**THE LORD REJECTS SAUL AS KING**

**1 Samuel 13:1-16:23**

**Key Verse: 15:22a**

**"But Samuel replied: 'Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord?'"**

**God, in his great mercy, chose Israel as his firstborn son so that he might use them as a priestly nation for world salvation. So God was their Fa­ther, and God was their King. But his people did not depend on God; ra­ther they want­ed to im­itate the countries around them who had kings, be­cause through kings these countries could be­come world pow­er coun­tries. Their ever-increasing desire to have a king like other world power nations was rea­sonable and ap­pealing to their sinful minds. They never gave up their de­mand. God knew his people's unbelief and grant­ed them a king--a most ideal person, a head taller than all others and a humanly humble person. But today's passage tells us that God could not but re­ject him as king because of his unbelief and stu­pidity.**

**I. Samuel rebukes Saul (13:1-15)**

**Saul had appeared to be obedient to his parents and human­ly hum­ble. But after becoming a king, he revealed his origin­al sinful nature. What kind of person was he? Saul was 30 when he became a king. Sam­uel told him to go to Gil­gal (10:8) and wait there for his coming. During the time of waiting for Samuel, how nice it would have been if nothing had happened to Saul. But many things happened to test his faith, to see if he was a man of faith who could lead God's people. At the outset of his rule, Saul did not seek God wholeheartedly. Instead, he had done his best to make his palace secure. So he deployed 2,000 palace guards and 1,000 front-line soldiers under the command of his son Jonathan.**

**At that time, the army force of the Philistines was a threat to Israel. So no one attempted to offend the Philis­tines. But fearless was Jonathan who challenged first the Philistine outpost at Geba. At the news of Jona­than, Saul drafted sol­diers throughout the country. Compared with that of Israel, the military force of the Philistines was far su­per­ior. They had 3,000 chariots, 6,000 charioteers, and sol­diers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. Now the Israelites become a stench to the Philistines. When the men of Is­rael saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they began to hide in caves and thick­ets and in rocks and pits and cisterns. Many of them ran away. And all the troops with Saul were quaking in fear, while King Saul was waiting for Samuel for his instructions and strate­gy in confronting the Philistines. Samuel had prom­ised that he would come to Gilgal. But he didn't come, though the time set for his com­ing had passed by. When Saul saw that his men were be­ginning to scat­ter, he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fel­lowship offerings." And Saul offer­ed up the burnt of­fer­ing. (13:9) Just as he finished making the offering, Samu­el ar­rived. What did Samuel say to him? Samuel rebuked him, saying, "You acted fool­ishly." In what re­spect did Saul act foolish­ly?**

**First, he committed the sin of cowardice. He was the king of his people. So he needed to show himself to them to be a man. He needed to show them the way to overcome the criti­cal situ­ation and strategy to defeat the enemy. In order to do so, he had to be a brave man. But he was caught by fear and was only look­ing for expediency to escape the des­per­ate situation. As a result, he offered the burnt offering in order to soothe the fear of his soldiers. He played politics instead of seek­ing God. Thus he revealed that he was a coward. (Rev21:8)**

**Second, Saul violated the priestly office. Saul felt desper­ate because of the besieging army of the Phil­is­tines. In ad­di­tion, Samuel did not appear at an appointed time. So he felt helpless and so fearful that he was com­pelled to offer the burnt offering. (12) He was shaken by fear and did not know what to do. So he did some­thing his sinful nature had dir­ec­ted. In desperation he offered the burnt offering. He vio­lat­ed the office of the priesthood. A king was not suppos­ed to of­fer sacrifices to God; only priests were. (2Ch26:16-20) His human fear led him to violate the priestly office. In this way he disobeyed the command of God.**

**Third, he did not seek God in prayer. Saul was chosen by God as the king and lead­er of his people. So he should have sought God whole­heartedly until he was inspired by God to know what to do. He should have led his people to seek God until God was sought by them. But he did not seek God, even though he was a king chosen by God. When he found no way, he just despaired at the situation. He said in ver­se 12b, "and I have not sought the Lord's fa­vor."**

**It was the time for Saul to come to God for help, acknowl­edg­ing God as God Almighty. But he had no God nor his words of command in his heart. So he acted according to his feel­ing. When the situation­ look­ed fearsome, he became very fear­ful. He was useless. So God de­cided to dismiss him and ap­point a new king. Read vers­es 13, 14. "'You acted foolishly,' Samuel said. 'You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not en­dure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his peo­ple, because you have not kept the Lord's com­mand.'"**

**II. Jonathan, a warrior of faith (13:16-14:23)**

**Saul's army of 3,000 (13:2) had diminished to an army of 600 (14:2), and they had no swords or spears because the Philistines control­led the blacksmiths in Israel not to equip themselves with arms. (13:19) So only Saul and Jonathan had swords and spears. Meanwhile, the Philistines camp­ed at Mic­mash, spreading their detachments, one toward Ophrah, the other toward Beth Horon, and still another toward the border­land ready to annihilate the army of Israel. (13:17,18)**

**Israel was in a critical situation. It seemed at any mo­ment that a catastrophe would befall the Israelites. They were in a helpless situation.­ Noth­ing could be done by them. But God was with Israel, and there was a man among them who had courageous faith in God. He was King Saul's son Jonathan. What kind of faith did he have?**

**First, he was a man of courageous faith. (14:1-7) One day Jon­athan son of Saul said to the young man bearing his armor, "Come, let's go over to the Philistine outpost on the other side..." (14:1a) As we have studied, the Philis­tine army was equipped with newly invented weapons and char­iots, and its force was mighty. One man's challenge to the Philis­tines was like throwing a stone at the entire force of the Philis­tine army. But Jonathan, the prince of Israel, did not despair at the situation. He believed that he was able to annihilate the whole army of the Philistines. He decid­ed to go over to the Philistine outpost on the other side to operate a surprise at­tack. How could he dare to chal­lenge the mighty Philis­tine army force all by himself? It was because he was with God, in whom all his trust rest­ed, and he had one loyal comrade, his armor-bear­er. Here we learn the power source of Jona­than--his faith in God. (14:6b) When he had faith in God, God em­powered him until he was brave enough to attack the entire Philistine army force.**

**In fulfilling the surprise attack, the first obstacle to Jonathan were rugged cliffs. On each side of the pass he in­ten­ded to cross to reach the Philistine outpost was a cliff; one was called Bozez, the other Seneh. One stood to the north toward Micmash, the other to the south toward Geba. (4,5) The cliffs were insur­mount­able. But Jonathan did not give up, look­ing at the dangerous cliffs. He began to climb up the cliff on his hands and knees. Prob­ably his hands and knees were al­ready too bloody to climb any­more.**

**Fur­ther­more, from a strategic point of view, it was not wise for Jonathan to ex­pose himself to the guards of the out­post of the Philis­tines. But his courageous faith was match­less. Here we are remind­ed of General Napoleon Bona­parte. Napoleon was nothing if not bold. Though his French army was surrounded by the allied Aus­tro-Russian army, which was ten times bigger in number, Napoleon decided to shatter the al­lied threat by defeating its strongest element, the army con­centrated around Olmutz, which was allied headquarters. His boldness enhanced the morale of his army, while the allied army was overconfi­dent, depend­ing on their power. One person Napoleon's bold­ness caused the allied army to suffer com­plete defeat. They say that there have been more sol­diers who have died by being driven into the sea than by bullets. Like­wise, God's peo­ple Israel were in a critical situa­tion. But God was plea­sed by one coura­geous man of faith, Jonathan.**

**Second, Jonathan had faith to glorify God's name. (14:6-14) Look at verse 6. "Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, 'Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few.'" His armor-bearer said, "Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul." (7b) Jona­than could not forgive those un­cir­cum­cised people who blas­phemed God with their mouths. As much as he loved God, he hated those uncircumcised peo­ple. When we read verse 6, we learn that loyalty to God was burn­ing in his heart. He did not mind even if he would die from the enemy's attack; what mattered was to be loyal to God and to destroy all who blasphemed the name of God--that was all. He did not tell his fa­ther that he was going out to the outpost of the Philis­tines. He came over to fight, believing God would give him vic­tory. He didn't mind doing anything, if only he loved God.**

**There are many who are bold but ignorant. But Jonathan was bold and intelligent. When we read verses 8-10 Jonathan care­fully followed the guidance of God through signs. When both of them show­ed them­selves to the Philistine outpost, the men of the Phil­istine outpost­ shout­ed to Jonathan and his armor-bearer, "Come up to us and we'll teach you a lesson." (12)­**

**God blessed this man of faith. Jonathan's surprise attack threw the entire Philistine army into a panic. The Lord sent what was apparently an earthquake, and the Philis­tines became so confused that they fought each other. Saul assembled his men and went into battle. The Israelites who had been hiding in holes and caves came out to fight. Israel had the whole Phil­istine army on the run. (15-23) Here we learn that one man of faith was­ migh­tier than the entire army of the Philis­tines. This is the rea­son Peter said that one Christian who knows the holi­ness of God is­ equiv­alent to a nation (1Pe2:9), and that one person's courageous faith is very important.**

**III. Saul's pride aggravated himself (14:24-15:35)**

**First, Saul's oath. (14:24-52) Saul needed to humble himself before God and repent. Instead, he made a foolish oath that revealed his pride, as if he had won the war. He made a law forbid­ding the soldiers to eat that day until he had avenged him­self on his ene­mies. He was not fighting for the Lord's hon­or. The trage­dy was that Jonathan was involved in his fa­ther's oath. When he was uninformed, he tasted a little hon­ey. In addi­tion to this, Saul's soldiers turned out to be sa­v­ages. Toward evening, the victorious but exhausted men pounc­ed on the plunder and began eating raw meat with blood, violating the law of Moses. Because of sin, their strength and spirit left them and they could not finish the fight. When Saul in­vesti­gated to find the cause, he found that Jon­a­­than was guilty. By Saul's own decree, Jonathan should die. But when the peo­ple de­fended Jonathan, Saul capitu­lated. (14: 31-52) Saul's pride could have destroyed his own son.**

**Second, Saul, a man of disobedience. (15:1-9) God gave Saul a mission. The Amalekites had taken advantage of God's people when they were most vulnerable. God called Saul to be his instrument of judgment to punish them. He wanted to give Saul a second chance to be the leader of his people. Saul started well, but when the time came to carry out God's hard com­mands absolutely, he interpreted God's commands in his own way; he lis­tened to the voice of his sinful nature and his soldiers and compro­mised. He spared the king of the Ama­le­­kites, Agag, and the best of the livestock and every­thing that was good. (15:8,9) Saul was a man of disobedience.**

**Third, the Lord was grieved at Saul's disobedience. (15:10-35) The Lord was grieved that he had made Saul king. Samuel ­cried out all night to the Lord for Saul's future. But Saul went to Carmel to erect a monument for his name's sake. When Sam­uel confronted Saul, (17) he was full of excus­es. He did not re­pent of not completing his mission. He said he wan­t­­ed to of­fer a sa­crifice to God. But God does not want such sac­rifices--he wants obed­ience. Disobedience is rebel­lion; it comes from arrogance. Read ver­ses 22,23. "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.'"**

**IV. Samuel anoints boy David as the future king (16:1-23)**

**First, the Lord looks at the heart. (1-13) The Lord rejected Saul as king and sought a man after his own heart. He sent Samuel to the home of Jesse to anoint one of Jesse's eight sons as king of Israel. Samuel was impressed by the handsome appearance of Eliab the oldest. But God does not look at the outer appearance; he looks at the heart. He saw the heart of David the shepherd boy, Jesse's youngest son. When Samuel anointed him, the Spirit of the Lord came on David in pow­er.**

**Second, Saul was possessed by demons. (14-23) When the Spi­rit of God left Saul, an evil spirit came in to torment him. When the Spirit of God left him, he became a toy of demo­ns. Saul's advisors recom­mended music therapy, and they told him about David. He was a brave man, a warrior, and he played the harp. He was handsome and spoke well, and the Lord was with him. He entered Saul's ser­vice, and his music soothed Saul.**

**In this passage we learn that the spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. Saul's human greatness achiev­ed nothing at the time of na­tional crisis. Rather, his human great­ness aggravated the integrity of his humanity until he became proud and godless. On the other hand, one man's faith and loy­alty to God empowered him with the Spirit of God un­til he defeated the mighty army forces of the Philistines. Who is a truly great man? He is one who has faith in God.**