



## **World Christian Fellowship**

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### **Leadership- Pride & Fall.**

The Bible is filled with examples of admirable leaders we should imitate, those who honoured God with their positions and were used by him for great works.

But the Bible also includes tragic examples of leaders who did not obey God's commands, follow the Spirit's guidance, or heed godly advice and we can learn from them as well.

One such example is King Saul, who, despite beginning his reign as God's anointed king, provides a devastating model of how not to lead.

In Israel and Judah there were a number of kings who had a promising start but spiralled out of control and ended up a spectacular failure.

No king's rise and failure, however, is spelled out with as much detail as the first king – Saul.

Almost the entire book of 1 Samuel, starting with chapter 9 and going through the end of the book, shows us the establishment and disintegration of the rule of Saul.

At first, Saul seems to do extremely well.

But pride and fear of man push Saul to rebel against God, and while that rebellion might seem harmless at first, by the end there's no denying that this is a man at war with his Creator.

Pride and humility will be an important theme for all the lives of the kings, but it is here spelled out by God unmistakably clearly.

**1 Samuel 15:17, அப்பொழுது சாமுவேல்: நீர் உம்முடைய பார்வைக்குச் சிறியவராயிருந்தபோது அல்லவோ இஸ்ரவேல் கோத்திரங்களுக்குத் தலைவரானீர்; கர்த்தர் உம்மை இஸ்ரவேலின்மேல் ராஜாவாக அபிஷேகம் பண்ணுவித்தாரே.**

This theme is important for all of us to consider, because although we may not be ruling over a nation, we too must decide whether we will remain small in our own sight or whether we will allow ourselves to think that we don't always have to obey the voice of God. In this lesson, we will fly over the

key points of Saul's life to see how this process took place, and

what we are expected to learn from it.

The Bible teaches that pride can ruin a person.

How do you think that happens?

How could pride ruin you?

Before we begin on Saul's life, though, it will be important to answer another question that we encounter in the first few chapters of 1 Samuel.

### **King Me?**

Did God want Israel to have a king?

This may seem to be a fairly straightforward issue.

#### **1 Samuel 8:4-9.**

Israel asks for a king, and God says that in doing so they were rejecting his kingship over them.

But how then do we explain what God spoke through Moses?

God had planned on a king since the time of Moses.

#### **Deuteronomy 17:14-20,**

There are several instructions given to the king that Israel will one day have, which hints that God is expecting for them to one day have a king.

The book of Judges, which comes right before the books of Samuel (with only Ruth intervening) ends with some wretched stories. The point of these stories is summed up in a phrase we find at the beginning of this final section of the book and at the end of the book itself.

Judges 17:6, அந்நாட்களில் இஸ்ரவேலிலே ராஜா இல்லை, அவனவன் தன் தன் பார்வைக்குச் சரிப்போனபடி செய்துவந்தான்.

Judges 21:25, அந்நாட்களில் இஸ்ரவேலிலே ராஜா இல்லை, அவனவன் தன் தன் பார்வைக்குச் சரிப்போனபடி செய்துவந்தான்.

The author of Judges thought a king was a really good idea.

We also must consider the fact that the idea of a king becomes a very important piece in the picture of the coming Messiah. God will eventually use the Israelite kings to set up a dynasty that will lead to Jesus himself. God promises David (a king) that he will set up a descendant which will rule over the entire world (2 Samuel 7), a promise that is expanded on and clarified in the prophetic literature.

All of this seems important to be a “Plan B” in God’s mind.

So did God want Israel to have a king, and how can these passages be reconciled?

All the above considerations make it very clear that God knew about the coming kings and was ultimately in favour of the idea.

The problem was not the desire for a king, but the reasons for that desire.

Israel gives 3 reasons for wanting a king:

- They wanted a military and political ruler (1 Samuel 8:5, 20)
- They were concerned about the poor leadership of Samuel's sons (**1 Samuel 8:4-5**).
- They wanted to be like the nations around them (**1 Samuel 8:5, 20**).

While the first two reasons weren't necessarily wrong, the third one was a major problem.

Ultimately, God saw the heart of the people and knew that their desire for a king was very different from the desire of the author of Judges.

Rather than wanting a king who would keep them following God, their desire for a king came from a rebellious desire for independence.

How can realizing this be helpful for us in our own spiritual lives?

What are some other ways we might do the right action but have the wrong heart behind it?

So, God gives Israel their king. The life of Saul is a fascinating study, one that starts very strongly and ends in miserable failure.

## **Saul's Life:**

### **1. The Rise of Saul**

Saul starts out with a lot of promise. God selects him and just about everything we see gives us high hopes for his future.

#### **Saul initially exhibited much humility.**

The major theme of Saul's life, and much of the kings, is the battle between pride and humility.

This is understandable, since the king was the highest position in the land it would be easy to become conceited and self-reliant.

God wanted kings who would stay humble and trust him. At first, Saul seems like he will be a good king because it looks like he will be a humble king.

**Saul's humility can be seen in different ways:**

**a) He did not seek the king position (1 Sam 9:15-10:16)].**

Being a king was the furthest thing from Saul's mind when he started. We are told a humorous story instead of how poor Saul was just looking for some lost donkeys. On the way, he decides to go looking for Samuel to see if Samuel can show him where the donkeys are and is instead anointed king.

Saul's view at this time is appropriately humble (9:19-21).

Saul returns home and doesn't even tell anyone what happened.

**1 Samuel 10:15-16, அப்பொழுது சவுலின் சிறியதகப்பன்: சாமுவேல் உங்களுக்குச் சொன்னது என்ன? அதைச் சொல் என்றான். 16. சவுல் தன் சிறியதகப்பனைப் பார்த்து: கழுதைகள் அகப்பட்டது என்று எங்களுக்குத் தீர்மானமாய்ச் சொன்னார் என்றான்; ஆனாலும் ராஜ்யபாரத்தைப்பற்றிச் சாமுவேல் சொன்னதை அவனுக்கு அறிவிக்கவில்லை.**

**b) He was hiding when he was appointed (10:17-24).**

Ironically, when it was time to pick the king Saul was nowhere to be found. The people have to ask God where the new king is, and God tells them that Saul is hiding among the supplies.

**1 Samuel 10:22, அவன் இனி இங்கே வருவானா என்று அவர்கள் திரும்பக் கர்த்தரிடத்தில் விசாரித்தபோது: இதோ, அவன் தளவாடங்களிருக்கிற இடத்திலே ஒளித்துக்கொண்டிருக்கிறான் என்று கர்த்தர் சொன்னார்.**

**c) He forgave those who opposed him (11:12-15).**

After Saul's coronation, certain people had mocked him, thinking he was the last guy they would want to save them. After Saul wins an impressive military victory, some people want to execute those who initially questioned his leadership. Saul humbly and wisely refuses to allow this to happen.

**Why do you think Saul lost this initial humility?**

What changed in Saul's life?

How might we face similar temptations?

**d) Saul was initially given the Spirit (10:10; 11:6).**

The Holy Spirit came upon Saul in the beginning and caused him to prophesy. The way the Spirit worked in the Old Testament was a little different than the way he works in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Spirit would come

upon leaders for the purpose of empowering them of the task God gave them (called by theologians “theocratic anointing”).

The Spirit comes upon Saul before he is anointed king, and then it comes upon him when he must go and take care of an enemy of Israel.

**e) Saul was initially successful (11:1-11).**

God blessed Saul in his leadership. Saul rallied the nation of Israel to help their brothers in Jabesh-gilead take on the Ammonite army (1 Samuel 11:6-11).

Initially, Saul was a loyal worshipper of God. He rebuked the people when they violated God’s will.

1 Samuel 14:32-34, அப்பொழுது ஜனங்கள் கொள்ளையின்மேல் பாய்ந்து, ஆடுகளையும் மாடுகளையும் கன்றுக்குட்டிகளையும் பிடித்து, தரையிலே போட்டு அடித்து, இரத்தத்தோடும் புசித்தார்கள். 33. அப்பொழுது: இதோ, இரத்தத்தோடிருக்கிறதைப் புசிக்கிறதினால் ஜனங்கள் கர்த்தருக்கு ஏலாத பாவம் செய்கிறார்கள் என்று சவுலுக்கு அறிவித்தார்கள்; அவன்: நீங்கள் துரோகம்பண்ணினீர்கள்; இப்போதே ஒரு பெரிய கல்லை என்னிடத்தில் உருட்டிக்கொண்டுவாருங்கள். 34. நீங்கள் ஜனத்திற்குள்ளே போய்,

இரத்தத்தோடிருக்கிறதைச்

சாப்பிடுகிறதினாலே, கர்த்தருக்கு ஏலாத பாவம்  
செய்யாத படிக்கு, அவரவர் தங்கள் மாட்டையும்  
அவரவர் தங்கள் ஆட்டையும் என்னிடத்தில்  
கொண்டுவந்து, இங்கே அடித்து, பின்பு  
சாப்பிடவேண்டும் என்று அவர்களுக்குச்  
சொல்லுங்கள் என்று கட்டளையிட்டான்; ஆகையால்  
ஜனங்கள் எல்லாரும் அவரவர் தங்கள் மாடுகளை  
அன்று இராத்திரி தாங்களே கொண்டுவந்து, அங்கே  
அடித்தார்கள்.

Built altars to worship the Lord.

1 Samuel 14.35, பின்பு சவுல் கர்த்தருக்கு ஒரு  
பலிபீடத்தைக் கட்டினான்; அது அவன் கர்த்தருக்குக்  
கட்டின முதலாவது பலிபீடம்.

Got rid the land of "mediums and spiritists"

1 Samuel 28.3, சாமுவேல் இதற்கு முன்னமே  
மரித்துப்போனான்; இஸ்ரவேலர் எல்லாரும்  
அவனுக்குத் துக்கங்கொண்டாடி, அவன் ஊராகிய  
ராமாவிலே அவனை அடக்கம்பண்ணினார்கள். சவுல்  
அஞ்சனம் பார்க்கிறவர்களையும்,  
குறிசொல்லுகிறவர்களையும் தேசத்தில்  
இராதபடிக்குத் துரத்திவிட்டான்.

He was a successful military leader, giving Israel victories over Moab, Ammon, Edom, the Philistines and others.

1 Samuel 14.47-48, இப்படிச் சவுல் இஸ்ரவேலை ஆளுகிற ராஜ்யபாரத்தைப் பெற்றுக்கொண்டு, சுற்றிலும் இருக்கிற தன்னுடைய எல்லாச் சத்துருக்களுமாகிய மோவாபியருக்கும், அம்மோன் புத்திரருக்கும், ஏதோமியருக்கும், சோபாவின் ராஜாக்களுக்கும், பெலிஸ்தருக்கும் விரோதமாக யுத்தம்பண்ணி, எவர்கள்மேல் படையெடுத்தானோ, அவர்களையெல்லாம் அடக்கினான். 48. அவன் பலத்து, அமலேக்கியரை முறிய அடித்து, இஸ்ரவேலரைக் கொள்ளையிடுகிற யாவர் கைக்கும் அவர்களை நீங்கலாக்கி இரட்சித்தான்.

Why is success ultimately a poor indicator of someone's spiritual state?

Why is it so easy to look to success for this purpose?

Saul started well. Unfortunately, he fell pretty hard.

His humble, Spirit-filled, successful beginning all changed when he rebelliously took on roles that God had not given him.

## 2. The Rebellion of Saul

Sadly, we have two major failures of Saul back to back in chapters 13 and 15 of 1 Samuel.

These stories explain why it is that God refused to establish a permanent dynasty with Saul and set up the need for another king: David.

**a) Saul assumes more than he was allowed (13:8-15).**

Saul waits for Samuel to come and give a sacrifice so that he can have the blessing of God before beginning battle. Samuel tells him to wait seven days, and Saul waits and then decides that he will give the sacrifice. As he is finishing, Samuel shows up.

**What does Saul do when Samuel shows up?**

How does this contrast with Adam and Eve's response when they rebelled, and God showed up?

Why do you think this is?

**How does Saul describe his rebellious behaviour?**

How might we similarly rephrase rebellion, so it sounds less wicked?

**b) Saul refuses to accept responsibility (14:29-30, 36-46).**

Chapter 14 is designed to give us a contrast between Saul and Jonathan.

Saul is cowardly, and Jonathan acts courageously.

Jonathan waits for the Lord's approval before going into battle. Saul impatiently tells the priest to stop asking God because it's taking too long.

Finally, Jonathan is ready to be put to death because he is willing to accept responsibility for an ignorant sin.

Whereas Saul won't admit that he was foolish and defend the life of his own son.

Saul's lack of divine counsel led to a foolish vow, which almost led to the death of Jonathan.

### **c) Saul disobeys God's command (15:12-31).**

We once again see a guilty Saul cheerfully, brazenly greeting Samuel as if nothing is wrong. Samuel immediately calls him out on his sin, and an exchange proceeds where Saul tries unsuccessfully to defend his rebellious actions.

#### **What excuses does Saul make for why he disobeyed?**

What is God's response?

How might we make similar excuses today?

What was Saul's greatest concern in this passage?

What does this tell us about his character?

Why do you think Saul's actions mattered to God as much as they did?

Why was David forgiven for adultery and murder, but Saul was not given a dynasty because of these sins?

Saul begged and begged that he is not to be embarrassed in front of other people.

David would later beg and beg that God forgive him and restore fellowship with him, no matter the cost.

David was publicly humiliated but was forgiven by God.

Saul was not embarrassed by Samuel in front of the people, but his life fell apart.

### **3. The Fall of Saul**

Saul's judgment consisted of an emotional and psychological breakdown, spiritual compromise of the most hypocritical proportions, and ultimately Saul's untimely death.

#### **a) Saul lost the Spirit and was instead tormented (16:14).**

Remembering the different ways the Spirit worked in the Old Testament, Saul here loses his special anointing of the Spirit to accomplish his task. Saul having the Spirit come on him didn't

make him saved and losing the Spirit didn't mean he lost his salvation.

Pagan prophets spoke in the Spirit (**Balaam in Numbers 24:3**), so simply having the Spirit come on you didn't mean you were regenerate.

The Holy Spirit leaves and in his place is a tormenting spirit. We don't know what exactly this meant, but it appeared to be a mental breakdown of some kind that was conciliable by the playing of David's harp (**1 Samuel 16:15-23**).

b) **Saul stoops to a point lower than he thought possible** (28:3, 8-10).

This sad story near the end of his life shows how desperate a man can become when he's rejected God.

The hypocrisy is painful. The woman doesn't want to help Saul, because she is afraid that Saul would kill her if he knew what they were up to. What Saul had once strongly condemned he turned to because of his own pride and stubbornness.

Sin makes hypocrites of all of us. When we seek to cover our wrongdoing, or resist God's will, or hold on to and hide things he has forbidden, we will often find ourselves going to lengths

and making concessions we never thought possible. Faith and obedience are the basis of a life of integrity.

Once we rebel against God, it's only a matter of time before the rest of the building crumbles without its foundation.

What are other ways that people capitulate to wrong because of their rebellion to wrong? How else does sin degrade us?

### **c) Saul is killed in battle with his sons (31).**

Saul's downward spiral ended up with his death, and with him the death of his sons. Saul's long battle against the Philistines, with many ups and downs, was ultimately a doomed venture if the Lord wasn't behind it. It would be for David to become king of Israel and ultimately end the Philistine menace.

James warns us that sin, when it is finished, brings about death (James 1:15). Our sin will always cost us. Saul's pride and rebellion may have started out innocently, but it led to an abandonment of what he clearly knew was right and wrong and destroyed him, his sons, and the lives of the soldiers he led into a battle he could never win without God.

Sin will always result in our ruin and destruction. Pride can cut us off from God's blessing and favour, and when that happens, there's no telling how far down we may spiral.

Based on Saul's life, what are some of the ways sin costs us?

**What are the other ways sin may cost us?**

Saul had such a promising start, but his pride and indifference to God's commands led to his ruin. His place was taken by a different king, a king after God's own heart.

**Application:**

**1. Pick and Choose from God's Commands**

Choose for yourself which of God's commands you will lead your followers to uphold and to what extent, compromising those that deny the flesh or seem less important.

In disobedience to God's command, Saul led the people to spare King Agag, the best of his livestock, and all that was good, devoting to destruction only what was despised and worthless. As a result, the Lord regretted making Saul king (**1 Samuel 15:1–11**).

When God's commands seem inefficient or inconvenient, we are tempted to choose for ourselves which ones to uphold based on our understanding or the world's advice.

We may ignore his instructions and compromise his standards even as we aim to serve him in doing so.

God deems wholehearted obedience better than sacrifice (**1 Samuel 15:22**).

Because every command of his word will stand forever (**1 Peter 1:25**), we can be sure that every good and faithful act of obedience we take as leaders (and every step we lead others to take as they follow us) will be seen and rewarded by him.

## **2. Remove those Who Disagree with You**

Assume people to be your enemies who, though they disagree with you, are actually more helpful and faithful than even some who agree.

Saul repeatedly ignored godly counsel, resenting those who challenged his unreasonable emotions and misinformed judgments.

Gradually, Saul's paranoia and fear drove him to surround himself only with those willing to confirm his wrong beliefs, believing they were the ones showing true compassion (**1 Samuel 23:19–21**).

When insecurity tempts us to see the disagreements of fellow leaders, or those we lead as threats to our success, we can grow defensive and resentful with self-preserving pride.

Arrogantly assuming our plans and priorities are always best, we may wrongly expect that others unquestioningly consent to our leadership, ignoring valid concerns we need to hear. Instead, we can intentionally surround ourselves with people courageous enough to question or oppose us when we are wrong.

We can welcome others' new ideas, diverse viewpoints, and unique perspectives as invitations to sharpen one another like iron (**Proverbs 27:17**).

God may be using the challenges of others to reveal our blind spots and fortify our weaknesses, since in the abundance of counsellors there is victory (**Proverbs 11:14**).

### **3. Don't shift Blame**

When you are caught in your errors, respond in self-defence by lying, deflecting, or blaming, rather than accepting responsibility and humbling yourself in repentance.

Saul, when confronted by Samuel over his sin, first lied about having performed God's command. He then tried to deflect the blame from his sin by pointing to the good he had done. Finally, he accused the people of persuading him to error (**1 Samuel 15:12–22**).

When others see our mistakes and give corrective feedback or a stern rebuke, we may stiffen with resentment, determined to try to preserve a reputation of excellence.

We can be deceitful about our actions, gloss over our mistakes with our good works, or accuse others of persuading us to sin. This may cause our hearts to harden, our counsellors to dwindle, our accountability to weaken, and our errors to propel us farther down a path of destruction.

Instead, we can humble ourselves to acknowledge the truth in others' reproof.

With gratitude for needed correction, we can confess our sins to those we have harmed and, ultimately, to our merciful God.

We do so in faith that all convictions over the many mistakes we will make as leaders are invitations to be washed thoroughly from iniquity, cleansed from sin, and restored to the joy of God's salvation with a renewed spirit and clean heart (**Psalm 51:1–12**).

#### **4. Your Call is unique**

Prioritize your status and recognition over God's work being accomplished however and through whomever he pleases.

Saul was jealous as the people rejoiced over David's greater victory in battle. As king, Saul should have rejoiced in the

success of their common mission, no matter whom God used to achieve it (**1 Samuel 18:6–9**).

We will be tempted to make the goal of leadership our own recognition and exaltation at all costs. In endless, maddening competition with perceived rivals, we can pursue quickly forgotten awards and fleeting applause that will never satisfy our souls. In the process, we are likely to leave a wake of destruction with all those we used, hurt, or ignored to achieve it. We may even find ourselves trying to oppose God's unthwartable plans (**Job 42:2**).

Instead, secure in the assurance that God himself establishes and removes leaders (Daniel 2:21).

We can trust all appointments of earthly positions to Him. Resisting temptations to envy or conspire against those around us, we can humble ourselves to joyfully embrace our unique role in God's story while cheering on all others in theirs.