

# A Man After the Lord's Own Heart

## Text: 1 Samuel 13

**Introduction:** We are making our way through the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. At various points through the first 12 chapters, the narrative of 1 Samuel has focused on men like Eli, and Hophni and Phinehas, and Samuel. But in chapter 9, we were introduced to a man named Saul who was sent to look for his father's lost donkeys.

The chapter before, we had learned of Israel's demand for a king. Samuel was old. His sons were evil. And Israel wanted a king to judge them like all the other nations. God warned His people through Samuel of the trouble that having a king would bring, but when the people insisted, God told Samuel, "Obey their voice and make them a king."

As the narrative of 1 Samuel progressed, we learned that Saul was the king whom God gave His people in response to their demand. We've seen some of Saul's flaws already in 1 Samuel. But we've also seen him defeat the Ammonites in the power of the Lord.

And last time in chapter 12, Samuel told the people, "If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you AND THE KING WHO REIGNS OVER YOU will follow the LORD your God, it will be well" (1 Sam. 12:14).

Faithfulness to the Lord matters. It matters for God's people. And it matters for those who will lead God's people. God's people need faithful leaders. The question as we come to the beginning of chapter 13 is whether this man Saul will be a faithful leader of God's people. Saul is king. Will he follow the Lord?

We begin to see the answer to that question in 1 Samuel 13. Turn there with me in your Bible if you haven't already. I'm going to read the whole chapter. And then we'll work through it together.

(Read 1 Samuel 13...Pray)

The Lord seeks men and women after His own heart. I want to share with you this morning, from 1 Samuel 13, four essential lessons for men and women after the Lord's own heart.

The first lesson is...

### I. Do not fear; trust the Lord.

#### A. And this lesson is really seen throughout the entirety of 1 Samuel 13.

1. **Though we were first introduced to Saul back in chapter 9, he is formally introduced as Israel's king here in verse 1 of chapter 13.**
  - a. **Depending on the translation that you are using, you may have noticed that there is a textual problem in verse 1.**
  - b. **Your ESV Scripture journal says, "Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years over Israel."**
  - c. **The problem is that when translated literally into English, the Hebrew text says, "Saul was a son of a year when he reigned, and two years he reigned over Israel." Clearly, we know that Saul was not one year old when he became king of Israel.**
  - d. **It's possible that there was a scribal error at some point that persisted throughout later copies of 1 Samuel. That's the position that the translators of the NIV take in adjusting the text to say, "Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years."**
  - e. **John Woodhouse, however, argues that it's best to take the text as it is and understand the one year to be the time between Saul's being anointed by Samuel in chapter 10 and the beginning of his reign at Gilgal in chapter 11. Then the two years would be the period of time between Saul actually becoming king at Gilgal and his being rejected as king in chapter 15.**

- f. It's hard to say for certain, but the point is that Saul is the king of Israel, and what follows is the account of his reign.
2. And to understand what follows, we have to go back to some instructions that Saul received from the Lord through Samuel back in chapter 10 after he was first anointed as king.
    - a. We saw there in 10:5-7 that Saul was to defend Israel by attacking the garrison of the Philistines at Gibeah.
    - b. We also saw in 10:8 that Saul was to go down to Gilgal and wait for further instructions from Samuel. Samuel said, "Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do" (10:8).
    - c. Now, as we look at chapter 13, we see that Saul is obeying the first part of Samuel's instructions.
    - d. Saul gathers an army (vs. 2a). A man named Jonathan, whom we discover later is Saul's son, also gathers an army (vs. 2b). And Jonathan defeats the garrison of the Philistines at Geba or Gibeah.
    - e. So, the first part of Samuel's instruction to Saul has now been accomplished.
  3. But there's a problem. And the problem is that defeating the Philistines makes the Philistines angry.
    - a. The text says in verse 3 that the Philistines "heard of it."
    - b. It says in verse 4 that Israel "had become a stench to the Philistines."
    - c. In fact, we read in verse 5 that "the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel" (vs. 5a).
  - d. "Mustered" in English might seem to indicate that their army wasn't very impressive, but it was the best they could do. Other translations say "assembled." However you translate it, the army of the Philistines was plenty impressive. Thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen. Which may mean 30 regiments of chariots and 6 regiments of horsemen. Either way, the number was impressive. We know because the troops were like the sand on the seashore in multitude (vs. 5). We also know because when the men of Israel saw this massive army, they knew they were in trouble, and they ran and hid in fear (vs. 6). They abandoned Israel's army (vs. 7a). The text says that even those who continued following Saul were trembling (vs.7).
4. Don't miss the significance of what is happening here.
    - a. Israel wanted a king who would go out before them and fight their battles (8:20).
    - b. And in Saul, God gave them a king to go out before them and fight their battles. In fact, speaking as the Lord's prophet, Samuel told Saul, "You will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies" (10:1).
    - c. And beyond just the general faithfulness of the Lord, the people of Israel have reason to believe that God will do as He promised. Saul has already defeated the Ammonites in chapter 11. And he has just defeated the garrison of the Philistines at Gibeah (vs. 3).
    - d. But still, the men of Israel are afraid. They do not trust Saul. And in not trusting Saul, they demonstrate that they do not trust the Lord.
    - e. Remember what God said through Samuel back in chapter 12: "If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well" (12:14).

- f. **Instead of fearing the Lord, the people fear their enemies.**
5. **But the men of Israel aren't the only ones who are afraid.**
    - a. **Look at verse 8: "He (talking about Saul) waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel." Remember chapter 10 verse 8. That's what Samuel told Saul to do. Wait seven days. But look at the rest of 13:8: "But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him."**
    - b. **We know that Saul was getting afraid because of what happened next. The men of Israel were afraid. Saul was afraid.**
    - c. **And no one was trusting the Lord.**
  6. **They should have trusted the Lord. We're going to see next week in chapter 14 that despite the odds being stacked against them, Israel defeated the Philistines in the power of the Lord.**
- B. I wonder what's going on in your life this morning that has you afraid.**
1. **Maybe it's a bad medical diagnosis. Maybe it's a tough financial situation. Maybe it's marriage or family problems. Maybe it's something going on at work. Maybe it's something no one else knows about but you.**
  2. **There's no 1-1 correlation between an army of the Philistines breathing down your neck and whatever it is that you're facing.**
  3. **But there is a 1-1 correlation between the God who was faithful to His people then and the God who is faithful to His people now. He's the same God. Yesterday, today, and forever. He doesn't change.**
  4. **Look, I'm not saying that your circumstances aren't bad. Israel's circumstances were bad. Maybe a lot worse than your circumstances.**

5. **I'm saying that the Lord is Lord over your circumstances. Whatever it is that you are facing. Whatever it is that you're going through. He is faithful. You can trust Him. You don't have to be afraid. You can trust the Lord.**

That's lesson #1. Lesson #2...

## **II. Do not be foolish; obey the Lord.**

### **A. Remember what Samuel, speaking for the Lord, said to Saul back in 10:8.**

1. **He instructed Saul, "Go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do" (10:8).**
2. **Saul is supposed to wait for Samuel. Saul was the king. Samuel was the priest. Only the priest could offer the burnt offering.**
3. **So, Saul waited. Verse 8 says he waited seven days. But Samuel never came (vs. 8a).**
4. **I can imagine him looking out the window every day looking for Samuel. Maybe he asked around. Has anyone seen Samuel? But Samuel was nowhere to be found.**
5. **Meanwhile, Saul's army was steadily deserting him (vs. 8b).**
6. **So, Saul decided to take matters into his own hands. He said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings" (vs. 9a). The text says, "And he offered the burnt offering" (vs. 9b).**
7. **I think most of us can sympathize with Saul here, can't we? He waited seven days like he was told, and still no Samuel. He must have wondered if Samuel would come at all. And if he did come, would it be too late? Would the whole army have deserted him by that point?**
8. **From Saul's perspective, he did the only thing he knew to do. Since Samuel wasn't there, he offered the sacrifice himself.**

9. So, when Samuel finally shows up in verse 10, Saul doesn't try to hide. He doesn't act ashamed. Saul went out to meet Samuel and greet him (vs. 10).

**B. But then, the stunning rebuke from Samuel.**

1. Samuel said, "What have you done?" (vs. 11a).
  - a. I don't know how he knew. Maybe he could see the offering out in the open. Maybe he could smell the smoke. Maybe the Lord had revealed it to him.
  - b. However he knew, he knew. And he asked Saul, "What have you done?" (vs. 11a).
  - c. Samuel's question reminds us of the question God asked Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after their sin. It reminds us of the question God asked Cain after he murdered his brother Abel. Or the question to Achan when he brought God's wrath on Israel by his greed in Joshua 7. "What have you done?"
  - d. We'll consider Saul's excuses in a moment, but look down at verse 13 at what Samuel said next to Saul. (Read vs. 13-14)
  - e. If the seriousness of this rebuke seems surprising to you, imagine how Saul must have felt as he heard Samuel speak these words.
2. But the bottom line was that Saul had not done what he was commanded to do.
  - a. He knew he wasn't supposed to offer a burnt offering. He knew he was supposed to wait for Samuel. But he did it anyway.
  - b. And Samuel says, "You have done foolishly"(vs.13a.
  - c. I wonder if you can see why Saul's actions here are so foolish. Why is Saul offering a burnt offering? Ostensibly, because he believed he needed the favor of the Lord to defeat the Philistines. But then he turns around and disobeys the Lord. He seeks the favor of the Lord by disobeying the Lord. That's pretty foolish.

- d. Psalm 14:1 says, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'" When we hear that verse, I think our minds immediately go to the atheist who denies the existence of God. And certainly, that is foolish. But Psalm 14:1 is not so much a comment on the intellect as it is a comment on the heart. "The fool says in his HEART, 'There is no God.'" It doesn't say, "The fool says in his MIND, 'There is no God.'" It says HEART. "The fool says in his HEART, 'There is no God.'"
- e. It is possible for you to mentally assent to the fact of God's existence and still say in your HEART, "There is no God." That's what happened here with Saul. And he reveals it with his actions. Saul determined that it was more important for him to do what he thought was best than it was for him to obey God.

**C. Surely you can see now how applicable this is for you and me.**

1. Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." Saul was very clearly leaning on his own understanding. Given the circumstances, it seemed best to him to violate the command of God. Better that he offers the sacrifice than that it does not get offered. But that's not what God had told him to do. He was supposed to wait for Samuel.
2. Can I encourage you to examine your heart this morning? Is there some area of your life where you are trying to bend the commands of God so that you can do what you think is best? Is there some area of your life where you are leaning on your own understanding rather than trusting the Lord by walking in obedience to His commands?
3. May Saul's disobedience to the command of God and the devastating result be a warning to you. None of us want to hear the Lord say to us what Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD" (vs. 13a).

4. **Richard Phillips points out that this whole episode reminds us that if we want to do God’s work, we must do it in accordance with God’s Word. Saul was Israel’s king. Saul wasn’t offering the sacrifice for his own personal benefit. He was doing it on behalf of the nation so that he could fulfill his God-ordained task of defending Israel from her enemies. But the problem was that he did not serve God in accordance with God’s Word. He was supposed to wait. He was not authorized to offer the burnt offering. Phillips writes, “Christians and churches risk the same result today when they adapt the worship of the church and plans for church growth to worldly models derived from the entertainment and business worlds, rather than faithfully apply the kinds of ministry taught and modeled in the Bible” (Phillips, 202). Goshen, we are committed to reaching our community for Christ. But we’re not going to follow in Saul’s footsteps and seek to do that by whatever means we determine necessary. We’re going to follow the means that God has given us in His Word. Namely, proclaiming the message of the gospel. Repent of your sin. Place your trust in Jesus. And be reconciled to God.**
5. **Now, we may employ different methods of gaining a hearing for the gospel. Whether it be a booth offering free temporary tattoos at National Night Out or an after-school club at Spotsylvania Elementary. But the message is the same. Turn from your sin and place your trust in Jesus.**

We’ve seen the first two lessons. Do not fear; trust the Lord. Do not be foolish; obey the Lord. Number 3...

### **III. Do not make excuses; repent before the Lord.**

#### **A. What did Saul do when he was confronted by Samuel for disobeying the Lord?**

1. **He made excuses. Look at his excuses in verse 11. (Read vs. 11)**

2. **The first excuse that Saul gives Samuel is that the people were scattering from him (vs. 11a). That was certainly true. The people WERE scattering from him. We saw that in verse 8. But it was not a reason for Saul to reject the command of the Lord and do what was right in his own eyes.**
3. **The second excuse is that Samuel did not come within the days appointed (vs. 11b). This excuse seems true on the surface. Samuel DID NOT come at the beginning of the seventh day. But it appears that Samuel did come by the end of the seventh day. Saul only needed to wait just a little while longer.**
4. **And the third excuse was that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash (vs. 11c). This was true too. But it was no occasion for Saul to turn his back on the commands of God. If anything, it was an occasion for Saul to press into the commands of God even more. The ONLY way the Israelites were going to defeat the Philistines was with God’s help. How in the world could Saul expect to receive God’s help if he did not OBEY God?**
5. **Saul continues with his excuses in verse 12. (Read vs. 12)**
6. **He says he “forced” himself, and offered the burnt offering. He makes it sound like disobedience to God was his only choice, and he had to force himself to do it.**
7. **Goshen family, disobedience is never the only choice. And we usually do not have to force ourselves to disobey. That comes pretty naturally for us. We have to, in the power of the Holy Spirit, force ourselves to obey.**

#### **B. The saddest thing in all of this is that when Saul is caught in his sin, he doesn’t show remorse and repent. Instead, he doubles down and seeks to justify himself.**

1. **Let that be a warning to us as well when we are confronted in our sin.**

2. While we should avoid foolishness and obey the Lord, the truth is that we are sinners who sometimes sin. So, what do we do when we sin. We ought to repent. We ought not seek to excuse or justify our sin. We should acknowledge it before the Lord and seek His forgiveness.
3. The good news is that because of Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross to pay for our sin, when we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The final lesson of 1 Samuel 13 is...

#### **IV. Do not despair; cling to Christ.**

##### **A. The rest of chapter 13 shows how the deck was stacked against the Israelites and in favor of the Philistines.**

1. This might remind us of the story of Gideon that was read for us this morning during our Scripture reading at the beginning of the service.
2. There God kept reducing Gideon's army so God could show His power over Israel's enemies. He also sent them into battle with torches and trumpets. Here we see that the size of Israel's army pales in comparison to that of the Philistines, and the only people with swords or spears are Saul and Jonathan.
3. That's where chapter 13 leaves it, but we'll see next week that God did give His people victory over their enemies despite seemingly insurmountable odds.
4. Surely Israel's victory in chapter 14 reminds us that we should not despair. The Lord is in control. We should trust Him.

##### **B. But before we close, I want to draw your attention back to that phrase we saw in verse 14: "a man after his own heart."**

1. Samuel said to Saul, "But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you" (vs. 14).
2. We know that David would later be called "a man after God's own heart." So, we know that this statement about "a man after God's own heart" here in verse 14 is about David. David will succeed Saul to the throne in Israel.
3. But I think the statement is about more than just David. Richard Phillips writes that it is a general statement of God's purpose. He writes, "God is seeking 'a man after his own heart.' This is what God is looking for in the world: obedience to his will. A true king and leader receives God's approval through faithful submission and service" (Phillips, 204).
4. Unfortunately, Saul failed God's test. He did not faithfully submit to the Lord. He rejected the command of God and did what was right in his own eyes.
5. But Saul was not the first to fail such a test. We can think back to the very first man in the very beginning of the Bible. God gave him a command. Adam could eat of any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As we know, Adam failed God's test. He disobeyed God. He ate of the very tree that God told him not to eat, and in doing so, He plunged the whole human race into sin.
6. And so, the whole Old Testament leaves us longing for "a man after the Lord's own heart." When Saul assumes the throne in Israel, we hope that maybe it is him. But we quickly learn that it's not.
7. Then we think that maybe David is the "man after his own heart" who will deliver God's people and lead them in righteousness. And while there is much to commend David, we also know that he too was a grievous sinner like you and me. There's no way that he could make things right between us and God. He needed someone to make things right between him and God.

8. **Ultimately, as we continue reading the story of the Bible and eventually turn to the New Testament, we discover that it is one of David's descendants who is truly "a man after the Lord's own heart." He is the one who will come and make all things right. Of course, we're talking about God's own Son. We're talking about the Lord Jesus.**
9. **Like Adam and Saul, He too faced a test of obedience when He was driven into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit for 40 days and 40 nights. But unlike Adam and Saul, the Lord Jesus passed the test. He obeyed God fully and continued to live a life of complete obedience to the Father's commands. Even to the point of death to pay for our sin.**
10. **Phillips writes that "Jesus' success as the man after God's own heart means that we have a king who reigns secure from an eternal throne" (Phillips, 205).**
11. **Hebrews 1:8-9 says, "But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.'"**
12. **See, Goshen family, it was Jesus' perfect obedience to God's commands that made him qualified to die to pay for our sin. He had no sin of His own to pay for. So, He took our sin on Himself on the cross and died in our place to pay for our sin.**
13. **Jesus' obedience to God and His commands also shows us how we too can be men and women after the Lord's own heart. By first clinging to Christ for salvation. And then, as we are transformed by Christ through His Spirit, we are empowered to walk in obedience to God's commands.**

**Conclusion:** I trust that you desire to be a man or a woman after the Lord's own heart. Turn from your sin. Cling to Jesus in faith. And walk in obedience to God and His Word.