

WHEN GOD WITHDRAWS

“Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.” —1 SAMUEL 15:23

Saul was the first king of Israel. He had been called by God, anointed by God and empowered by God. He was also a man of vision, but visions from God only come to fruition when acted upon in obedience. Because of disobedience, God withdrew His anointing and Saul's life came to a sad and tragic end.

Saul had everything going for him, but his failure in office was a direct result of his failure in his relationship with God. 1 Samuel 16:14 tells us, “Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.” That raises a red flag for many of us as once we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we cannot lose Him, but this event takes place prior to Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon people for a specific task and was then withdrawn because the task was completed, or in Saul's case, because of disobedience to the will of God.

In the era after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit does not withdraw. We can never lose the presence of the Holy Spirit, but we can quench, grieve and limit His work in our lives. When it comes to service, we are to operate in His fullness, but we can lose that fullness. In the case of Saul, God withdrawing His Spirit left a void which an evil spirit filled. The result was psychological disintegration in which he suffered delusions of being persecuted, severe depression, homicidal

tendencies, and later even played with the occult. When we see the spiritual decline in a man like Saul, we have to realize we too are vulnerable.

Despite being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, if we are disobedient and harden our hearts towards God, we will not be left spiritually and emotionally unscathed. There will be consequences. If the Holy Spirit is quenched or grieved and ceases to operate as He wants to, we will not function in a vacuum. Something else will always move in and lure us away from God. In our day, Saul would have been diagnosed with a psychological breakdown. We should, however, not assume that all emotional and mental breakdowns have a spiritual cause as there are hereditary, medical, circumstantial and environmental causes, but also the possibility of demonic attack, which without God we will be unequipped and unprepared for.

When we withdraw from God, He withdraws, and we lose the safest, most secure anchor for our souls. We are all capable of spiritual disintegration, but also of healthy spiritual growth. Which direction we take will depend on our response to the grace, goodness and will of God in our lives.

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, keep a tight reign on me. Be my strength and bring me increasingly closer to You. Thank You, God.

TO REFLECT UPON: How would I prevent spiritual decline in my life?