

1st Samuel

Lesson 22

3. The Story of the Failure of Saul to Obey

a) Saul Waited for Samuel (13:8)

Now we come to the story of the failure of Saul to obey. We come to the point where Saul waited for Samuel and then proceeded without him. Verse 8.

“Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him.” (13:8)

Every notable commentary connects this sentence to Samuel's instruction to Saul on the day Saul was consecrated as king outside Samuel's house found in 1 Samuel 10:8. It was the fourth of four instructions given by Samuel to Saul. Samuel said in chapter 10:8, *“And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you should do.”*

Throughout this study, we have taken the position that the writer completely ignored recording the meeting of Saul and Samuel after Saul prophesied with the prophets on the hill of God at Gibeah. Some commentators take the position that this reference in 13:8 is the required meeting even though it took at least a year for the meeting to occur, and Saul and Samuel had been together several times in between. Some take the position that the writer is inserting the details of that meeting here even though they are out of order. Some take the position that this is a totally different meeting, and the first meeting was simply left unrecorded. What is the truth?

Harmonizing the sentences in 10:8 and 13:8 is difficult, and I have held my thoughts until this place in the text. Let me state my opinion about this now.

First, the meeting with Saul and Samuel in Gilgal after Saul prophesied with the prophets on the hill of God and was required in 10:8 was not recorded in the Scripture.

Second, this meeting with Saul and Samuel in 13:8 is a separate meeting with the two men. It was not the second meeting with Saul and Samuel at Gilgal because the two had been there together several times by this time in the recorded history in the Bible.

So we have to ask the question, “Why in this subsequent meeting was Samuel holding Saul to the seven-day requirement of the first meeting?” The clue to this answer is actually found in the 10:6-8 verses, which said, *“Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man. It shall be when these signs come to you, do for yourself what the occasion requires, for God is with you.”* And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you should do.”

Notice that in the third instruction from Samuel to Saul, Samuel told Saul that he would prophesy by the Spirit of God on the hill of God with the prophets. Then the clue comes in verse 5 when Samuel said, *“It shall be when these signs come to you, do for yourself what the occasion requires, for God is with you.”* In other words, after the Spirit of God had come upon Saul, as king, he was to act as king in everything he did as the “*occasion requires*.” Then, when Saul needed to know what to do as king, he was to go to Gilgal and wait for Samuel. That clue is in 10:8. *“And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you should do.”* In other words, when Saul needed to know what to do as king, he was to go to Gilgal, and Samuel would come to meet him there in seven days.

Notice also that at Gilgal, Samuel would offer the burnt offerings and the sacrifice offerings for Saul before telling Saul what he needed to do as king. We must not forget that Saul was not a Levite priest, and therefore he could not make the offerings; it took Samuel to make the offerings for Saul because Samuel was a priest. What we are saying here is this. It seems that on Saul's dedication day, Samuel promised Saul that they would meet at Gilgal, close to Saul's hometown of Gibeah, and there Samuel would entreat the LORD for Saul's direction as king.

Here, in 13:7-8, Saul is in a predicament, and he does not know what to do. Once again, the text says, *“But as for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him.”* Because Saul knew that he needed to wait for Samuel to present the offerings and give him a word from the LORD, Saul waited seven days. How did Samuel know when Saul was waiting for Samuel to arrive in Gilgal when Saul needed him? Did Saul send a message to Samuel? We do not know, but it does not seem that Saul had to tell Samuel he needed to speak with him. In reality, we will find in the rest of 1st Samuel that Samuel always knew when Saul needed him because Samuel was a true prophet, and the LORD was in constant communication with Samuel, directing his every path.

b) Saul Jumped Ahead of Samuel (13:9)

Saul waited the seven days, and then he jumped ahead of Samuel. Verse 9.

“So Saul said, ‘Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.’ And he offered the burnt offering.” (13:9)

When Samuel did not come early on the seventh day, Saul jumped ahead and performed the offerings himself, for himself. Saul did not have the religious right to make these offerings. Samuel, as his priest, was assigned the duties of making the offerings and giving him instructions. Saul has failed early on in his kingship.

c) Saul Went to Meet Samuel (13:10)

How do we know that Saul jumped ahead of Samuel? We find that next. Saul met Samuel as he arrived in Gilgal on the seventh day. Verse 10.

“As soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him and to greet him.” (13:10)

Samuel was not late. Saul was impatient. It is the first clue in the Scripture that tells us of the impatience of Saul in his actions as king. But it is also the first clue that Saul tended to try to cover up his sin when Samuel arrived. Notice in this verse that Saul went out to meet Samuel when he saw him coming instead of waiting for Samuel to arrive at the altar site. Saul was caught.

d) Saul Questioned by Samuel (13:11-12)

Saul should have known better. He should have trusted Samuel completely. But he did not. He should have also expected to be questioned by Samuel. After all, as we will discover in the rest of Samuel's ministry with Saul, Samuel seemed always to know what Saul was doing. Even though Samuel would ask Saul what he had done, Samuel already knew. Verse 11.

“But Samuel said, ‘What have you done?’ And Saul said, ‘Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, ¹² therefore I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.’ So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering.” (13:11-12)

At this point in the story, one of the significant characteristics of Saul's personality begins to show. Saul was a blame-shifter. Nothing was ever his fault. In this case, Saul committed his sin because *“the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash....”* So Saul's sin was because of the Israelite warriors, the Philistine warriors, and Samuel. None of it was because of himself. Then comes the *“therefore”* in

the sentence, and Saul makes the whole thing worse. “*... the Philistines were assembling ... will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.*” Of the six excuses, they were all the fault of others except the last. And how bad was the last? Eh! Saul simply forgot to pray. Saul’s statements are great examples of how people, caught in their sin, blame others for making them sin. And as with Saul, if he was guilty of any part of the sin, it was because of something that seems innocent enough, and everyone would understand. “*I have not asked the favor of the LORD.*” In other words, oops, I forgot. He just could not leave it there. He had to make one more excuse. “*So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering.*” Basically, Saul is saying, “I didn’t want to do it, but I had to force myself to do it.” Well, in the area of sin, it goes like this. If you force yourself to sin, you are the one who sinned, and you are without excuse. You did it. You are responsible for your own sin. It does not matter what anyone else did. They did not sin. You did. In reality, Saul’s admission made things worse. He admitted to a greater sin. He, by offering the burnt offerings, placed himself in a role that the LORD did not ordain him to have. Since the days of the Exodus, the ordained priests presided over all offerings. Saul may have been the king, he may have been a prophet, but he was no priest. The priest’s office was designated for a certain line of men, the men of the tribe of Levi. Saul was a Benjamite. Saul crossed a grave line and broke the commands of the LORD. In the LORD’s plan, the people brought their offerings to the priest, and the priest presided over their worship. Saul did not have the authority to do it for himself. In addition, let us pretend that Saul was a priest. In that case, he could have brought his offerings to the LORD, but a different priest would have presided over the worship for Saul. But he was not a priest, and he did not have the right in any way to preside over the worship of the burnt offering for himself. “*What have you done?*” Samuel asked. He had committed a grave sin against the LORD.

Let us not forget one more point in this passage. In verse 10, the writer told us that “*As soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel, came....*” What is the point of covering that verse again? It is a reminder that it was not Samuel who sinned because he indeed arrived on the seventh day. It was Saul who sinned by not trusting the LORD that Samuel would come in time to perform the offering and tell him what to do, as instructed. The LORD had Samuel there in perfect timing.

We spoke about Saul’s character flaw of being a blame-shifter. In the rest of Saul’s life and story, we will find this to be true several times. It was his character. But the seed of three other character flaws of Saul’s life is planted in this passage and will repeatedly occur in the rest of Saul’s life. He was impatient. He was not faithful. He did not have self-control. Three of the fruits of the Spirit, three of the characteristics of a person who truly trusts in the LORD with all their heart, are that they are patient and faithful with self-control, meaning he is willing to wait on the LORD before he acts. “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control....*” (Galatians 5:22–23.) You might ask since we have said Saul was a blame-shifter, “where does being a blame-shifter fit into these characteristics of a person who truly trusts in the LORD?” It falls under the characteristic of “*goodness*.” Goodness, in this case, is the opposite of *badness*. It is the character that makes a person loveable and righteous. No one likes a blame-shifter. They are not loveable, and they are not righteous under the LORD. Thus, in this one instance at Gilgal, the storyline has planted the seed of the character of Saul being in opposition to four of the fruits of the Spirit. Only love, joy, peace, kindness, and gentleness remain. Hang on, before we end the story of Saul, he had trouble with them all.