

A Tale of Two Kings

1Sa 2:1-10 - Similar to Charles Dickens' intro to his famous book "A Tale of Two Cities", Hannah's prayer provides for us a preview and an intro to the themes present in 1st & 2nd Samuel. In these two books, we are told the life-stories of Israel's first two kings, Saul & David.

1. Saul had all the potential to be a great king.

9:1-2 = Rich upbringing & physical presence

10:1-10 = God's blessing, confirmation, & guidance

10:17-24 = The approval of most of the people

11:1-2, 5-8, 11-15

- Saul was Israel's yearbook selection for "*Most likely to succeed*"

- Think of this from their perspective and the way Scripture lays it out

2. Saul's life falls apart because he refuses to change his character flaws.

2.1. Impulsive = 1Sa 13:5-14 – Saul's wrong sacrifice

Notice Saul's arrogance to take it on himself to sacrifice. (e.g. Uzziah doing the same becomes a leper for taking priestly duties upon himself 2Ch 26 – too big for your britches syndrome)

Notice Saul makes excuses for why he did it (I feared b/c the people were scared, and the Philistines were bearing down on me)

VERY interesting, v. 12 – word for "forced" is typically "Restrain, or control yourself", Saul does the opposite by "restraining" his conscience and acting anyway. Rom 14:23

2.2. Impulsive, rash & arrogant = Saul's vow. 1Sa 14:24, 27-33, 38-46, 52

Saul creates a far worse situation by taking a vow that no one required. One he didn't think through and resulted in further wrongdoing (eating w/ the blood). Pro 19:2/Pro 15:28

2.3. Impulsive, inattention to detail, arrogance, and fear of man = 1Sa 15:1-3, 7-9, 10-24, 25-31

Notice Saul still believes he did it correctly. V.13 & TRIPLES down on doing it the right way in the face of God's messenger (e.g., Mat7; God's present-day messengers = pastors). Saul makes excuses for what he did, doesn't take ownership. Usually when people are zealous about taking ownership, it's there BEFORE doing something wrong. Instead, getting Saul to own anything is like stapling jelly to the wall, moving target, all appearance-based.

Notice Saul 1) blames the people for preserving the sheep & fears what they'll say if he puts his foot down. 2) Saul doesn't want the shame of Samuel leaving, he asks him to "honor me before the people. V30-31. Look at how fearing what men think controls & makes you pathetic. Desperately clawing after Samuel to avoid the shame of discipline. When you don't take ownership and don't value obedience, you fear man, and can't live with the disapproval of the people.

3. Saul is disciplined for his rebellion but shipwrecks his soul by refusing to submit to God's discipline.

3.1. Notice the paranoia and attempts to stay in control that Saul makes. Despite Saul's love for David, as soon as Saul perceives a threat, he attempts to kill David twice & then to get him killed. David 18:5-16. 25-30. Saul attempts to kill David once more & even Jonathan with the spear in person and hunts him in at least 4 major instances documented for us.

3.2. In his pursuit of David, Saul DOES murder the priests due to them helping David. 1Sa 21:1-10, 22:6-19. 1Ti 5:19

3.3. Saul ends his sad life still expecting to find God's favor & throws a tantrum when God doesn't answer. 1Sa 28:4-6 w/ v7, 10-11, 14-15, 16-19, 1Chr 10:13

Concluding principles from Saul's life:

1. Response to discipline is a defining moment and test for people, possibly more than anything else (Heb 12, Jam 1, Pro 6; Pro 15:10 – hates reproof = death, Pro 15:31-33)

2. We shouldn't be surprised or worried that those who refuse to submit to God's discipline often end up being the worst enemies of God and His people. (e.g. Simon the Sorcerer, Cain, Judas; it can seem crazy that close friends/family leave the church and quickly turn around to lie, slander, and become enemies of Christ, but understand this follows the pattern in Scripture)

3. Moral decline doesn't happen overnight. (Take stock of your **current** trajectory, not your current state. You can't just look at data points, you have to plot the trajectory) Birds of a feather flock together. Don't think 'it happened to them, but it won't happen to me'. What is it about these people that you're attracted to?

4. What makes a man mighty in God's eyes is not his ability to physically conquer but rather his commitment to carefully obeying God. This should be SUPER encouraging to us. God doesn't need warriors or inherently special people to do great things – he just needs people to obey. You don't have to be a king capable of routing nations, leading armies, slaying giants, for God to **delight** in what you're doing, all you have to do is **obey**.

5. Having the deck stacked in your favor is an indicator of future POTENTIAL, not future SUCCESS. Your future success is contingent on being faithful now and in the future, not the amount of potential you currently have.