

THE LANGUAGE OR THE LIFE?

“But Samuel said to him, ‘I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!’ ” —1 SAMUEL 15:26

It can be quite easy to obtain the form and speak the language of faith, but lose the substance of our spiritual lives. We see this in the tragic story of King Saul who failed bitterly in his reign over Israel.

Before God had placed Saul on the throne, He had raised up judges to lead His people, but the Israelites no longer wanted to live under a theocracy. Like surrounding nations, they wanted a monarchy and demanded their own king. At their persistence, God gave them Saul as the first king of Israel. The Holy Spirit came upon him in power, and God had given him victory in his first battle over the Ammonites.

Saul’s primary role was as a military leader. In 1 Samuel 9:16, God said, “He will deliver my people from the hand of the Philistines.” Saul is then told, “Do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you” (10:7). For forty years, Saul reigned on the throne, but never received the victory. 1 Samuel 14:52 says, “All the days of Saul there was bitter war with the Philistines.” Why had God not given Saul the victory He had promised?

There were three battles against the Philistines in which the one constant in Saul was fear. The first was at Gibeah; the second in the Valley of Elah, and lastly, on Mount Gilboa. The Bible says of Saul and his men they were afraid, dismayed and terrified, quaking with fear and terror

filled Saul's heart. Earlier, Saul had become disobedient and arrogant to the point of erecting a monument at Carmel in his own honour. In his disobedience and arrogance, Saul had transferred his trust from God to himself, and God had rejected him as king. The result was "trembling with fear". In the battle of Gilboa, Saul lost his three sons and by his own sword, committed suicide. It's a tragic story that should have ended in triumph.

What God does in our lives is always conditional. Saul had experienced God-given victory and he knew the language of faith, but when confronted with a threat bigger and stronger than he was, the promise God had made was irrelevant to Him. It's when we're faced with a crisis that we discover whether our faith in God is merely language or life. If it's life, God comes into play, but if it's language, we're left bankrupt. When we step out in faith, our utter obedience and trust in God is the condition in which He fulfills His promises.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, help me to live true to my faith, and step out in obedience and trust in You. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: In times of crisis, does my faith in God override any fear I may have?