. It's great to be a leader of so many people.

Do you realize that if you become a leader and you don't pray for those people, you sin. Many people think only of murder, adultery, bad thoughts, anger, and all that sin. Here's another type of sin, not praying for those you lead.

Jesus prayed for those 12 disciples regularly. All the time he was praying for them. And Samuel understood that too.

He was a man of prayer. All of God's great servants have been men of prayer. Paul was like that.

I want to show you what God himself testifies about Samuel in the book of Jeremiah. Many years later in Jeremiah 15 and verse 1, the Lord says concerning the backslidden state of Israel at that time, and he says, even if Moses and Samuel stand before me and pray, I will not change my mind about these people. What is that saying? Doesn't God listen to everybody's prayer? He certainly does.

But the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. And from that entire Old Testament period of Israel's history of 1,000 years, from the time of Joshua to the time of Jeremiah, God picks out two people, not Elijah, not Elisha, not David, Moses and Samuel. He says there are two men in the history of Israel who were men of prayer.

God says that. And he links Moses and Samuel together as men who had power with him in prayer. Samuel was one like that, an outstanding man of prayer, just like Moses.

It's a pity that he failed with his own children in appointing them as judges. Moses did not make that mistake. Moses had two sons too, just like Samuel had sons.

But Moses did not appoint his sons to take over from him. He appointed the one God told him to appoint. So even men of prayer can make mistakes because partiality and love for our flesh and blood is very close to us.

That's why Jesus said we've got to cut ourselves off from that attachment to father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters if we want to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Now these are warnings for us and a wise man will learn from the mistakes of others. A foolish man will make the same mistakes himself.

And we find multitudes of people making the same mistake that scripture has warned us about again and again. Now we come to the ministry of Saul. Saul reigned for 40 years.

And we read of Saul, the first king of Israel in chapters 8 through 15 primarily. And I want you to see a number of things here concerning Saul. Saul did not go around wanting to be a king.

The people of Israel wanted a king. And one day Samuel chapter 9, 1 Samuel 9, the Lord revealed something to Samuel verse 15 saying, tomorrow at this time, chapter 9 verse 16, I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin and you must anoint him to be the king over my people. And when Samuel saw the Lord, verse 17, the Lord said to him, this is the man.

And Samuel went and spoke to him and he brought him inside and we read that in chapter 10, Samuel took a flask of oil, poured it on his head and said, the Lord has anointed you as a ruler over his inheritance. Saul was absolutely surprised. He was just an ordinary man, young man.

And for God to pick him out and say, that's the man I have found means that that man had so many good qualities. And so we see here the Samuel telling Saul in verse 6, the spirit of the Lord will come upon you, chapter 10, verse 6, and you will prophesy and you'll be changed into another man. This is a wonderful promise for all of us to take.

Lord, I want the spirit of God to come upon me in such a way that I will be changed into another man. I want to point out to you one more thing before I come to that. Finally, the time came for Saul to be publicly acknowledged as king.

And so Samuel called the people together in verse 17 and he says, okay, we're going to select a king now. And Samuel did not say, okay, Saul, come here. It's very interesting to see there that they cast lots.

There was a thing called the Urim and the Thummim, which the high priest had in those days. There's no description in scripture as to what it was. Maybe it was some type of stone, which indicated yes or no.

It was a yes, no type of thing. And it was God ordained. And the meaning of Urim and Thummim is lights and perfections.

And it was in some way, and I don't want to guess how it was, but when they threw it down, they discovered whether God's answer was yes or no. And they threw the lots and picked, picked, picked, picked, and finally the lot fell on Saul out of all the thousands of people there. And when they looked for Saul, they couldn't find him because he didn't have any prominence there.

He hid himself. I want you to see a number of good qualities and advantages that Saul had. First of all, notice in chapter nine, verse three, the situation in which God called him.

We read here that there was a man called Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, whose donkeys were lost. His son was Saul. And verse three, chapter nine, verse three, Saul said to his son, go and search for these donkeys.

And Saul went searching, verse four, through the whole hill country of Ephraim, the land of Shalisha, the land of Shalem, verse four, and traveled all over looking for the donkeys. That's the first thing I want you to notice about Saul. He was a faithful young man.

He was thorough. His father gave him a job to do and he did it thoroughly. He didn't just go out for five minutes and say, I couldn't find it.

God picks such people who are faithful in small things like looking for donkeys. It's very interesting how the Lord looks for people who are working faithfully where they are before he picks them up. The second thing I want you to notice is that when a long time went and they couldn't find the donkeys, he says to his servant in verse five, let's go back because of my father will now be more concerned about me than the donkeys.

He had some wisdom there. And the third thing I want you to notice is when the man said, Hey, there's a man of God in the city, let's go and meet him. And Saul said, okay, let's go and meet him.

But let's take a present for him. Verse seven, let's take a present. He was a man who knew how to honor God's servants.

Number four, I want you to notice in chapter nine, verse 21, when Samuel picked on Saul, Saul said, who am I? Am I not a Benjamite of the smallest of the tribes of Israel and my family, the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin. He was a man who had a very humble opinion of himself. I'm trying to tell you the reasons why God picked on Saul.

Number five, we read that God's, when Saul spoke to him, it says here that God's presence was with him and the spirit of the Lord. Verse six came upon him. Verse seven, it says God is with you.

The presence of God was with him. Chapter 10, verse 10. The next thing we see here, his advantage he had was the spirit of God came upon him.

God was with him. Number five, the spirit of God came upon him. Number six.

And when he went home, he told his uncle in verse 16, that somebody told Saul said to his uncle, he told the plane, the donkeys had been found, but he didn't tell him that he had been anointed king. He was a man who did not boast. Number eight, we read that when they selected him to be the king, he was, it says in verse 22, hiding himself in the baggage.

He was a man who remained in the background. He didn't want to come up in front. And number nine, we read that when Saul went to his house, there was certain worthless men chapter 10, verse 27, who said, how can this man deliver us? And they despised him and didn't bring him any present, but he kept silent, even though he'd been publicly anointed as king long suffering.

That was another qualification he had. The 10th quality I see in him is in chapter 11, verse one to seven, when certain people of Israel were being attacked by their enemies and they sent messengers to Gibeah of Saul in chapter 11, verse four, saying what had happened. Saul, you find a zeal to help these people who were in distress.

The spirit of God, verse six came upon Saul and he was very angry. And he took a yoke of oxen and gathered people to go and help these fellow believers, brothers of his who were in distress, zeal to help

others. And chapter 11, verse 11, you find Saul went and fought.

You see his courage there. He was a man of courage. He went and struck down the Ammonites verse 11 of chapter 11.

And the last one is his forgiving his enemies. And when Saul came back victorious from the battle, some people said in verse 12, bring those men who didn't want Saul to rule. Let's kill him.

And Saul said in verse 13, no one is going to be killed today. This was the man whom God chose with all these wonderful advantages and qualities. And yet in a few years, he had lost the anointing, lost the kingdom, lost grace and lost everything.

A man who had such wonderful qualities when he started. This is the sad story of many, many, many, many servants of God. And that can be the sad story of some of you if you don't become wise by learning from the mistakes of others.

We read here in chapter 13, the first reason why Saul lost the kingdom. Number one, Samuel had told Saul to wait until I come and I will offer an offering before you go into battle. And it says in 1 Samuel 13, 8, that Saul waited for seven days and Samuel didn't come.

And Saul said, bring the sacrifice. I'll offer it. Now he knew he was not a priest.

He had no right to offer an offering to God. And he went into a ministry that God never gave him. There are many people who make this mistake going into a ministry that God never gave them.

We have to recognize the ministry God has given us and stay within our boundaries. Many years ago, God, I recognized that God had not called me to be an evangelist. I realized that and I've stayed within my boundaries through these years.

There are other people who do that. I value them. I respect them.

We must recognize in the Old Testament, there are warnings like this. Uzziah was a king, tried to be a priest. He got leprosy.

Saul was a king. He tried to be a priest and he lost his kingdom. Recognize your ministry and stay within the boundaries God has given you.

Let other people fulfill their ministries and you stay within the ministry God has given you. So that's how he and his impatience. That's the other thing we see here.

And a few minutes later, we read in verse 10, Samuel came. If he had just waited a few minutes, how different the story would have been. So impatience and going into a ministry God never called him for, he lost everything.

But yet he sat for more than 30 years after that on the throne. There are a lot of people who sit on thrones today in Christendom who've lost the anointing and lost the ministry God initially called them for. But because they got authority, they sit for 30 years without the anointing as rulers over systems and organizations.

That's exactly what we see in Saul. A man who had gradually degenerated from a wonderful young man who started out with great humility and degenerated to become one who was useless to God. We see in chapter 13 and verse 14, Samuel tells Saul, your kingdom shall not endure now.

Verse 13, you have acted foolishly. The Lord now seeks for somebody who's a man after his own heart. Notice the emphasis on heart.

The thing we read about Saul in chapter 10 verse 23, when he was initially anointed as king, is that when he stood in the midst of the people, he was taller than everybody else. If you saw a huge crowd of Israelites, you'd see one head sticking out about all of them. He must have been about six feet, 10 inches tall or something.

His head stood out. The thing that stood out about Saul was his head. The thing that stood out about David was his heart.

He was a man after God's own heart. There is a difference. There is a Christianity of the head, there's a Christianity of the heart, and there's a world of difference between the two.

Saul represents one, and David represents the other. One Samuel 13, 14, the Lord has sought for a man after his own heart, and he's found one. That's what God told Samuel.

Our head represents our brains, our cleverness, our intelligence. A heart represents our devotion and our worship of God. That's the point.

That's what God looks for. If you're not a worshiper, if you're not devoted to Jesus Christ, no matter how much, however much brains you may have, you can ultimately end up like Saul. David finished his course triumphantly, even though he made mistakes, because his heart was right.

And we read further in chapter 14, verse 35. Many years later, we read, Saul built an altar to the Lord. It was the first altar that he ever built.

Saul was not a worshiper. Abraham was a worshiper. Wherever he went, he built an altar.

Saul was not a worshiper. He was a clever man, a smart man, a handsome man, a tall man, but he was not a worshiper of God. Jesus said, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and then serve him.

We cannot serve without being worshipers, and that's where Saul lost out. Beware of a Christianity which is only in your head, which does not lead you to devotion to Jesus Christ and worship of God the Father. I want you to turn now to chapter 15, where we see the second mistake that Saul made.

God told him to go and kill all the Amalekites, and he didn't kill all of them. He spared some of the sheep, and the reason he spared was because he feared the people. It says in verse 9 that Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, but when Samuel confronts him, he blames the people, saying in verse 15, the people spared the best of the sheep.

Verse 15. Verse 21, the people took the sheep. You see, he was the one who along with the people spared the sheep, but he puts the blame on the people, and when you don't know how to take the blame yourself for your sin, you're unfit to be a leader.

Saul could have said, I'm sorry, I made a mistake. He didn't say that. He put the blame on the people, and it's in these small things that you see disobedience.

He killed most of it, but he spared the good sheep. But he says to Samuel in verse 13, I've carried out the commandment of the Lord. Verse 20, I did obey the voice of the Lord.

He thinks he has obeyed, but in the small things he has disobeyed. It's the small things that determine whether you're qualified to be a leader or not. Finally he admits it.

Why did he do it? When Samuel keeps on confronting him, he says in verse 24, the last part, yes, I was afraid of the people, and I listened to their voice. A man who is afraid of people and listens to the voice of people is totally unfit to be God's leader, the leader of God's people. And notice one more thing.

One last thing I want to point out about Saul is in verse 30, he tells Samuel, I'll tell you privately I have sinned, but please don't let me down publicly. Please honor me in front of the elders. Please come along with and worship with me and act as though nothing is wrong.

And Samuel said, nothing doing. You go alone. He went behind him.

He sought honor. He was more interested in appearance. Don't let it look as if I've lost your support, Samuel.

He wanted people to think he was still anointed. Now we have seen the good qualities with which he started and the reasons why he failed. And a wise man will learn from those mistakes.

Finally, we read in chapter 31 and verse 5 of Samuel that Saul commits suicide. Before that, you find the spirit of God has left him. An evil spirit took charge of him.

He became jealous. I don't have time to show you all that. You can read that in chapter 18, verse 9 to 11.

He became jealous. An evil spirit possessed him. He threw a javelin at David to try and kill him.

He contacted witches in chapter 28, verse 8, mediums. You see the degeneration. Once you start, once you have lost the anointing, he became jealous of somebody else whom God was blessing more young David.

He tried to kill him. He tried to kill his own son, Jonathan with a spear. Saul was another person who wanted to promote his son, even though he knew the anointing was not upon Jonathan, God.

The anointing was on David. But he tried to promote his son and he degenerated, degenerated, degenerated. Finally, he chased David.

Many times he chased David. And we read that David spared his life more than once. David could have killed Saul many times.

He didn't kill him. All of those things. Saul did not repent.

He could not see the grace of God on a younger person. He was chasing him and after him for his life because he wanted to establish himself. You know, it's possible for a person to be like that.

There are many people like that. Somebody else is a threat to them and they eliminate that person. And they themselves feel uncomfortable in that position of leadership on their throne, like Saul.

And they try to establish themselves, but they go down and down and down and down and that character is gone. Finally, in chapter 31, verse 5, they commit suicide. He commits suicide.

It's a sad end to a man who started with all these wonderful qualities that I described. In contrast to him, we read of this other man in Samuel, this other young man, David, the man after God's own heart. And he was a person whom God again selected.

The Lord said to Samuel in chapter 16, 1 Samuel 16. How long are you going to grieve over Saul? Stop praying for him. I'm going to anoint somebody else.

You go to the house of Jesse. I've selected a king from among his sons. And I don't have time to show you all that.

You read the rest of the chapter. The interesting thing is that when Jesse, when Samuel told Jesse, bring your sons, because the Lord is going to anoint one of them, he called all his sons except David. David was the youngest.

Why didn't Jesse call David? He called all his other sons. And David was still looking after the sheik. He was the youngest.

And one by one, smart, handsome Eliab, the first one comes before Samuel. And chapter 16, verse 6, Samuel thinks, yeah, that must be the Lord's. And there we have this wonderful verse again, which is good for us to remember.

1 Samuel 16, 7. The Lord does not look as man looks. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. Again, the emphasis on the heart, not the head, the heart, not the brains, the heart.

Man looks at the outward appearance. God looks at the heart. And then Jesse called Abinadab, next son, verse 8. He said, no, like that.

He let all his sons pass before him. And God said, no, no, no. And Samuel was confused.

And he said, Samuel said to Jesse, verse 11, are these all your children? Did I make a mistake in hearing what God said? And he said, no, there's one younger one. He's a pretty useless fellow. He's out there looking after sheep.

I not very clever or intelligent. It just, we send him to look after sheep. Okay, we'll call him if you want.

And young David comes. He doesn't know what's happening. He's quite happy looking after sheep, strumming his guitar and singing songs to God out there.

God had seen that young man, maybe 17 years old, full of love for the Lord. And the Lord said, this is the one. You know, the sovereign choice of God who searched around Israel for a man who loved him.

Do you think God is searching around India today for young men who are probably despised by others? There are other smarter people, cleverer people up there in front. And you may be out there doing your job faithfully, singing songs of praise to the Lord. And God has his eye on you.

Be faithful. He will call you one day, anoint you. He picks up people when they are young and trains them to serve him.

In their teenage years, he picks up his servants, like David, like Joseph, and trains them over a period of time and makes them, leads them into a ministry. And he was anointed and the spirit of the Lord, verse 14, departed from Saul and the spirit of the Lord, verse 13, came upon David. Now, notice in the next chapter, when he goes and sees Goliath threatening Israel, David's concern for God's name.

In 1 Samuel 17, 26, the last part, he says, who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should taunt the armies of the living God? His concern that God's name is being dishonored with this heathen man. Haven't we heard of what God did in the days of Moses and Joshua? Why should this man dishonor the Lord's name? And he goes against him and kills him. But before he had done that, there's something that David had done in his private life, which nobody knew, which he reveals in verses 34 to 36 to Saul.

He says, when I was looking after my father's sheep, a lion would come sometimes or a bear and take a lamb from the flock. And I would go after that lion and rescue the lamb from the lion's mouth and kill the lion, the bear. Now, I don't know how many people, if they are looking after a hundred sheep and the lion walks off with one lamb, would care for that one lamb, say better that one lamb die rather than I die.

But he went after that lion and killed the lion to rescue that one little lamb. It's people who have such a concern for little lambs who are fit to be shepherds of God's people. When they see Satan has got a hold of some weak brother, they are concerned to go against Satan in prayer and battle to rescue that person from the grip of Satan.

That's the type of person God is looking for. That's why God picked up and the bear came and he killed him also. His servant was killed, verse 36, the lion and the bear.

This teaches us that we've got to kill the enemy in our private life first before we can face Goliath in public. If you have not overcome the lion and the bear in your private life, don't think you will be called by God to face Goliath in public. A lot of people like a public ministry of demolishing Satan's fortresses.

First of all, start in your private ministry and show a concern for God's name for the little lambs over there. And then we read that when he came to Saul, Saul said, put on my armor and go. That was a big temptation to put on the armor and go.

Shall I trust in Saul's armor or God? And David takes it all off and says, I don't want all this. And he goes trusting God. And in the name of the Lord, he tells the Philistine, verse 45, you come to me with sword and spear.

I come to you in the name of the Lord. In the name of Jesus, I come against you, Satan. And he brings Goliath down and kills him.

And he uses Goliath's sword to chop off his head. That is God's way. He uses Satan's own weapons to destroy Satan through death, which was Satan's weapon.

He destroyed him who had the power of death. The Bible says in Hebrews two and verse 14. And we read that once Goliath was killed, all the other Philistines ran away, teaching us that if you kill the great sin in your life, many other sins are conquered too.

Do you find one sin that rules you more than anything like Goliath defies God in your life? Go against it in the name of God and say, you are not going to dishonor God anymore in my life. And when you conquer that, you will find like it says here in verse 51. The last part, when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, all the rest of the Philistines ran away as well.

In chapter 18, we read of the tremendous loyalty of Jonathan to David. Jonathan did not have the jealousy of his father. He was closely knit to David.

He gave David his robe and sword and both sign of eternal friendship. And he said, David, I'm totally yours. Jonathan was a fine young man.

In chapter 14, we read of his faith with which he overcame the Philistines. Here we see of his total freedom from jealousy. He could recognize there is an anointing on this young man, even though I am the son of Saul and I deserve to be the next king.

When he saw the anointing on another young man, he says he took off his armor and his belt and sword and bow 18 four and gave it to David. He said, you're going to be the next king. And he told him that.

That's wonderful when we find a young brother who recognizes the anointing of God on another young brother and gives him his ministry. I'll give you an example of that in the New Testament. It says in Acts 13, Barnabas and Saul went out to serve the Lord.

Barnabas and Saul. Barnabas was the older man, the senior believer, Barnabas and Saul. A little later, it becomes Saul and Barnabas.

Barnabas withdraws into the background when he sees there's a greater anointing on this younger man, Paul. It's wonderful if we can have such people in the church like Jonathan, who recognized the anointing on David so different from Saul's jealousy. And there were a few other people also who recognized that the anointing was David on David and they gathered together with him.

We read in chapter 22, they met in caves. God allowed David to be chased by Saul many, many times. And he had to depend on the Lord for guidance.

Many times we read, for example, in chapter 23, verse 2, Lord, shall I do this? Lord, shall I do this? Verse 12. Again, he asked God for guidance. He always lived seeking God for guidance.

You read that in chapter 23. And thus his life was spared. Saul was after him.

And through all those experiences in the caves, running away from Saul, God trained him to be a man of God. See, it was all those difficult experiences that made David a good king. Saul never had those difficult experiences before David.

Solomon, who came after him, also never had difficult experiences. So their reign was ruined. David was trained to, through a period of perhaps 10 years at least, in difficult circumstances.

And thus he qualified to be a king. So when God picks you out in your teenage years, don't think you're ready to be king immediately. If you become a king immediately, you'll be like Saul and Solomon.

You'll just destroy your ministry. God is to take you perhaps through a period of 10 years of difficulty, of trial, of other people jealous of you, other people trying to suppress you. You'll have to learn to listen to

God.

You'll have to learn to trust Him. And you'll have experiences with God in secret. And then a day will come when God will establish you on the throne, as we see in the next chapter.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for warnings from bad examples in scripture and challenges from good examples. Help us to learn from both, that we can walk in your footsteps and glorify your name.

I pray that many of these young people here will grow up to be like young David, anointed and useful for you in this land. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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