

THE HIGH COST OF DISOBEDIENCE

1 Sam. 13:1-14

Intro: When Saul had been made king of Israel, Samuel charged him and the people of Israel with the words recorded in 1 Sam. 12:12-15.

Saul had a place of ministry, and it was God-given! BUT HIS BLESSING AND THE CONTINUATION OF HIS MINISTRY AS KING WERE DEPENDENT UPON ONE THING: OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD!

Not only must the king be obedient, but the people must be also. Since they had not been accustomed to this, God was looking to Saul to lead the people in this direction. Without obedience in Saul's life, little could be expected from the people. Therefore, the Spirit of God directs our attention to Saul in these verses.

Two incidents give us the reasons for the downfall of Saul. Strangely enough, neither one of them records any scandal. In fact, in both experiences Saul seems to have done a wise thing. However, the first meant that Saul's family would not be the royal family; the second meant that Saul himself would not continue. Cf. 1 Sam. 15:10, 11, 23b.

Every child of God is a servant of the Lord. You may be busy at some job, but this does not mean that you are not His servant.

God has a place of service for every one of us. There is only one thing that can hinder the blessing that we would like to see. It is the same as in Saul's day: disobedience.

These two chapters (1 Sam. 13 and 15) will be of tremendous value to us if we can learn from all of these circumstances why Saul disobeyed the Lord.

Let us look at some of the particulars.

I. He panicked in a crisis (cf. 1 Sam. 13:8, 9).

The Israelites were surrounded and outnumbered by the Philistines, and were starting to scatter. Samuel had not come as he had promised (cf. 1 Sam. 10:8). SURELY SOMETHING NEEDED TO BE DONE. And so he did it.

He took upon himself to offer sacrifices which he had not right to offer. Samuel's word to him in 10:8 was the will of God for Saul, but he chose to overrule the Word of God because of the emergency he faced.

We begin to see why Saul was not God's first choice because

Saul did not have the spiritual resources to wait when the situation about him seemed to demand action in spite of what God had said.

The story of Aaron and the children of Israel at Sinai is a remarkable parallel to this story. Do you suppose Saul knew of that incident when Moses was upon the mount and waited longer than the people wanted to be there?

And do you remember how Aaron had gotten his position in Israel--due to the unbelief of Moses?

If you and I are to know the voice of God in the crisis, we must learn to recognize that voice when things are quiet. (Mrs. Isobel Kuhn)

Every lesson the Lord is teaching us is building up a reserve spiritually for the day when we will need it.

II. Saul assumed a responsibility which was not his (1 Sam. 13:9).

There is no question but that the people needed to pray, and that he needed to pray. But there were the strictest conditions established by God for those who would approach him.

He may have used priests (K & D), but Saul was still being tested. Samuel was directing the sacrifices, and only he had the right to say what would be done.

Cf. Uzziah in 2 Chron. 26:16 ff. What an encouragement this king had been to Isaiah, and yet think of all that is bound up in those words in Isa. 6, "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord . . ."

No matter what our place may be, it is important to see that we keep this place.

Related to this in both Saul's and Uzziah's lives is our next point.

III. Saul had lost his littleness (cf. 1 Sam. 15:17; cf. 9:21; 10:22; for Uzziah, cf. 2 Chron. 26:15b, 16a).

Contrast this with Moses in Num. 12:3, and with even our Lord in Matt. 11:28-30.

"Seekest thou great things . . ." (Jer. 45:5). Cf. Phil. 2:5 ff.; Jas. 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6.

One other point.

- IV. He set aside the Word of God for what seemed to be the wise thing to do (cf. 1 Sam. 15:23b).

This is probably one of the greatest dangers we face. Why should Saul destroy "the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good" (1 Sam. 15:9)? --especially when he expected to offer it to the Lord (1 Sam. 15:15).

There is one answer to these questions. IT WAS WRONG BECAUSE GOD HAD TOLD SAUL TO DO JUST THE OPPOSITE.

III. Eve in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3). What is wrong with eating fruit that is good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desired to make one wise? The same thing--it was forbidden of God.

How thankful Saul could be that David did not act on the same basis. Cf. 1 Sam. 24:4-7.

Concl: What a high cost Saul paid by these acts of simple disobedience to God! He had the blessing of God, the promises of God, and had been chosen of God. But his life was wasted because he had not learned this one simple lesson: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22).

Let me conclude with one other illustration from the Bible.

In the Upper Room the Lord talked to His disciples about two things: the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and their ministry of obedience to the Word.

And he promised two blessings for those who are obedient:

- (1) Special, intimate fellowship with the Father and the Son not experienced by the disobedient (cf. John 14:21, 23).
- (2) Fruitfulness in life and service (Cf. John 15:5, 10).
To abide is to obey.