

Text: 1 Samuel 13

Title: The Early Signs of a Great Fall

Big Idea: Saul's downfall begins long before the kingdom is taken from him; it begins in the hidden places of the heart where insecurity, impatience, disobedience, and pride are allowed to grow.

Introduction: The Warning from Samuel

- Recall Samuel's final public address to Israel: the people wanted a king like the nations, and God gave them Saul.
- Samuel's warning was clear: blessing follows obedience, but rebellion brings consequences.
- Up to this point, Saul has appeared capable and obedient, but chapter 13 reveals the first cracks in his character.
- **Transition:** In 1 Samuel 13, we see three early signs of Saul's coming fall—signs that his character could not support his calling.

I. Saul Organizes for Battle, but the Crisis Reveals the Heart

- **Passage focus:** 1 Samuel 13:1–4.
- Saul establishes a standing army, something Israel had not previously maintained in this way.
- Jonathan is introduced as a courageous and faithful leader who acts decisively against the Philistine outpost.
- Jonathan's action provokes the Philistines and sets a larger conflict in motion.
- **Illustration:** Like turning one square on a Rubik's Cube, one decision changes the whole picture.
- **Application:** Obedience often provokes opposition. Spiritual enemies do not remain passive when God's people move toward faithfulness.
- **Key line:** You cannot live peacefully with a Philistine.

II. First Sign of a Great Fall: A Longing for Recognition and Praise

- **Passage focus:** 1 Samuel 13:3–4.
- Jonathan attacks the Philistine outpost, but the public report says, "Saul has attacked the Philistine outpost."
- Saul claims or receives credit for what Jonathan risked himself to do.
- This reveals a dangerous pattern in Saul: he is threatened by the success of others, even those closest to him.
- **Warning:** Jealousy is no respecter of persons; it can turn spouses, children, coworkers, and partners into perceived rivals.
- **Supporting Scripture:** Proverbs 27:4 — "Wrath is cruel, and anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?"
- **New Testament contrast:** Paul rejoiced when Christ was preached, even by those who hoped to increase his pain in prison.
- **Application question:** Am I more excited about honoring others than I am about others honoring me?

III. Israel's Fear Exposes the Limits of Human Kingship

- **Passage focus:** 1 Samuel 13:5–7, 19–22.
- The Philistines gather with overwhelming force: chariots, charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore.
- The Philistines also possess the military advantage of iron weapons, while Israel is dependent on farm tools.

- The people thought a king would solve their fear, but frightening circumstances still required them to trust God.
- Instead of trusting the Lord, the Israelites hide in caves, thickets, rocks, pits, and cisterns; some flee across the Jordan.
- **Illustration:** Fear can drive people to Google before God, creating more anxiety instead of deeper faith.
- **Application:** Human solutions cannot replace spiritual dependence. Even when circumstances change, faith is still required.

IV. Second Sign of a Great Fall: A Disregard for the Word of the Lord

- **Passage focus:** 1 Samuel 13:8–10; 1 Samuel 10:8.
- Samuel had clearly instructed Saul to wait seven days at Gilgal until he came to offer sacrifices and give direction.
- Saul waits, but as the troops scatter and pressure rises, he takes matters into his own hands.
- Saul offers the burnt offering himself, stepping outside the role God had assigned to him.
- Samuel arrives just as Saul finishes, exposing the timing and foolishness of Saul's impatience.
- **Key insight:** Waiting is often the place where God tests whether we trust His word more than our circumstances.
- **Application:** Any leader who does not tremble at God's Word is in danger of sabotaging the calling God has given.

V. Third Sign of a Great Fall: An Unwillingness to Confess Wrong

- **Passage focus:** 1 Samuel 13:11–14.

- Samuel asks, "What have you done?"—not because he lacks information, but because Saul is being given an opportunity to repent.
- Instead of confessing, Saul blames the people, blames Samuel, blames the Philistines, and claims he was "compelled."
- Saul's excuses reveal a pattern that will continue throughout his life: he reshapes God's instructions around his own fears and desires.
- **Key contrast:** Foolishness reacts to urges in the moment; wisdom steps back, sees circumstances from a God-centered perspective, and responds in obedience.
- **Leadership principle:** There is no longevity in leadership without humility.
- **Application:** When confronted, the path of grace is confession, not excuse-making. God gives grace to the humble.

VI. The Consequence: The Kingdom Will Not Endure

- **Passage focus:** 1 Samuel 13:13–15.
- Samuel declares that Saul has done a foolish thing and has not kept the command of the Lord.
- Saul's dynasty will not endure because God has sought out a man after His own heart.
- The issue is not Saul's appearance, popularity, charisma, or giftedness; the issue is his heart.
- **Key line:** What we consider small matters of negligence are often major indicators of a heart not fully devoted to God.
- **Application:** God is not merely looking for "good" people; He is forming godly people whose wills are surrendered to Him.
- **Pastoral clarification:** A heart for God does not mean perfection. It means willingness, humility,

repentance, and a desire for God's glory in every area of life.

VII. The Setback May Be God's Setup

- **Passage focus:** 1 Samuel 13:15–23.
- Saul began with 3,000 men, but after fear and failure, only about 600 remain.
- The chapter ends with Israel in apparent weakness, exposed before the Philistines and stripped of the things they were tempted to trust.
- Yet this prepares the way for chapter 14, where God will show His strength through Jonathan's faith.
- **Key line:** When all you have is a setback, it just might be a setup for God to show Himself strong in your life.
- **Application:** God sometimes allows our schemes and false securities to fail so we will turn fully to

Closing prayer: freedom from jealousy, deeper trust in seasons of waiting, obedience to God's Word, humility in confession, and hearts fully surrendered to the Lord.