

AGAPE HOUSE OF WORSHIP MIDWEEK BIBLE STUDY

Topic: *Lessons from the Rise & Fall of Saul (2)*
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Text: *1 Samuel*
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Background

Saul was a Benjamite who, under God's order, was anointed by Samuel as King of Israel. Shortly after becoming King, he began to act disobediently towards God. He was unwilling to trust and obey God in all matters regarding his duties as king. Saul ruled for 40 years and was replaced by David. Fearing potential defeat, Saul decided to offer a sacrifice himself (**1 Sam 13**) when he had no business doing so. He also disobeyed God's order to utterly destroy the Amalekites, and after David was anointed as the new king, the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and a demon came into him. Saul subsequently unsuccessfully tried to kill David.

Bereft of divine guidance—the Spirit of the Lord having departed from him—he turned to another supernatural source for instruction. Disguising himself, he consulted a medium—an act strictly forbidden by Jewish law (**Lev 19:31**). God allowed his request to consult Samuel (now dead) to be granted. Samuel appeared before Saul and pronounced imminent doom upon him, and the following day this prediction was fulfilled. Saul ended up being one of the most disappointing characters in the Bible. He appeared at first to be every inch a king and was polite, prudent, respectful, and modest. He ended up, however, being disobedient and jealous, and was eventually rejected by God. *There are many lessons to be learned from the life of Saul, we will examine some of those lessons today.*

1. Selfism

Do you know that you are who you are by God's grace? God made you who you are and your ability to maintain the gift of God is predicated upon your ability to remain in God. Saul rose to power because God decided that he found a man he wanted to make King. God handpicked him, and Samuel anointed him. (**1 Sam 10**) Whenever he raised his sword, the enemy perished, he was a mighty warrior because the mighty man in battle was in his camp. As long as Saul was in harmony with God, he defeated all before him.

Selfism means 'concentration on one's own interests; self-centeredness or self-absorption.' It is the desire to have one's own way and ignore what anyone else does or says. Unfortunately, Saul suffered from the evil of selfism, like many of today's believers. Selfism is a downward path which leads away from God. Make sure you are not on it. (See **John 14:15**) The outward expression of selfism is disobedience.

2. Disobedience

Saul was shockingly disobedient. He demonstrated his spiritual and moral deterioration, not only by his sin of presumption and impatience, but also by his disobedience and rebellion. (**1 Sam 15:22-23**) From the very start of his reign, Saul had the perfect opportunity to be the benchmark by which all future kings could be measured. All he had to do was to seek the Lord wholeheartedly, obey God's commandments, and align his will with that of God's, and his rule would have been a God-honoring one. However, he chose a different path and strayed away from God.

The Agag incident: We find a perfect example of his disobedience in the incident where God commanded him to kill all the Amalekites, but Saul kept the king and some of the spoils of war. Haman the Agagite, who would later seek to kill the Jews (see the book of Esther), was a descendant of the king whose life Saul spared. Saul compounded his troubles by lying to Samuel over the incident. He claimed that the soldiers had saved the best of the animals in order to sacrifice them to God. (**1 Sam 15**)

The Gilgal incident: This was another prime example of disobedience. Saul waited for Samuel at Gilgal, as arranged, but seeing his soldiers beginning to disperse, he usurped Samuel's priestly office by offering sacrifices in Samuel's absence. (**1 Sam 13:9-14**) Arriving soon after this event, Samuel rebuked Saul for his presumption

and announced that he would be replaced by a king after God's own heart. *Note that Samuel called sin what exactly it is: sin.* He did not cover it up as we too often tend to do. We live dangerously when we allow an act of disobedience to pass as an act of prudence. Learn to see every sin for what it is—a violation of God's principles—and confess it without delay. **(1 John 1:9)**

3. Jealousy

Saul's rebellion and subsequent rejection by God resulted in the Spirit of God departing from him, and it was not long before an evil spirit took hold of Saul and began to control his life. The presence of the evil spirit produced in Saul periods of deep depression and frenzied outbursts of rage. He became intensely jealous of David because David became an astute military leader in his own right and became more popular than the reigning king. David ministered to Saul during his times of depression and was able to bring him some relief. Later, when Saul heard the women singers placing David's exploits above his own, he became insanely jealous and tried to kill Israel's next king. **(1 Sam 18:9-11 & 19:9-10)**

Twice David spared Saul's life. Because of Saul's jealousy and hostility, David became an outlaw **(1 Sam 22:1-2 & 23:13)** and Saul spent considerable time, energy, and expense trying to kill David rather than consolidating the gains of his earlier victories, and because of this the Philistines sensed an opening for a major victory over Israel.

4. Arrogance

Saul abused the power God had entrusted to him. Pride often creeps into our hearts when people are serving and honoring us. Receiving "star treatment" can make us believe that we really are something special and worthy of praise. When this happens, we forget that God is the one who is really in control and that he alone rules over all. God may have chosen Saul because he was humble, but over time that humility was replaced by a self-serving and destructive pride that ruined his rule. Did you notice that he did not come into the presence of Samuel to apologize after the Amalekite debacle? Saul seemed to have twice said, what are you talking about Prophet, I obeyed God's instructions. **(1 Sam 15: 13-15)** And when Samuel wanted to pronounce God's verdict, Saul seemed unbothered **(1 Sam: 15: 16)** by exhibiting a *so what?* attitude. (See **2 Chr 7:14, Job 8:7, Ps 25:9**)

Conclusion

God blessed Saul not because there was no one else to bless. But he brought a curse upon his head as a result of his own proclivities and eventually, he committed suicide. Could it be possible that your issues are killing you? Maybe an adjustment to your attitude could change your altitude? Saul was physically strong, but spiritually weak. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the hollow areas of your character. Ask God to develop you so that you can help build the Kingdom and not end up like Saul.