

## **1 Samuel 13:1-15 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup> Saul was [thirty] years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel [forty-] two years.

<sup>2</sup> Saul chose three thousand men from Israel; two thousand were with him at Micmash and in the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin. The rest of the men he sent back to their homes. <sup>3</sup> Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost at Geba, and the Philistines heard about it. Then Saul had the trumpet blown throughout the land and said, "Let the Hebrews hear!" <sup>4</sup> So all Israel heard the news: "Saul has attacked the Philistine outpost, and now Israel has become a stench to the Philistines." And the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal. <sup>5</sup> The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, with three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Micmash, east of Beth Aven. <sup>6</sup> When the men of Israel saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. <sup>7</sup> Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear. <sup>8</sup> He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter. <sup>9</sup> So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." And Saul offered up the burnt offering. <sup>10</sup> Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. <sup>11</sup> "What have you done?" asked Samuel. Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash,

<sup>12</sup> I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering." <sup>13</sup> "You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. <sup>14</sup> But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command."

<sup>15</sup> Then Samuel left Gilgal and went up to Gibeah in Benjamin, and Saul counted the men who were with him. They numbered about six hundred.

1. What are some of the pressures of being a Christian and what alleviates that pressure?
2. Why is the overall impression of living the Christian life negative? How will it be problematic for our walk with Christ if we buy into the narrative that “Cross-bearing” is negative?
3. We will not always be successful at our trials and at times we will fail. What should our response to failing to honor God be and what has God promised us in our failure?
4. Why is it so hard to have faith in the Word of God over the circumstances we may be facing?
  - A. When the sermon says “God defies logic,” what does that mean to you and how can this help us in honoring God with our walk?
5. Part of our faith growth is when God brings us to the point where all of our education won't help, all of our earthly resources won't help, all of our physical might won't help and we have to make a decision, whether I am going to trust in God or not.
  - A. Why do you think this is a part of our faith growth
  - B. Do you have a testimony to share where you have come to the end of everything and trusted God?
6. This account is both a lesson and a warning. What is here for us to learn from Saul's mistake?
7. After going through this lesson, how has it changed the way you view and respond to the pressures of life?
8. Share your main takeaway from the sermon and the lesson?

## The Unlawful Act That Made Saul Unfit to Be King: Being Disqualified from Serving the LORD, 13:1-23

(13:1-23) **Introduction— Disqualified, Tragedy of— Rejection, Tragedy of— Unfit, Tragedy of— Ineligible, Tragedy of:** "Disqualified!" Merely hearing or seeing the word can cut the heart of a person. Pain, even severe pain, can shoot through the heart of a person when he hears that he has been *disqualified* or *barred* or *put out*. Likewise, all kinds of emotions grip us when we find out we have been disqualified:

- ⇒ disqualified from a promotion
- ⇒ disqualified from a job
- ⇒ disqualified from a sports' team
- ⇒ disqualified from an organization
- ⇒ disqualified from gaining credit
- ⇒ disqualified from an athletic event
- ⇒ disqualified from a competition
- ⇒ disqualified, counted unacceptable, by some person

Saul heard the heartrending word *disqualified*, a word that must have cut him to the core. This chapter begins the decline of Saul. Saul was disqualified from being king of Israel, disqualified from serving the LORD and His people. His decline and disqualification are highlighted in chapters 13 through 15, but his decline continues throughout the story of David's rise to power (16:1-31:13). This present chapter is: *The Unlawful Act That Made Saul Unfit to Be King: Being Disqualified from Serving the LORD, 13:1-23*.

1. The full-scale war with the Philistines: the believer's fear and panic in facing trials (v.1-7).
2. The unlawful act that made Saul unfit to be king: being disqualified from serving the LORD (v.8-14).
3. The critical situation confronted by Saul: a desperate need for God's help (v.15-23).

**1. (13:1-7) Fear, Caused by— Panic, Caused by— Saul, Wars of— Wars, of Israel— Philistines, Wars Against Israel:** there was the full-scale war with the Philistines. This is a clear picture of the believer's fear and sometimes panic in facing the trials and problems of life.

1. Saul mobilized a standing army of 3,000 soldiers in the second year of his reign as king (1 Samuel 13:1-2). He stationed 2,000 soldiers with him at Micmash and in the hill country of Bethel. The remaining 1,000 soldiers were placed under the command of his son Jonathan at Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin. The rest of the troops were sent home.

The city of Micmash was about seven miles north of Jerusalem and about five miles northeast of Gibeah, which was the city chosen by Saul to be his capital. This was a strategic positioning of Saul's troops, most likely to eliminate the Philistine outpost at Geba, which was less than three miles from Saul's capital. Jonathan's troops were guarding a strategic pass that led to Geba, apparently to block any attempt to escape by the Philistines.

2. At some point the decision was made for Jonathan to attack and take over the Philistine outpost at Geba (1 Samuel 13:3). Soon after his attack, the news spread quickly among the Philistines that Israel had revolted.

3. Sensing that the Philistines were going to launch a counterattack, Saul sent messengers throughout all Israel warning the people that the Philistines had become inflamed and now hated the Israelites more than ever. Israel had become an abomination to, a stench in the very nostrils of the Philistines. Strong hostility flooded the hearts of the Philistines against the Israelites.

4. For that reason, the Philistines mobilized a massive army to march against Israel (1 Samuel 13:5). Note the forces mobilized: 30,000 chariots (some manuscripts of the Septuagint say 3,000); 6,000 horsemen; and an innumerable legion of soldiers. The army marched up and took over the military site that Saul had originally occupied at Micmash.

5. Fear and panic struck the Israelite troops when they saw the overwhelming army that opposed them. It was clearly evident that their situation was critical, that the bloody, savage maiming and slaughter that take

place in war were about to happen. The heaviest casualties would undoubtedly be suffered by the Israelites, for they were far outnumbered. And because of the deep-seated hostility of the Philistines, they likely would leave no survivors. Terror swept through the Israelite camp, and a mass defection and desertion set in. Thousands of troops fled and hid in caves, thickets, pits, cisterns, and among the rocks (1 Samuel 13:6). Some even fled across the Jordan River into East Jordan, to the land of Gad and Gilead (1 Samuel 13:7). All the troops were gripped with a paralyzing fear.

**Thought 1.** In facing the Philistines, the Israelites confronted an overwhelming enemy. And so it is with us. As we walk throughout life, we often face enormous trials and problems, trials and problems that seem overwhelming, such as...

- disease
- accidents
- financial troubles
- difficulties at school,  
work, home, or in  
society
- divorce
- the death of a loved one
- emotional disturbance
- purposelessness
- depression
- dissatisfaction

Some hardship or temptation confronts each of us every day of our lives. And far too often, we begin to question our ability to handle the difficulty. Fear—and sometimes panic—strikes our hearts, and we begin to wonder what we will do next.

It is at this point that we must learn to turn to the Lord. For He promises to uphold us, to strengthen us, to help us through any trial or any problem. This is the strong declaration of God's Holy Word:

**"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:30-31).**

**"Only let your conversation [behavior, conduct] be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God" (Philippians 1:27-28).**

**2. (13:8-14) Disqualification, Caused by— Disobedience, Results of— Saul, Disqualification of— Kings, Saul, Disqualification of— Ruler, Disqualification of:** there was the unlawful act that made Saul unfit to be king. This is the clear picture of being disqualified from serving the LORD. Saul committed a serious offense in what he now did, an offense that was to change his life forever, an offense that was to doom his kingdom. Note his unlawful act that disqualified him from being king:

1. For some reason, Samuel had delayed his arrival to the battlefield, and Saul became impatient—very impatient (1 Samuel 13:8). Apparently, Samuel had instructed Saul to always wait at least seven days, if possible, before engaging in any military battle. Seven days would give Samuel time to reach the battlefield to lead the troops in worship and sacrifice, and to give spiritual, military guidance to Saul (10:8). Whatever the case, in this particular instance Samuel had definitely instructed Saul to wait seven days for his arrival. However, some of Saul's few remaining troops began to scatter.

2. In desperation, Saul committed a terrible, unlawful act (1 Samuel 13:9). Not waiting for Samuel, he assumed the role of a priest and led the men in worship, offering up the burnt offering. But note that he never had time to offer up the fellowship sacrifices (1 Samuel 13:9).

3. Just as Saul had finished offering up the burnt sacrifice, Samuel arrived (1 Samuel 13:10). Seeing him off in the distance, Saul went out to greet Samuel. Immediately Samuel questioned Saul, asking what he had done. In response, Saul gave four excuses for his unlawful act of disobedience and blamed the troops, Samuel, and the Philistines. His excuses were:

- ⇒ the fleeing of the troops
- ⇒ the delay of Samuel
- ⇒ the massive mobilization of the Philistines
- ⇒ the desperate need to seek the LORD's favor before the attack of the Philistines was launched against him (1 Samuel 13:12)

Saul confessed his fear of facing the Philistines without having sought the LORD's favor. Therefore he felt compelled to offer the burnt offering since Samuel had not yet arrived.

4. Hearing this, Samuel immediately pronounced God's judgment upon Saul (1 Samuel 13:13). He declared that Saul had acted foolishly, that he had tragically disobeyed the LORD's command. He had disobeyed by not waiting the seven days (10:8) and by assuming the place of a priest in worship and offering the burnt sacrifices.

No crisis could ever justify such an offense against God, such terrible disobedience. Saul had disobeyed God; consequently, he had to face the judgment of God. He had to pay the penalty for his disobedience. Samuel pronounced the judgment: Saul was to lose the permanent establishment of his kingdom, the rule of his dynasty in the future. His dynasty or kingdom would not last (1 Samuel 13:13).

5. Saul was to be bypassed and another kingdom or dynasty established. The LORD would thereafter choose another man—"a man after His own heart"—to be the leader of His people (1 Samuel 13:14; see 1 Samuel 13:5). The future ruler of God's people would be a person totally committed to the LORD.

**Thought 1.** The lesson for us is simple, yet very straightforward: disobedience disqualifies us from serving the LORD. If we disobey the LORD, we make ourselves unclean instruments for the LORD. The LORD cannot use...

- a disobedient person to proclaim obedience
- a sinful person to proclaim holiness
- a wicked person to proclaim righteousness
- an immoral person to proclaim morality
- an unjust person to proclaim justice
- a foul-mouthed person to proclaim spiritual truths
- an irresponsible person to proclaim responsibility
- a thief to proclaim honesty
- a liar to proclaim truth

**"Not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).**

**"Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:21-23).**

**3. (13:15-23) Defeat, Danger of— Enemy, Danger of— Believer, Danger Facing— Israel, Weapons of:** there was the critical situation confronted by Saul. Since he had just become disqualified from serving the LORD, he faced the possibility of being utterly defeated by the Philistines.

1. Because of his terrible disobedience, Saul had been alienated from God, and he was now to be alienated from God's prophet (1 Samuel 13:15). Samuel turned and walked away from Saul, leaving Saul to face the enemy by himself. Apparently Samuel neither prayed with nor gave any direction to Saul. Saul had made the tragic decision of doing his own thing, disobeying God, and taking matters into his own hands. As a result, God's prophet was to leave the scene, allowing Saul to exercise his free will and do just what he had wanted.

Neither the LORD nor His prophet Samuel could have anything to do with such self-centered behavior and disobedience.

2. Being left all alone, Saul counted his men and discovered that there were only 600 troops left to fight the overwhelming Philistine army (1 Samuel 13:15-16). At this time, Saul and Jonathan were camped in Gibeah, while the Philistines were camped at Micmash.

3. Three major raiding parties were sent out by the Philistines to harass and plunder and to demoralize the population of Israel (1 Samuel 13:17). By using this strategy, the Philistines were obviously seeking to achieve an easy victory, perhaps even a surrender by the Israelites. If they could demoralize the population, Saul might be forced to surrender, and the Philistines would gain a victory without the loss of any troops.

4. Note that the Israelites had no weapons developed from metal nor any other of the latest technologies (1 Samuel 13:19-20). They had only weapons made of wood and stone such as knives, slings, javelins, clubs, bows, and arrows.

In their oppression and occupation of Israel, the Philistines had forbidden the Israelites to have blacksmiths. This made the Israelites totally dependent upon the Philistines for all their metal tools (1 Samuel 13:19-20). If an Israelite needed to purchase or repair some agricultural tool, he was forced to go to the Philistines.

5. Moreover, the Israelites had no money to manufacture or to purchase weapons, for the Philistines charged outrageous prices for servicing agricultural tools (1 Samuel 13:21). Economically, the Israelites were a poor people with little money to spend on anything, much less weapons.

6. In fact, on the day of the battle there were only two swords among the entire army, the swords carried by Saul and Jonathan themselves (1 Samuel 13:22). The Philistine oppression had forced a harsh, poverty-stricken life upon the Israelites.

7. At some point, the Philistines sent a detachment of soldiers to block the pass at Micmash (1 Samuel 13:23). The pass was the major road between the two armies. By blocking the pass, the Philistines prevented a surprise attack and assured a delaying action in the event of an attack, a delay that would allow them time to mobilize their forces to withstand any attack by the Israelites.

**Thought 1.** Saul had disobeyed and separated himself from the LORD. Tragically, he sinned when he most desperately needed the LORD. If he ever needed divine guidance, it was now. He and his troops faced a terrifying, critical situation.

There is a strong lesson for us in Saul's experience. When we are facing terrible, terrifying situations, God will help us. If we will confess and repent of our sins, turn away from sin and turn to God—God will help us. No matter what the hardship or misfortune is, if our hearts are cleansed from sin, God will deliver us. He will deliver us through...

- sickness
- disease
- accident
- injury
- financial difficulties
- bankruptcy
- broken relationships
- divorce
- loneliness
- depression
- distress
- emptiness
- purposelessness
- guilt
- temptation

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God will deliver us through any hardship or misfortune if we genuinely follow after Him, seeking Him with a repentant, clean heart. This is the wonderful declaration of God's Holy Word:

**"And the LORD shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen" (2 Timothy 4:18).**

**"Let your conversation [behavior, conduct] *be* without covetousness; and *be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The LORD *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5-6).**

Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – 1 Samuel.