

• *Saul's disobedience – he offered the sacrifice*

**2. The form of his disobedience**

• *Pride – overstepping the limit of what was right for the king*

• *When civic leaders push themselves into religious officialdom, they corrupt the faith of the nation*

• *God's timing is always for his own glory, but man's timing is generally planned to make him feel self-assured*

**3. Saul's sin had consequences**

We are still observing (1) **the occasion of Saul's disobedience**<sup>□1</sup>. The situation was very threatening. Saul's army was deserting him<sup>□2</sup>; the Philistines were arriving. So Saul took a disastrous step which damaged his life. He offered the sacrifice to inaugurate the battle-campaign<sup>□3</sup>.

We consider next (2) **the form of his disobedience**. His sin consisted of pride of office. He felt he was the king and could do anything now. When we feel our own power and authority, we are in danger of stepping out of our calling, over-stepping the limits of what is right for us.

One particular aspect of the matter is that Saul was intruding into the rights of a spiritual leader. Samuel as a priest and a prophet had the prerogative of offering the sacrifice. He was of the tribe of Levi. Saul was a king, of the tribe of Benjamin. It was a civic ruler pushing himself into the rights of 'the church' (to use New Testament language) or (to be more exact) into the rights of the spiritual side of the leadership of Israel. Saul had no right to do this. To apply the lesson in New Testament language - it was the state interfering with the church. Officials of the state have no power in the church's internal affairs. Saul as the king had no right to steal the privileges of the priesthood. The king could not be a priest. The priests of the tribe of Levi were never able to become kings. The kings were not allowed into the 'holy of holies' of the tabernacle or temple. Here is the king saying to the prophet and priest, 'you would not come so I did it'. He pushes himself into an area where he has no authority. When civic leaders push themselves into religious officialdom, they corrupt the faith of the nation. They are usually concerned for a religion that has no repentance in it. Saul has no great regard for God. He simply feels that the ritual must be finished as speedily as possible so as to get on with the battle! State leaders who push themselves into direct spiritual work generally (there are exceptions), want 'religion' on their side - and they want nothing more. I recall a country which called upon the churches to support its foreign policy by holding a day of prayer for its success! The state assumed its policy was right and wanted 'religious' people to support it.

God feels very strongly about interference with his worship. Saul shows a lot of arrogant high-handedness towards God's spiritual leader. He more or less blames him for not arriving on time. He demands that God should come at Saul's convenience. Saul needed him! The truth of the matter is that God's timing is always for his own glory, but man's timing is generally planned to make him feel self-assured. Saul was trying to make himself feel secure. He wanted everything right so that he would feel safe. God's timing makes us feel insecure in ourselves and we have to look to God for our security. Saul feels no guilt at what he had done and greets Samuel with great confidence and great ignorance<sup>□1</sup>.

We come then to consider (3) **the consequences of Saul's sin**. Samuel rebukes him<sup>□1</sup> and listens for his answer. If Saul had immediately confessed his folly things might have been different. If Saul had come out into the open with God, all would have been well.

□1 see Part 13

□2 18:8

□3 13:9

□1 13:10

□1 13:11

• If Saul had immediately confessed his folly things might have been different

• From this point on the story is one of steady decline

• Decline is not inevitable.

• After sin there is a way back – confession and repentance

• Saul could have gone back to God

• Let God cleanse you by the blood of Jesus

If he had said 'Samuel, I realise I did something foolish. I should not have done what I just did', maybe things would have been forgiven. But Saul does not say anything like that. He is confident, self-righteous, defensive<sup>□2</sup>, pretending he had no choice<sup>□3</sup>. Samuel's analysis is different. Saul had been foolish and disobedient<sup>□4</sup>, so he has forfeited part of the plan of God for his life. God's plan was that he should be the founder of a dynasty. 'The LORD would have established your kingdom for ever'<sup>□4</sup> but now the dynasty is to be given to someone else<sup>□5</sup>.

Saul's disobedience paved the way for further disobedience. Saul's story from this point on is the story of steady decline. He goes from bad to worse. Yet he did not lose everything at precisely this point. He still could have sought God's forgiveness and restoration. But disobedience on one occasion makes it easier for there to be disobedience on another occasion. The next time it is easier to disobey.

It did not have to happen that way. Have you panicked in a crisis? Did you do something you should not have done? It does not have to be the end of everything for you. We have all done something like that. It does not have to be a downward decline. You can just come back. You can come and confess it and clear the sin out of your life. God does not write us off when we sin, but you do need to take steps to seek cleansing and restoration.

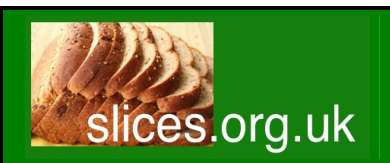
Peter asked Jesus how many times one should forgive an offender<sup>□1</sup>. Should it be seven times? 'Seven times?' said Jesus. 'No, seventy times seven - and even more.' But if God requires that of us then we can know that he is like that himself. Saul could have got back to God.

There's a way back to God  
From the dark paths of sin.  
There's a door that is open  
And you may go in.  
At Calvary's cross is where you begin  
When you come as a sinner to Jesus!

You will never outgrow that! Saul could have come back to cleansing and restoration. His tragedy was that he did not. And since he would not rise up he sank down. Let God cleanse you by the blood of Jesus. He will redeem the situation, forgive the mistakes and pick up with you once again.

□2 13:11b  
□3 13:12  
□4 13:13  
□5 13:14-15a

□1 Matthew 18:21



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