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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

I heard of one little church where the Minister of Music planned his songs in direct opposition to the preacher’s message. One Sunday the Preacher got up and preached a sermon about “Everybody has to get up and go out and minister” the Minister of Music got up and said, “Let’s sing, ‘I Shall Not Be Moved.’” The next Sunday the Preacher preached on how “Everybody has to give their money to do the work of the Lord.” The Minister of Music got up and said, “Let’s sing, ‘Jesus Paid It All.’” The following Sunday the Preacher preached on “Gossiping” and how terrible it was to be a gossip in the community and the Minister of Music got up and said, “Let’s sing, ‘I Love To Tell The Story.’” Well, it made the Pastor rather angry. He got up one Sunday night and said, “If the Minister of Music keeps doing this, I may just resign pretty soon!” The Minister of Music got up and sang, “Oh, Why Not Tonight!” The following Sunday the Preacher got up and said, “That’s it! Jesus led me to this church and now Jesus is leading me away.” The Minister of Music got up and said, “Let’s sing, ‘What A Friend We Have In Jesus.’”

Tonight I am going to speak about King Saul. I say King Saul but he was a man who really could not be king or would not be the king God wanted him to be. Tonight as I preach on Saul, I want to let you know on the next few Sunday nights I am going to be introducing the character of David, a man after God’s own heart. I will be bringing you about four messages about the life of David but one about the life of Saul. The thing about King Saul is he was the first king of the nation of Israel, but God never intended for the nation of Israel to have a king. Believe it or not God wanted to be their King. We talked last week about how Samuel was God’s faithful prophet and Samuel was the transitional character between the judges and the kings. This what the people said to Samuel.

1 Samuel 8:6-7. “But when they said, ‘Give us a king to lead us,’ this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: ‘Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.’”

Samuel tried to say, “You don’t want a king. God wants to be your king.”

1 Samuel 8:19. “But the people refused to listen to Samuel, ‘No!’ they said. ‘We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.’”

The nation of Israel was saying, “We want to be like our neighbors! We want to keep up with the Joneses! *They* have kings! *We* want a king!” Is it obvious to us that God did not want them to have a king? He wanted to be their king. In chapter 12:12 when Samuel is giving his farewell address, he hits on this theme again about how God wanted to be their king.

1 Samuel 8:12-13. “But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was moving against you, you said to me, ‘No, we want a king to rule over us’—even though the Lord your God was your king. Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for; see, the Lord has set a king over you.”

Are you aware there is something we may call the “perfect will of God?” There is something that

has sometimes been called the “permissive will of God;” it’s not God’s perfect will, but he allows it and then he takes it from that point. God has a perfect will for your life and if you don’t stay completely on track with that, there are some times that God will give you what you ask for. They wanted a king. God did not want them to have a king, but he permitted them to have a king and they got what they asked for. This is true in our lives sometimes when we seek that which is less than God’s best.

THE LIFE OF SAUL

CHAPTER ONE: A SHINING FUTURE

Well, they got King Saul. How can you describe the life of King Saul? I want us to look at his life in three chapters. I call chapter one “A Shining Future,” because if anybody had promise or potential it was this man, Saul. We learn some things about Saul that showed that he had a lot of qualifications and attributes to be used of God.

1 Samuel 9:2. “He [Kish] had a son named Saul, an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites—a head taller than any of the others.”

1. Physical strength

The first thing we can say about Saul that was a part of his shining future was that he had physical strength. He was a big man. He stood head and shoulders above everybody else. He was Israel’s giant and the Philistines had their giant, Goliath but as you know Israel’s giant did not challenge the Philistines’ giant.

2. Humility

The second thing we can learn about him is he possessed humility at the start. It is obvious. When Samuel told Saul, “God has chosen you to be the king.” “Saul answered, ‘But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?’” (1 Samuel 9:21) In other words to start with Saul said, “Samuel, I am not qualified. I am not cut out to be the king. I don’t come from a good family. I don’t come from a good clan. You must have the wrong guy.” He expressed some humility at the start. You know anybody God has ever used and chosen they’ve always felt unqualified. Any time somebody comes along and says, “I am qualified to do a certain work for the Lord”—that in itself is often a disqualification—only those who do not seek to be privileged are those who are privileged with a call from God. Saul shows humility at the start. In fact, a little bit later we are going to see that when it was time for him to be promoted and introduced to the nation of Israel, he was hiding under some baskets.

3. Spiritual power

Here’s the third thing we see about his potential his shining future. At the beginning he possessed spiritual power. This is what Samuel predicted after he anointed Saul with oil in the first part of chapter 10, which is symbolic of the Holy Spirit’s anointing or covering of his life. That literally happened, because Samuel said in chapter 10:6, 9-10.

“The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person.’...As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart and all these signs were fulfilled that day. When they arrived at Gibeah, a procession of prophets met him; the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he joined in their prophesying.”

At the beginning God anointed Saul with spiritual power and changed his heart but it was not a permanent change. It was just an initial change.

CHAPTER TWO: A SPIRITUAL FAILURE

1. Impatience

One of the hardest burdens you can carry is when people point at you and say, “You have great potential!” because oftentimes it is hard to live up to. And it was true in the case of Saul. That leads us to chapter two in his life and I call this “A Spiritual Failure.” We see some deficiencies and imperfections in the life of Saul. They start out rather minor, but worsen as time passes. I am just going to mention the first two and you can go and read them for yourself. I want to talk more about the third one. The first spiritual failure he committed was the sin of impatience. In chapter 13 they went out to battle. Samuel gave specific directions. He said, “You wait on me, Saul. I am the priest. I am the prophet and I am the only one to make the sacrifice, so Saul, wait until I get there!” Well Saul went into battle and they were victorious and Saul was sitting around saying, “Where’s Samuel? Where’s Samuel? He hasn’t come yet!” and he offered the sacrifice. Samuel said, “Saul, God is angry with you!” He was impatient when he didn’t wait on the Lord and God’s man.

2. Arrogance

Number two is the sin of arrogance. If you took the time to read chapter 14, you would find that Saul’s son, Jonathan, was a tremendous warrior. Jonathan went into battle and the Bible says he and his armor-bearer killed 20 men in the space of half an acre. We’re talking hand-to-hand combat. What a valiant warrior he was and Saul missed the battle. Afterward, Saul took credit for the victory. So we see not only impatience but we see arrogance. He took credit for something that never did. Maybe you need to look at those first two failures and ask yourself if you are ever afflicted with impatience. “God I want you to do it and I want you to do it right now! God give me patience and give it to me right now. I want it right now!” Maybe you are thinking you are better than you should.

3. Disobedience

But you know that led to the third point of failure. This was disobedience. In chapter 15 God said, “Now, Saul, here are your marching orders. I want you to go and I want you to fight.”

1 Samuel 15:2. “This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. Now go,

attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.

Why in the world did God give those orders? The Amalekites are a picture of the flesh in our life, because just as the Amalekites stood in the way of God’s children reaching the Promised Land, it is our own flesh that stands in the way of us entering into God’s promise. That’s why the New Testament teaches that our flesh must be totally put to death. So, that’s a picture of that and although it sounds harsh, that’s what God said. So, Saul went into battle and they were victorious against the Amalekites.

When they were mopping up the battle, Saul remembered what God said but he looked over and there was Agag, the king of the Amalekites. He must have reasoned and thought, “Well this is a king and I’m a king and who knows the shoe may be on the other foot a little bit later. You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.” So he didn’t kill the king. Then, Saul looked at some of the sheep and all he could think about was lamb chops. He said, “Wait a minute, guys don’t kill all of those sheep. Just kill the skinny ones.” Then he looked at the cattle and sure enough some of those cattle that were weak and emaciated he said, “Go ahead and put those to death” then he looked over there at some of those fat cows and all he could think about was “T-bone steaks roasting on the grill” and he said, “Don’t kill those.” So he kept them over to the side. Meanwhile, God came to Samuel and said, “Samuel! I am fed up with this king! He has continually disobeyed me! I want you to go down and confront him about that!” Sure enough Samuel goes down there to the camp. I can just picture it when Saul sees him coming and thinks, “I’m going to have to head him off at the pass and I’m going to have to be pro-active.”

Saul rushes out and says, “Hello, prophet of the Lord. I have done everything the Lord has commanded me to do!” About that time from the other side of the camp a cow mooed and a sheep bleated. I can just imagine King Agag sticking his head up checking it out. Samuel says, “Wait a minute, Saul. If you have obeyed the Lord, what does the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the cattle mean? You have disobeyed God!” Saul started making excuses: The flesh always tries to justify itself. Saul said, “I kept those sheep alive so I could sacrifice them to the Lord. That’s what I am going to do. I am going to sacrifice them to the Lord. I kept those cattle alive so I can sacrifice them to the Lord.” God says, “The very thing I want put to death you are going to sacrifice to me?!” That’s like sometimes how we dedicate our flesh to the Lord and he says, “I don’t want you to dedicate it to me, I want death to it!”

Look at 1 Samuel 15:22-23, these are some of the strongest words in the Bible and a tremendous principle of the word of God.

“But Samuel replied: ‘Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has rejected you as king.’”

Yet Saul served as king from age 30 to age 72–42 years, but the hand of the Lord had been taken

off of him because he disobeyed the Lord in a little area.

That’s the problem with many of us today. We think if we obey the Lord about 75 percent of the time, that’s okay. We think he’ll just let us slide on that 25 percent; He’ll grade on the curve or something. Let’s say Saul obeyed 85 or 90 percent of God’s commands in that one incident. God said, “That’s not enough!” Total obedience or at least a desire for total obedience. Well that’s spiritual failure.

CHAPTER THREE: A SAD FINISH

Here’s the third chapter of his life. I call this, “A Sad Finish.” Steve Farrar wrote a great book called “Finishing Strong.” It is interesting in the Bible there are a lot of guys who start out great but end up weak. Can you think of other examples? Noah built the Ark, delivered his family and the animals. At the end of his life he got drunk and naked and exposed himself to some of his sons. Sad ending. What about Solomon? Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived besides the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says in the later part of his life his wives turned his heart from God and he ended up an old, cynical man. Just read the book of Ecclesiastes. It’s not so much what you have done before this time, God is concerned about how you are going to finish. How are you going to reach the finish line? The Bible is full of people who finished a lot worse than they started off.

1. He consulted a witch

What are some of the examples of this sad finish? Number one: He consulted a witch. He consulted a medium. You can read it for yourself in chapter 28. This is later in his life when he is a puzzled, backslidden carnal. He has tried to kill David numerous times.

1 Samuel 28:5-8. “When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. He inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets. Saul then said to his attendants, ‘Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her.’ ‘There is one in Endor,’ they said. So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman. ‘Consult a spirit for me,’ he said, ‘and bring up for me the one I name.’

This is a very puzzling passage of scripture, because if you took the time to read on as some of you are going to do because your curiosity has been piqued, it’s going to *sound* as if the spirit of Samuel comes forth and speaks to Saul. You say, “Wait a minute! I don’t know if I believe in this witches or mediums or séances or things like that!” 1 Kings 22:22 is an example of how God sent a lying spirit, which I think was a demonic spirit, because I don’t think the angels lie and that lying spirit delivered a false message.

What happens at some of these séances where everybody sits around and they light a candle and hold hands and try to dream up the ghost of Aunt Gertrude who died 12 years ago and you hear weird voices and strange things happen? Is that really Aunt Gertrude who’s coming back? NO! Because in Luke 16, Abraham says, “And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, or can anyone cross over from

there to us." There's a weird thing that happened in I Kings 22:22. I *don't* believe it was Samuel. I think it was a lying spirit impersonating Samuel, so don't you go consulting a witch don't you go consulting a medium because this is not an example of how to do it. This is an example of a man who is so far away from God he can't hear from God so he goes to a witch. Today these fortune tellers astrologers and things like that that fits in the same category. When I drive by one of these places that says, "Fortune Tellers" I point at it and either say out loud or silently, "I rebuke you in the name of Jesus!" Don't you read your horoscope in the newspaper! That's just a bunch of baloney! You don't try to get directions from anybody except God, his word and his spirit. All that shows is how far away from God you are just like Saul! That's one example of his "sad finish."

2. He committed suicide

Number two, he ended up committing suicide. In the Bible there are several people who committed suicide. Ahithophel, who was the counselor to Absalom when he rebelled against his father, David, hung himself. There was a king who reigned for seven days named Zimri, who set his house on fire and burned himself. Then, of course, there was Judas in the New Testament who went out and hanged himself. In chapter 31 here it says Saul went out into battle and when he was surrounded on all sides he asked his sword bearer to kill him but the sword bearer wouldn't do it So Saul takes his sword and puts the hilt of it in the ground and he places the point of the sword up under his ribcage and with all the weight of his body he falls on his sword and he takes his life. They took the body of Saul and his sons and hung them on the walls of Beth Shan as a mockery of their victory. What a sad finish. Just a few minutes ago I was talking about a man who was anointed by the spirit of God and who was prophesying. He allowed sins to creep into his life.

LESSON ONE: Little sins lead to big sins

Here are the lessons we can learn from this. Number one: Little sins lead to big sins. It starts with impatience. Impatience? Why, that's no big deal! Before you know it, it becomes disobedience then before you know it, it's consulting a medium. You've heard me say before that sin will take you farther than you ever wanted to go it'll keep you longer than you ever wanted to stay and it will cost you more than you ever wanted to pay. The time to stop sin is when it first starts when it is a little sin. Jesus said, "If you are faithful in that which is little, I'll make you faithful in that which is much." The converse of that being true, if you are unfaithful in little things, chances are you are going to be unfaithful in big things.

LESSON TWO: Natural ability is worthless without God's power

Here's lesson number two: Natural ability is worthless without God's power. We can use singing as an example. I'll bet you Robert Goulet could sing, "It Is Well" more technically correct than David Solomon but the main difference is the power of God is not there. Sometimes, when some of these so-called "Hollywood celebrities" try to record a religious album and they don't know the Lord Jesus just listen to it! The notes are right, the music is clear, but you can just tell something is missing. But let somebody who loves Jesus Christ stand up and they can sing in a voice that may not sound beautiful to the human ear but the power of God is there! Natural

ability is worthless without the power of God!

LESSON THREE: God requires total obedience

One final thing God requires is total obedience. You and I can't be perfect, but God does not judge us so much on our performance as he does on the desire of our hearts. We're going to see this next week when I talk about how God chose David. The eyes of the Lord are roaming throughout the earth trying to find somebody whose heart is not perfect but it is perfect toward God, which means the desire of their heart is to obey God. I believe with all of my heart if you say to God, “God, I want to obey you in every area. I choose to obey you in every area that you have commanded me. God it is my desire!” If it is your desire, God will give you the power to do it. The power is not up to you. God will give you the power.

Like the old preacher said, “If God tells me to jump through a brick wall, my job is to jump at it. It's God's job to get me through it!”

OUTLINE

THE LIFE OF SAUL:

CHAPTER ONE: A SHINING FUTURE

Saul initially possessed:

1. Physical strength
2. Humility
3. Spiritual power

CHAPTER TWO: A SPIRITUAL FAILURE

Saul later possessed:

1. Impatience
2. Arrogance
3. Disobedience

CHAPTER THREE: A SAD FINISH

1. He consulted a witch
2. He committed suicide

LESSONS:

1. Little sins lead to big sins
2. Natural ability is worthless without God's power
3. God requires total obedience