

God's Providence in God's People

Contra Costa Gospel Church
Adult Sunday School

SAUL

Saul seems to be a combination of some-good, some-bad. We've seen some "kingly" actions by him in defending his people from the enemy (cf. 1 Samuel 11 and 13). And... well, he looks the part (cf. 1 Samuel 9:2; 10:23-24). Sadly, there's not much else complimentary in the account of Saul. However, the flaws in his character are deep. He seems to have a spirit of cowardice (1 Samuel 10:22), rules by fear and threat rather than through love (1 Samuel 11:6-7), has a disregard and disrespect for the Law (1 Samuel 13:9-13), and makes rash decisions (1 Samuel 14:24). All of these things add up to a king who is not fit to serve in that post, and his tenure bore that out (1 Samuel 14:52).

- 1) We are reminded again how many of his flaws are flaws that we have seen in others already. Of the characters we have studied already, who does this resemble?
 - a. Spirit of cowardice: _____
 - b. Rules by fear and threat: _____
 - c. Disregard/disrespect for the Law: _____
 - d. Makes rash decisions: _____
- 2) What makes Saul's mistakes in these categories (above) more egregious than the mistakes made by the judges before him?
- 3) Read 1 Samuel 15:1-35. Under normal war circumstances, when Army A defeats Army B, Army A considers the possessions of Army B to be theirs, as part of their plunder. How is this situation different?
- 4) Before attacking the Amalekites, Saul first warns the Kenites about the impending attack and encourages them to leave the area (cf. 1 Samuel 15:6). Why do you think the author includes this little (unnecessary) tidbit of information? How does this verse color the story?

- 5) In 1 Samuel 15:8-9, the author tells us of Saul's sin in this matter. By keeping some of the things for the army and himself, including sparing the life of Agag, Saul disobeys the Lord.
 - a. Why do you think Saul keeps some of the things? Is it a result of ignorance? Forgetfulness? Misunderstanding?
 - b. When it comes to our own obedience to the Word of God, how are we guilty of a similar kind of disobedience?
- 6) How does Saul compound the problem, in 1 Samuel 15:12-23?
- 7) Look at 1 Samuel 15:22. Samuel says that the Lord does not "delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord." Aren't burnt offerings and sacrifices a part of obedience since they were commanded by the Lord? What does Samuel really mean with this statement?
- 8) In 1 Samuel 15:24-25 Samuel finally expresses contrition and apologizes, asking for forgiveness. He explains that he was afraid of the people. Is he telling the truth here? Or is this more lip service paid to Samuel?
- 9) We have stated again and again how the Bible shows the flaws of Israel's leaders so clearly and plainly, pointing the way to the Messiah who would be like them, but better. And yet, when we are honest with ourselves, we find that these leaders (as faulty and flawed as they are) are just like us. How are Christians today just like Saul in his character flaws?