

A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

1 Samuel 13:1-15 (Key verse 14)

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."

Saul was only thirty years old when he became king of Israel. (1) And in today's passage, he encounters his first conflict with the mighty Philistines. But this was not just an ordinary conflict for Saul. But as a young king, his first battle with Philistines turned out to be **a life defining moment in Saul's life**.....that not only tested his faith.....and his heart towards God.....but would determine the future of his kingdom. If Saul kept God's commandment.....despite the critical situation he faced.....God would establish Saul's kingdom over Israel for all time. But if Saul fails to trust God and obediently wait on Him.....then the LORD would sought out another king, after his own heart and hand Saul's kingdom to another king. The stakes could not be higher for Saul! Sadly, Saul acted foolishly.....Instead of wholeheartedly seeking and waiting on God.....Saul acted impulsively based on human logic and emotions. Then God could not but reject him as king. This morning, the main question we want to answer through this passage is: how can someone be a person after God's own heart? I sincerely pray, that we all learn from Saul's mistake.....how to be men and women after God's own heart. Then God can firmly establish our lives in this world.....for the benefit of this and future generations. Amen.

Let's look at verse 2. Saul chose three thousand men from Israel; two thousand were with him at Micmah and in the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin. The rest of the men he sent back to their homes. At the time of this passage, Israel's neighbours, the Philistines, waaaaaaayyyyyy superior than them. We can say that the Philistines were a developed nation.....like America.....who possessed the latest technology..... cutting edge weaponry.....and a disciplined and well trained military force. While Israel..... on the other, could be compared to a developing and poor countryhere in Africa. They had no standing army.....nor any weapons to fight the Philistines.....except for plow-blades, picks, axes, sickles, and pitchforks. (13:19-22) Indeed, **humanly speaking, Saul and the men if Israel were no match for the Philistines.....and it seemed** impossible for Israel to ever conquer their arch enemies. But that was exactly what God was planning to do.....through Saul. When God chose Saul to be king, He had said to Samuel: "I've seen how my people are suffering, and I've heard their call for help. (CEV)I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him ruler over my people Israel..... he will deliver them from the hand of the Philistines." (9:16)

Now to achieve God's purpose for his kingship, Saul was supposed to muster thousands of troops in preparation for an attack. Yet, verse two surprisingly tells us, that Saul instead decided to choose only 2,000 palace guards and 1,000 front-line soldiers under the command of his son Jonathan..... The rest of the men he sent back to their homes. Why would Saul do this? In context of today's passage.....we can conclude that Saul did not intend to attack the Philistines at all. This was because, he still operated on human logic.....instead of faith in God.....and in God's clear purpose for his kingship. Logically, it made absolutely no sense to attack the mighty Philistines. So sent the rest of the men back to their homes, and did nothing.

Look at verse 3. It reads....Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost at Geba.... This is exactly what God expected from Saul.....to attack the Philistines by faith...instead of relying on human logic..... Then what was the outcome.....did the Philistines defeat Jonathan and his men, as Saul so confidently believed..... No...they did not!! The NLT reads....Jonathan attackedAND..... defeated..... the garrison of Philistines at Geba. Because God was pleased with Jonathan's faith. This is exactly what God would have done for Saul if he acted by faith.....instead of acting based on human logic.

Then how did Saul respond to this life lesson? Let's look at verses 3 and 4. Saul had the trumpet blown throughout the land and said..... "Let the Hebrews hear!.....Saul..... has attacked the Philistine outpost. Saul loudly and confidently proclaimed that he was the one, and not his son Jonathan who attacked the mighty Philistines! But it was an outright lie.....aimed to deceive the people of Israel to think that Saul was a man of faith.....a man who trusted God.....when the truth was.....he was the exact the opposite. A man of logic and human reason. What a shame.....Here Saul had the opportunity to repent of his lack of faith.....He had an opportunity to ask God's forgiveness for not trusting Him enough to attack the Philistines! But instead of seeking to please God.....Saul sought to please people. He then, under this false pretence.....summoned the men he sent home earlier.....to join him at Gilgal.....for war against the Philistines.

Look at verse 5. When the Philistines heard about the attack, they also assembled for war against Saul and his men.....but as could be expected.....compared with that of Israel, the military force of the Philistines was far superior. They had three thousand technologically advanced chariotsthey also came with six thousand charioteers.....two men per chariot.....and with soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore.....Suddenly, Saul found himself in a critical situation.....caused by him first acting based on human logic.....and then when his lack of faith was exposed.....under false pretence.

Look at verse 6 and 7. The Philistines were so numerous.....so ruthless and determined to wipe all Israel off the face of the earth.....that the men of Israel.....in great fear.....looked for any place to hide.....they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns.....while others could simply not remain in the country.....but ran away by crossing the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. These were the ordinary men in Israel.....what then about the trained soldiers with Saul? At least they did not hide or run away.....but remained with Saul at Gilgal. Yet they too were quaking with fear.....Do you know what the word quake means? It is to shake or tremble.....Can you imagine just how terrified the soldiers were.....they literally shook with fear!

This shows us, that Saul really faced the most critical situation..... ever..... in his life.....A life defining moment.....the outcome of which determined the very future.....not only of Saul's life.....but of his kingdom! Now most people would pity Saul for landing in such a hot mess!! Other might speculate what Saul could have done to avoid the crisis. Yet, to do so would be futile. Rather, it is best to look at the situation from God's point of view. And I believe we will all agree.....that from God's point of view.....this situation.....created an ideal opportunity for Saul to lay down his human ways.....to humbly accept God's way for him.....which is to live by faith in Almighty God.....instead of human logic or emotion.....Moreover, it was ideal opportunity for Saul to lay down his plans to merely live a life of convenience.....to

instead wholeheartedly accept God's plan for him to be the king of Israel who fights against the Philistines to deliver God's people from their hand.

Now, interestingly, God set a time period of 7 days to see how Saul responds. Seven days.....before God would send Samuel to Saul....to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the Lord.....after which he would then receive the Lord's instruction and tell Saul what to do. (10:8) Now seven days does not sound like a long time, right!? But to Saul..... in this critical situation.....these 7days felt like an eternity! We can be certain that he counted the seconds. Every day he was looking for answers and solutions.....every day he tried to see what he could do to act against the imminent threat that the Philistines posed. But nothing.....the situation was beyond his control.....and he just felt more hopeless by the day. Look at verse 8. He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal.....to make the already critical situation even worse for Saul.....was the fact that his men seriously began doubt his ability to lead them.....and therefore also began to scatter. Indeed, the situation just spiralled deeper and deeper into chaos for Saul.....The time had firmly arrived for him to choose.....to lay down everything before the LORD.....or to take matters into his own hands. It was only one of these two options! Which option did Saul choose?

Look at verse 9. 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..... A king was not supposed to offer sacrifices to God; only priests were. That is why God told Saul to wait 7 days for Samuel.....so that Samuel could offer sacrifices on Saul's behalf and then tell him what to do. But sadly..... Saul could not wait on the LORD anymore.....and in desperation.....he took matters into his own hands. With a complete disregard for God and His ways.....Saul offered the burnt and fellowship offerings himself. In this way Saul disobeyed the command of God.

Look at verses 10-11. Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. Samuel immediately realised what a terrible thing Saul did..... "What have you done?" asked Samuel. And then, instead of acknowledging his mistake.....his sin before the LORD.....Saul remained true to his sinful nature....by making one excuse after the other. Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering,..... AND.....that you did not come at the set time.....AND.....that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash..... I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal.....ANDI have not sought the LORD's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering."

Let's look at verse 13 "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. Humanly speaking, everything Saul said seemed plausible and somehow justified his choice. Some might even say that based on the situation Saul acted reasonably! However, spiritually before God Saul acted foolishly. This is surprising, don't you think? We tend to think to solve a life problem it's not such a big deal if we ignore God and His words.....to rather act based on our emotions.....or logic..... Yet, here we learn that it is sheer foolishness! And our foolish behaviour have severe and far reaching the consequences..... Look at verse 14. Can we read today's key verse together? 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." Samuel said.... But now your kingdom will not endure. In this critical moment, when Saul was to show his heart towards

God.....and trust him absolutely....by waiting for Samuel to come and offer the burnt and fellowship offerings.....Saul blatantly disregarded God by taking things into his own hands. Then.....God could not but reject Saul as king..... because of this foolishness....and replace him with someone after His own heart.....to be the leader of God's people. In his mercy, God did not replace Saul immediately.....but only after 42 years.....when God handed Saul's kingdom to David.

The main question we want to answer through this passage is: how can someone be a person after God's own heart? Based on today's passage, we can see there are 2 ways.

Firstly: someone after God's own heart is someone who values God more than anything in his or her life. Previously, God poured his grace on Saul by appointing him as king.....Also, Saul personally experienced the power and presence of God in his life.....Yet, Saul did not value God the most. Instead, he valued what people was thinking more than God

1. That is why He sent the rest of the men back home, when he was supposed to attack the Philistines. If Saul valued God the most, he would sincerely considered God's purpose for his kingship and prepare for battle....and not sent the rest of the men home.
2. That is also why he lied about who attacked the Philistine outpost.....to impress people instead of doing what is right before God.
3. That is also why he instead of waiting on God to tell him what to do, Saul forcefully tried to obtain God's blessing by offering the sacrifices to God himself.

Saul did all of this because he did not value God the most in His life. And that is why he was not a man after God's own heart. So, to be a man or woman after God's own heart, we have to value God more than anything.

Secondly, someone after God's own heart is someone who acts based on faith in God.....and not human logic and emotions. Saul did exactly the opposite. Firstly he calculated the risk of attacking the Philistines, and then concluded that it was no use to attack them. So he choose only 3000 soldiers and sent the rest of the men home. Also, after waiting 7 days for Samuel.....Saul said that he felt compelled to offer the sacrifices himself.....which shows that in the heat of the moment.....Saul acted based on his fear and distress.....that is according to his emotion.....instead of faith in God. Then God rejected him as king. So, to be a man or woman after God's own heart, we have to act and make decisions by faith in God and His word, instead of our human logic or emotion.

In conclusion.

I believe that none of us want to be rejected by God, like Saul. Am I right? Instead, we all want to be men and women after God's own heart, someone who God can be proud of and be pleased to establish his life. The truth is, this is also God's greatest desire for you and me. That is why, at some point in our life, God will allow us to also face a critical situation, just like Saul. A situation unlike any other situation we had ever experience. A situation beyond our control that threatens to even destroy our lives. These situations are not meant to destroy us. But to establish us as men and women after God's own heart.

I sincerely pray that, unlike Saul, you and I:

1. Value God more than anything in our lives.
2. And act and make decisions based on our faith in God and His word, instead of human logic and or our emotions.

May God establish all of us as men and women after his own heart! Amen