

LESSON TEXT: 1 Samuel 1:1--2:36

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Samuel was born about 1100 B.C. The two books named after him cover about 130 years of the history of God's covenant people in the Old Testament, from Samuel's birth to the beginning of Solomon's reign. God prepared Samuel to lead his people out of the deeply depressing moral, social and civil chaos of the era of the Judges.

Samuel served God as priest, judge and prophet to revitalize and redirect the people who had sworn to a covenant with God to be his Messianic vessel to the world. Samuel was a teacher (1 Sam. 12:23). He believed that teaching was the means by which people could be directed to the service of God. He had a "school of the prophets" at Naioth (*Naioth* means, "student's lodgings," see 1 Sam. 10:5; 19:18-20). Our first lesson shows the parental preparation necessary for a leader like Samuel contrasted with the parental failure of Eli that ruins leadership potential.

When the archaeologist Sir Austen H. Layard was digging (A.D. 1852-54) in the ruins of ancient Nineveh he discovered king Assurbanipal's library in the palace of Sennacherib. Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) was king of Assyria (modern Iraq). Originally it contained 100,000 volumes. It may be the most epochal archaeological discovery ever made. This library (of clay tablets) contained the laws of ancient Nineveh. One of the laws read in effect that anyone guilty of neglect would be held responsible for the result of his neglect. This held true for the responsibility of parents for their children, so long as they were in their minority.

According to the magazine *Medicine and Missions*, parents are cited as the foremost influence on their children becoming missionaries. Missionary speakers ranked second; personal contact with medical missionaries, third; God's call to help others and books on missions tied for fourth place. Preacher was sixth and college teacher seventh.

1 per cent of the child/s time is spent under the influence of the Sunday School; 7 per cent under the influence of the public school; 92 per cent under the influence of the home.

QUESTIONS:

1. There are at least 7 attributes of godliness to be found in Hannah---can you name them?
2. Why did Hannah take her barrenness so seriously? 1:1-11
3. What prompted Eli to think Hannah was a drunken woman appearing in the tabernacle of God? 1:12-15
4. How could such an insignificant thing as requesting raw meat instead of boiled meat make Hopni and Phineas guilty of contemptuousness toward the Lord? 2:12-17
5. What effect did their conduct have on the people? 2:22-25
6. Who did God hold responsible for the wickedness of Hopni and Phineas? (See 1 Sam. 3:13; Ezek. 18:1-32).
7. How did God solve the problem of their corruption? 2:27-36. Does God still exercise his sovereignty over rulers and those in places of authority to set them up and depose them? (See Dan. 2:21; Jer. 27:5ff).

At least two great presidents paid tribute to their mothers. John Quincy Adams said,
"All that I am, my mother made me."
Abraham Lincoln said,
"No man is poor who had a godly mother."

"THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE
RULES THE WORLD."
William Ross Wallace, 1866

LESSON TEXT: 1 Samuel 3:1---4:22

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

In case you haven't noticed, these first chapters of 1 Samuel draw a dark and gloomy picture for the redemptive program of God upon earth. Israel, God's redemptive people, was being led into sin by weak and corrupt leadership (Eli and his sons). Israel lacked the courage and the moral will to conquer her enemies. Chaos and despair gripped the nation. In such circumstances one would assume the only solution would be that God should deliver his people through some cosmic, spectacular, cataclysmic miracle. But we learn from these two chapters that: **(a)** God chooses to carry out his redemptive work through his **word** spoken and lived by men (Samuel); **(b)** God's glory is not really resident in things and symbols (ark of the covenant), but in faithful people (Samuel); **(c)** no matter how despairing the circumstances (Phineas's wife), God's redemptive program will survive, if even through one man (Samuel).

When Igor Sikorsky was a lad of 12, his parents told him that competent authorities had already proved human flight impossible. Yet Sikorsky built the first helicopter. And in his American plant he posted this sign: "According to recognized aero-technical tests, the bumblebee cannot fly because of the shape and weight of his body in relation to the total wing area. The bumblebee doesn't know this, so he goes ahead and flies anyway."

The great preacher, John Henry Jowett once told of a little graveyard beside a church in a small village where the memory of a devoted soul, who had spent herself freely and untiringly in the service of that small community, is enshrined in a brief and touching epitaph, "She has done what she couldn't."

God has usually had to work his greatest redemptive victories through one individual totally dedicated to the task---e.g., Noah, Joseph, Moses, Jeremiah, and Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

QUESTIONS:

1. How was the word of the Lord precious (i.e., rare, RSV) in those days? 3:1. Is it rare today? Are we doing anything about making it not rare?
2. Why did God stand forth to call Samuel? 3:10. How does God call for messengers of his word today?
3. Could we resign ourselves to God's will as Eli did? 3:18. Why couldn't Eli do God's will toward his own sons? Is it easier to do God's will in the big things than in the small things?
4. Why didn't the strategy of the elders in using the ark of the covenant work? 4:3-11. Name some ways Christians may be tempted to substitute things or symbols for a personal relationship with the Lord.
5. Was it right for Eli to mourn more over the loss of the ark than over the loss of his two sons? 4:18. Which is more important to us, the work of God or family?
6. Do you ever get discouraged, or perhaps despairing, like the wife of Phineas and feel like the presence of God is gone? 4:22. Was there any hope that God was still working and keeping his word? Where? Is there any hope today? Where? Why don't people see it?

Someone has said that if you could convince a man there was no hope, he would curse the day he was born. Hope is an indispensable quality of life. Years ago the S-4 submarine was rammed by another ship and quickly sank. The entire crew was trapped in its prison house of death. Ships rushed to the scene of disaster off the coast of Massachusetts. We don't know what took place down in the sunken submarine, but we can be sure that the men clung bravely to life as the oxygen slowly gave out. A diver placed his helmeted ear to the side of the vessel and listened. Someone was tapping out a question in Morse Code. The question came slowly: "Is.....there.....any.....hope?" This seems to be the cry of humanity: "Is there any hope?" Hope, indeed, is the basis of all human existence in Christ.

LESSON TEXT: 1 Samuel 5:1--6:21

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

In these two chapters, two lessons stand out clearly: (a) God does not approve of any religion except the one he reveals to men in the Bible, yet he honors with his assistance all attempts of even the most pagan to find the truth; (b) God does not tolerate the false familiarity with holy things which breeds contempt and irreverence.

God tried to communicate these two truths to the people of the Old Testament in very direct, physical ways. Remember the adage of Santayana, "Those who will not learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

It is of great significance to us that there are many parallels to these two lessons in the New Covenant scriptures. God is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. Let us be sure we know these two truths, believe them, and so practice them that the glory of God will go out to all the world..

In 1808, just a year before the death of Franz Joseph Haydn, a grand performance of his outstanding oratorio *The Creation* took place in Vienna, Austria. The composer himself was there for the occasion. Old and feeble, he was brought into the great hall in a wheelchair. His presence caused an electrifying enthusiasm in the audience. As the orchestra and chorus burst forth with full power into the passage, "And there was light," a crescendo of applause broke out. Moved by this response, the elderly musician struggled to his feet. Summoning all his strength, he raised his trembling arms upward, crying, "No, No! Not from me, but from thence--from Heaven above comes all!" Although he fell back exhausted in his chair and had to be carried from the hall, the old master had made his point in a dramatic and unforgettable manner.

At the end of the Civil War, Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, caused to be displayed from the dome of the Capitol a transparency on which were inscribed these words from Psalm 118:23-- "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes."

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the Philistines categorize the ark of the covenant alongside their god Dagon? 5:1-5. What do you think motivates unbelievers to try to reduce Biblical religion to pantheism or other pagan religions? Can you suggest modern forms of this? (Cf. Rom. 1:18-32; John 3:18-21, etc.).
2. Chapter 5 teaches that God revealed his judgment upon disobedience through natural means 5:6-12. Does God still do this? (Cf. Rom. 1:18-32; Luke 13:1-9; Rev. 9:20-21; 1 Cor. 11:29-32).
3. How did the diviners of the Philistines know about guilt offerings? 6:1-4. Does this confirm the idea that there is a law of conscience even in pagan people? (Cf. Rom. 2:13-16).
4. How did the Philistines know about the Egyptians (350 years before them)? 6:6 should pagan nations learn from history anything about Who is Sovereign in the universe?
5. How did the Philistines arrive at the conclusion they should hook up previously unyoked cows to a cart of new wood and put the ark of the covenant on the cart and send it away? 6:7-18. Why did these cows take the ark directly to Beth-shemesh? What does all this say about God's relationship to pagan attempts at doing the truth?
6. Why did the Lord slay 50,070 Israelites when some of them looked into the ark of the covenant? 6:19-21. What is so wrong with taking a peek into a box?

Michael Faraday, who died in 1867, was one of the most brilliant scientists in the history of science. He was a pioneer in electrical discoveries. Faraday received practically no early formal education. But in the book-bindery where he found work, he also found a few volumes of science. He read and studied these, and then embarked on the experiments that were to influence his religious convictions, so that we are not surprised at these words he uttered with his dying breath: "I bow before Him who is the Lord of all."

LESSON TEXT: 1 Samuel 7:1---8:22
Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Human beings are weak, insecure and sinners. God is all powerful and all merciful. How clearly these two chapters testify to that! The whole world desperately needs this perspective. However, most of the world disbelieves the factual, honest, supernatural revelation of God. The unbelieving world's perspective is diametrically opposed to the Bible's viewpoint. Most of the world believes an innate human goodness that is capable of eventually saving itself (given a few billion years of evolution). Most of the world conceives of a God (or gods) who is unmerciful and vacillating.

This section of the Biblical history is one of thousands of histories which testify that because humans choose sin, they are weak, dull, capricious and self-destructive. It took Israel 20 years to decide to repent. When Samuel interceded with God and brought deliverance from their heathen enemies, Israel decided they wanted a king so they could "be like the nations." In spite of inevitable burdens a king would bring, the people insisted on being "**like the nations**" (i.e., Gentiles).

God, in his tender mercy, forgave and forgave again. Because of the hardness of human hearts, God permits people to have their way. But even in this, his mercy is at work, chastening, guiding, motivating people back to his Lordship through suffering the inexorable penalties of their own errors (cf. Rom. 1:18-32).

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall flourish out of the earth; and righteousness hath looked down from heaven." Psa. 85:10

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the people of Israel spend twenty years "lamenting" before they decided to repent? 7:1-2
2. Four phases of repentance were taken by the people of Israel in 7:4-6. Can you name them? Are we applying these in our modern mentality?
3. Name the attributes of godly leadership you find in the man Samuel in the text 7:9-17.
4. What excuses did the people of Israel give for demanding a king like the nations? Why did they **really** want a king? 8:1-9 and 8:19-20
5. Why would the king be allowed to take so much from his subjects--- 8:10-18?
6. Why did the Lord give in to the demands of the people? 8:19-22. There may be more than one reason--perhaps a long range reason!

There are always three goals **believers** have in mind when they rationalize, "We want to be like the **unbelievers**" (i.e., "Give us a king like the nations.")

Either they seek gratification of bodily instincts only,
Or they are addicted to excitement and entertainment,
Or they crave having their human egos stroked,
Or, perhaps, all three!

The apostle John called it, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life." 1 John 2:16.

The apostle Paul said that it was through these temptations that the "serpent" deceived Eve by his cunning...and led her thoughts astray! (2 Corinthians 11:3

May God have mercy and deliver us from the evil one!

---PTB

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The covenant people of God demanded a “king like the nations.” God gave them Saul, son of Kish. Evaluated by the standards of an unbelieving world, Saul was excellent king material. He had all the advantages and attributes the world seeks--but the world does not look upon the heart.

There was something in the heart of Saul that Saul could not overcome—it was pride and conceit. Saul could not handle power. A wise man once said, “Absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Saul, son of Kish, is a case in point. Even though the Spirit of God endowed him with certain *charisma*, these did not protect him from himself! God does not force righteousness on anyone. Godly character is developed only as a person surrenders his will to the revealed will of God in the Scriptures.

Power does not *have* to corrupt. Jesus, partaker of the same fleshly nature we have, tempted in all points like we are tempted, possessed of absolute power, was **absolutely** not corrupted! He is the true King; he is the perfect King. God grant us the wisdom to say, and mean, “Give us a King like Jesus.”

In a certain pond there were two ducks and a frog. They were the best of friends and played together all day long. As the hot summer days came, the pond began to dry up and soon there was such a small amount of water they all realized they would have to move. The ducks, of course, could easily fly to another place, but what about their friend, the frog? Finally it was decided that they would put a stick in the bill of each duck, and then the frog would hang onto the stick with his mouth and they would fly him to another pond. And so they did. As they were flying high in the sky, a farmer out in his field looked up and saw them and said, “Well, isn’t that a clever idea! I wonder who thought of it?” The frog opened his mouth and croaked, “Idiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii----“

QUESTIONS:

1. There are about 8 advantages Saul, son of Kish, had which would appeal to the people as king material--can you name them? 9:1,2,5,7,20,21; 10:22,27. Which are **not** necessary for leadership in God’s kingdom?
2. Why were Saul and his servant concerned that they had no present to give to the man of God? 9:7-8. Where men of God moochers? Should men of God be supported today by gifts? (see Deut. 25:4; 1 Cor. 9:9; Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:18).
3. Why give Saul the leg of the cooked meat? 9:23
4. Were the prophets whom Saul met using musical instruments in the worship of God? 10:5 are there other Biblical examples indicating the use of musical instruments in worship?
5. What is God promising to Saul in saying he will be changed into another man? or, into another heart? 10:6,9. Does his subsequent behavior show it was a miraculous, irresistible conversion?
6. Saul’s charismatic gifts did not help him make the right moral choices. Are there parallels to this in the New Testament--in Christendom today?
7. Why do you think Saul’s popularity was not unanimous? 10:27. Why did Saul hold his peace toward those who despised him?

Leadership is not Extremism

Self-reliant but not Self-sufficient; Energetic but not Self-seeking
Steadfast but not Stubborn; Tactful but not Timid
Serious but not Sullen; Loyal but not Sectarian
Unmovable but not Stationary; Gentle but not Hypersensitive
Tenderhearted but not Touchy; Conscientious but not a Perfectionist
Disciplined but not Demanding; Generous but not Gullible
Meek but not Weak; Humorous but not Hilarious
Friendly but not Familiar; Holy but not Holier-than-thou
Discerning but not Critical; Progressive but not Pretentious

“Nothing is as hard to do gracefully as getting down off your high horse.”

LESSON TEXT: 1 Samuel 11:1---12:25

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

After the ceremonies the newly anointed King Saul returned to his home in Gibeah waiting for an opportunity to do something king-like. That opportunity soon arrived. He defended Israel in a mighty way against the Ammonites who would have cruelly and spitefully disgraced God's people by deliberately mutilating them all. Saul became very popular and conducted himself magnanimously on this first mission. Very soon, however, he let his popularity and position seduce him into disobeying God (1 Sam. 13:8ff).

Samuel, reaffirmed the fact that Saul was the king they demanded, and announced it was time for him (Samuel) to step down as the official leader of Israel. Samuel continued to serve God and the people as intercessor, instructor and spokesman for God. He judged Israel all the days of his life. Samuel claimed the right of continued moral leadership by the testimony of his godly life. Samuel's leadership never really ceased because true leadership has its power from moral integrity and not from manipulation. This the Israelites themselves confirmed. The essence of godly leadership is godly character. Character is not an innate human virtue---it is learned and developed through endurance and endurance is produced by suffering (Rom. 5:3-4). Character is not developed or proven quickly. Samuel was a real leader--Saul was not. Saul had *charisma*--Samuel had character!

John Ruskin (1819-1900), was wealthy poet, author, professor at Oxford University, and social reformer. He donated his family fortune to doing good works for the poor. Ruskin once wrote, "You will find it less easy to uproot faults than to choke them by gaining virtues. Do not think of your faults; still less of others' faults. In every person who comes near you look for what is good and strong; honor that; rejoice in it; as you can, try to imitate it, and your faults will drop off, like deadleaves, when their time comes."

James Freeman Clarke, Boston preacher, said, "*It may make a difference to all eternity whether we do right or wrong today.*"

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the Ammonite king have such a passion to disgrace all Israel? 11:2. Is God concerned how pagan kings behave themselves toward other nations? (See Obadiah 10-12; Amos 2:1-3; Isa. 10:5-19).
2. Why did the people of Jabesh-gilead not call upon the newly anointed king Saul to come to their rescue? 11:3
3. Does the Spirit of God incite people to anger? 11:6. Is anger ever called for in Christians? How often? For what purpose (see Mark 3:5; Eph. 4:26; Heb. 1:9).
4. Why did Samuel take it upon himself to review his own career? 12:1-5. Isn't tooting one's own horn forbidden for godly people?
5. Samuel (10:17-19; 12:6-11; 12:24), later prophets, and even NT writers, rehearse the history of God's people over and over. In fact, the Bible is mainly history. How can God's people ever go on to greater things if they quit learning about the past?
6. Why did Samuel say it would be a sin for him to stop praying for Israel? 12:23. Would there ever be circumstances where the Lord would not hear Samuel's prayer for Israel? (See Jer. 15:1; 11:14; 14:11; 16:5; Ezek. 14:20).
7. Right along with praying for people, what else did Samuel feel compelled to do? 12:23. Would it have been equally as sinful for him to neglect this as well as to neglect prayer?

After the San Francisco earthquake of 1989, geologists said there may be hidden underground faults not previously known and that these added to the damage from the quake. This headline was most interesting, "California Quake Damage Suggests Hidden Faults." If we think of *fault* not as a dislocation in the heart of the earth but in its customary sense, we must ask, Are we being damaged by hidden faults? Everyone of course, has hidden faults. They are hidden from our friends. They are hidden from our family. Perhaps they should remain so hidden, but we should never have faults that we have hidden from ourselves!
----1000 Windows, by Robert C.. Shannon

LESSON TEXT: 1 Samuel 13:1---14:52
Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The sound of Samuel's last exhortation that both king and people must follow the Lord had hardly died in the air before Saul disobeyed the Lord. And Saul (though his conscience told him he had disobeyed, i.e., "I *forced* myself"), rationalized that he acted correctly because he was seeking a good end. Besides, he probably also thought, "I am the king, I can over-rule anyone." How often the philosophy that "the end justifies the means" is practiced by people in both high and low places today--and *shamefully*, in some Christian endeavors.

But Saul's action did not really bring the end he thought it would! He still had only 600 men out of the original 4000! What really rallied the Israelites to fight God's enemies was the great faith and courage of Jonathan--Saul's son.

We have observed wise fathers and foolish fathers (in the families of Eli and Samuel). Now observe a foolish father and a wise son! Saul's stupid edict that none of the army was to eat until after the battle was probably motivated by some insecure compulsion to prove he was king. Jonathan characterized it as "troubling the land." It was foolish, and subsequent events proved Jonathan correct. This is another exposure of the fundamental flaw in the character of Saul--conceit and arrogance!

Seen from a human standpoint, Saul's reign was successful. In terms of "body count" he won many victories, increased the territory of Israel and established the nation on a growing economic base. But what was the Lord's evaluation of Saul's reign? God and humans evaluate things by different standards. An essential part of our Christian growth is that we learn to evaluate things as God does (see 2 Cor. 5:16).

Enthusiasm is easier than obedience;
--but God desires OBEDIENCE!

QUESTIONS:

1. Was it ethical for Jonathan to attack the Philistines? What about Saul's boasting about it? 13:1-4.
2. The Israelites were outnumbered more than 10 to 1 and in weaponry vastly inferior--what was wrong with their hiding from the enemy? 13:5-7
3. Saul practiced the philosophy, the end justifies the means when he sacrificed, 13:8-15. Is this always a bad practice? Have you ever tried to rationalize this practice?
4. Was Jonathan's attack on the Philistines, 14:1-23, foolhardy? Is there ever a time for a believer that "discretion is the better part of valor?"
5. Do you think Saul was wise in making the vow about not eating before battle? 14:24-46. Why? Do you think he should have broken his vow?
6. Characterize Saul's reign, 14:47-52. How does this summary of his reign confirm Samuel's warning in 8:10-18?

The Premier of Australia said that when the WWI broke out, the Australian Commonwealth at once offered to do what they could to back Great Britain. They asked what was the most useful thing that they could do and the reply came--"Build us ships, we want ships." The Australians were not shipbuilders, so they smiled and began to till the fields, sow seed, and reap harvests to send food to the motherland. Grain was gathered, put into sacks, and brought down to the water's edge to wait for ships from England. But the ships never came. The mice got in, and then found their way into towns and villages and cities, carrying disease with them--a disease that attacked the eyes of many and blinded some. And all the time Great Britain said, "Ships! Ships! Ships!"

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

King Saul was a military success--but a moral failure. We should learn something from the fact that the Bible devotes much space to *detailing* Saul's *moral battles* (and failures) while devoting little space to summarizing his military battles. The focus of history and God's goal for humanity is **morality!** God wants all people, everywhere, kings or commoners, to know the right and do the right. God is more interested in character than expertise!

In these chapters we see a man going from bad to worse. Not because he has no opportunities to change, nor because the will of God for him is vague. Saul flopped because his security was in the image of peer-pressure--what will men think (i.e., "...because I feared the people..." 15:24) rather than in what God thought. God is not satisfied with peer-pressure excuses--God desires **obedience to his revealed will.**

Saul even lost the ability to recognize the truth. He said he had obeyed God's commandment when it was clear to anyone he had not (15:20). Then when he was faced with the truth, he regretted he had been caught and blamed others for his disobedience (15:21,24). When a man comes to the place where he calls good evil and evil good, the Spirit of God cannot abide in him--an evil spirit dwells within him (Satan)! It happened to Saul--it could happen to any of us. The Holy Spirit of God is the same as the Holy Spirit of Truth--he cannot dwell where falsehood reigns!

It has been reported that when the famous football player Red Grange was about to become a professional, Babe Ruth, the Yankees baseball immortal gave him this sage advice: "Kid, don't ever forget two things I'm gonna tell ya. One, don't believe everything that's written about ya. Two, don't pick up too many checks."

"Always remember there are two types of people in this world. Those who come into a room and say, 'Well, here I am!' and those who come in and say, 'Ah, there you are!'"

--Frederick L. Collins

QUESTIONS:

1. Who were the Amalekites? 15:1-9. Why did God order them all to be killed? Can you worship and trust a God who would do that? What if he hadn't?
2. Why did Saul make a monument for himself? 15:10-12. Does this say anything about his character?
3. How did Saul justify keeping some of the spoil of the Amalekites? 15:13-16. What was Samuel's answer? What implications does this have for us as Christians?
4. Does God repent, or not? 15:10; 15:29
5. What was the Lord's basis for choosing David to be king? 16:1-13
6. How can God be responsible for an evil spirit coming into a man? 16:14-15.
7. What does music have to do with an evil spirit? 16:16-23.

Many years ago, John Newton, the converted slave trader who became a Christian and a poet, the same John Newton who wrote *Amazing Grace*, lay upon his deathbed. A young clergyman came to see him and expressed deep regret at the prospect of losing so eminent a laborer in the Lord's vineyard. The venerable servant of God replied, "True, I'm going on before you, but you'll soon come after me. When you arrive, our friendship will no doubt cause you to inquire for me. But I can tell you already where you'll most likely find me--I'll be sitting at the feet of the thief whom Jesus saved in his dying moments on the cross." Although a distinguished man, Newton felt with Paul that he could only class himself among the chief of sinners who have been saved through the marvelous grace of Christ.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Has the record of Saul's ruin depressed us? Have we been frightened to compare his moral self-destruction with some of our own moments of weakness? **Take heart! Be of good cheer!** We are now going to focus on a man after God's own heart--David, son of Jesse.

"David" in the Hebrew language, means "Beloved." Saul sinned but he did not make any effort to correct his sin--only to blame his failure to repent on circumstances and others. David sinned, **and he always repented** and sought his best to correct his actions to conform to the revealed will of God. That was what made David a man after God's heart. God justified David, not because David was perfectly sinless, but because David believed in God's word (see Psa. 51 & 119) and repented showing he wished to be perfect. If we have David's attitude, we too, are persons after God's own heart!

Very early in his life, David was thrust into the teeth of the storm of life. He was tested, tempered and slowly prepared for the great task God had for him. David's faith in God's power to deliver and guide him was tested in his contest against Goliath. David's character was sharpened and refined when his soul was knit with the virtuous Jonathan. David's humility and morality was tested by his fame compared by others with that of Saul. David's spirituality and graciousness was tested by Saul's murderous jealousy and persecution. **David passed the tests!** Now, dear Christian, compare your strengths with those of David and be secure in the knowledge that God can mold you and use you to his glory. All you need is a heart of courage, conviction and compassion like that of David!

John Wesley said, "Give me a hundred men who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I will shake the world. I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; and such alone will overthrow the kingdom of Satan and build up the Kingdom of God on earth."

"Sleep with clean hands, either kept clean all day by integrity or washed clean at night by repentance." --John Donne

QUESTIONS:

1. Is the Biblical description of Goliath exaggeration or could a man be that gigantic? 17:1-7. Do your enemies seem that large and unconquerable?
2. What is meant when it is said Saul would free the father's house of the man who would kill the Philistine giant? 17:25. Do you think David faced Goliath for the rewards offered?
3. Was David presumptuous in thinking he could depend on the Lord to deliver him from the giant? 17:37.
4. What was David's purpose in fighting Goliath with only a sling and some stones? 17:47-54
5. Why did such a strong personal relationship develop between Jonathan and David? 18:1-4. Do you think Christians from different families could become such close friends?
6. How did David deal with his popularity? 18:23.
7. How did David deal with Saul's attempts on his life? 18:26

When John Chrysostom, (A.D. 345-407), greatest Christian preacher of his day, was arrested by the ancient Romans, the emperor ordered this Greek Christian to deny his faith, Chrysostom refused to do so. The emperor asked his advisers what must be done to the prisoner. "Shall I put him in a dungeon?" "No," one of his counselors replied, "for he will be glad to go. He longs for the quietness wherein he can delight in the mercies of his God." "Then he shall be executed!" declared the emperor. "No," came the answer, "for he will also be glad to die. He declares that in the event of death he will be in the presence of his Lord." "What shall we do then?" the emperor questioned. "There is only one thing that will give Chrysostom pain," a counselor said, "To cause Chrysostom to suffer, make him sin. He is afraid of nothing except sin."

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

John Donne (1572-1631) English poet and preacher, wrote, "No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

David, the anointed of God, needed help; he needed a friend. King Saul the most powerful man in Israel burned and raged in his heart with envy and hatred for David. Those were the beginnings of David's darkest days. Saul hunted him like a ravenous lion stalks a prey. Michal, David's wife and Saul's daughter, warned David of Saul's intentions. Jonathan heard the bell toll for him. It was Jonathan, Saul's own son, who laid his family relationship, his heirship to the throne of Israel, and even his own life on the line to keep David safe. As the once popular song said, "Like a bridge over troubled waters, I will lay me down," Jonathan was David's bridge to safety.

According to a Greek legend, a young man named Pythias had been condemned to die by Dionysius of Syracuse. He was allowed to leave the city to put his affairs in order when his friend Damon promised to die in place of Pythias if he failed to keep his promise to return. Pythias was delayed, and arrived just in time to save Damon from death. Dionysius so admired this display of friendship he pardoned Pythias and asked the two to become his friends.

The record of Jonathan and David is no legend--it is true history. This is how two people with the Spirit of God in them will act toward one another. Jesus said it this way: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." You want a Friend?--how about Jesus?

"Friendship without self-interest is one of the rare and beautiful things of life"
—James Francis Byrnes

QUESTIONS:

1. Did Jonathan disobey the OT law about children being obedient to their fathers when he rebuked Saul? 19:4-5. Should younger people rebuke older people when they are wrong?
2. Would you deceive your father if he was trying to kill someone like Michal deceived Saul? 19:11-17
3. What was the purpose of the Spirit of God coming upon Saul and his messengers to make them prophesy? 19:18-24. Was it evidence of the saving grace of God?
4. How much respect and trust was there between Jonathan and David? 20:1-11. Should we trust any other human being that much?
5. What is meant by the phrase, "...The Lord is between you and me forever"? 20:23,42
6. David and Jonathan, grown men, kissed one another and wept with one another--should grown men act that way toward one another? 20:35-42

"I think that God will never send,
A gift so precious as a friend,
A friend who always understands,
And fills each need as it demands,
Whose Loyalty will stand the test,
Who sees the faults that merit blame,
But keeps on loving just the same,
Who does far more than creeds could do,
To make us good, to make us true,
Earth's gifts a sweet contentment lend,
But only God can give a friend."
—Rosalie Carter

"So long as we love we serve. No man is useless while he is a friend."—Robert Louis Stevenson

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“The arm of flesh will fail you--Ye dare not trust your own...” goes the refrain of a Christian hymn. God lets us see some blemishes in his most devout and sanctified servants. He apparently does this in order that we may not put too much trust in ourselves and at the same time learn not to be overwhelmed with discouragement when we also stumble into sin.

First, David lied, then displayed embarrassed weakness and finally lowered himself to a degrading deception before one of the kings of the Philistines. It is quite unlike the stalwart youth who courageously slew the Philistine giant, Goliath, to grovel in feigned madness before the same enemies because he fears them.

It is one thing to show faith and courage when a single wave of trouble rolls in upon us, and another to continue in faith when *wave after wave* of trials burst upon us, and the terrified eye sees the tempestuous sea. David was alone, unable to remain in his own homeland, a hunted fugitive, unwilling to raise his hand against God’s anointed king (24:6), and without bed or board!

Though David sometimes sinned through weakness, he constantly turned to God in penitence and sought to do God’s will. When hungry and frustrated he went to God’s house and sought the help of Ahimelech; after groveling before the king of Gath, perhaps as he hid in the cave of Adullam, he wrote the 34th Psalm---read it! Finally, when Gad the prophet spoke to him God’s instruction to return to Judah to face more persecution, he obeyed. Here is David struggling upward and Saul sinking downward. No man is without sin—not Abraham, not Moses, not David, not the apostle’s. But the man who repents (changes and struggles **upward**) is a man after God’s own heart and is justified by faith.

In *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice asked the Cheshire Cat, “Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?” The Cat answered, “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.”

Our moral decisions depend on where we want to get to!

QUESTIONS:

1. How could Ahimelech conscientiously break the commandment of God and give David some of the Bread of the Presence to eat? 21:1-6 (see also Lev. 24:9; Matt. 12:1-8).
2. What prompted David to ask Ahimelech, a priest, for a sword? 21:8-9.
3. Why would David run to the king of Gath, a Philistine, for asylum? 21:10-15. Why didn’t the king of Gath let David stay there?
4. How could David leave his parents in the care of the heathen Moabites? 22:3-5.
5. Why do you think Doeg, the Edomite, finked on David? 22:9-10
6. Do you find anything to admire in Ahimelech the decedent of Eli? 22:14-15.
7. Why did David feel responsible for the death of all the priests? 22:22.

What Sin Really Is!

Man calls it an accident; God calls it an abomination.

Man calls it a blunder; God calls it blindness.

Man calls it a defect; God calls it a disaster.

Man calls it a chance; God calls it catastrophe.

Man calls it an error; God calls it an enmity.

Man calls it a fascination; God calls it a fatality.

Man calls it an infirmity; God calls it an iniquity.

Man calls it a luxury; God calls it a leprosy.

Man calls it a liberty; God calls it lawlessness.

Man calls it a trifle; God calls it a tragedy.

Man calls it a mistake; God calls it a madness.

Man calls it a weakness; God calls it willfulness.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16:32). David really gained a greater victory in the incidents described in these two chapters than he did in the defeat of Goliath or the thousands of Philistines he slew.

There is no one found anywhere in God’s word who is so versatile. He is David, the brave shepherd boy, the court musician, the soldier, the true friend, the outcast captain, the king, the great general, the loving father, the poet, the sinner, the broken-hearted old man, **but always, the lover of God**. We find him a sort of Robin Hood of the Bible. He was a man of wonderful personal power and charm. What is the cause of David’s success? His excellency of character is the cause! Note in these two chapters, he: **(a)** is always willing to go to the aid of others even at the risk of his own life, not retaliating when they betrayed him; **(b)** earnestly seeks the Lord’s guidance; **(c)** is loyal to his friend Jonathan; **(d)** has a conscience tender toward having publicly shamed the king; **(e)** is forgiving and loving toward Saul when he had every provocation to take vengeance; **(f)** is modest and respectful toward his enemy, Saul; **(g)** patiently waits upon the Lord to providentially deal with Saul; **(h)** suffers persecution without bitterness; **(i)** accepts every spark of penitence and godness that may be left in Saul, hoping for the best.

What a difference between David and Saul! It is well for us to reflect on this for these same factors may work in our lives and we may deliberately choose the forces which shall carry us on either course.

“There is no end to the sufficiency of character. It can afford to wait; it can do without what is called success.” —
Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1903-1904

QUESTIONS:

1. Does the Lord *instigate* war? 23:1-5
2. Why was David afraid (RSV) 23:15.
3. How could Saul pronounce a blessing of the Lord upon the Ziphites for their aid? 23:21
4. Why was David smitten in his heart after he cut off the skirt of Saul’s robe? 24:5
5. Was David sarcastically teasing Saul with the piece of skirt, the proverb and the reference to dead dogs and fleas? 24:8-15
6. Do you think Saul was earnestly sorry and penitent? 24:16-21
7. Why did David take an oath to do no harm to Saul’s descendants or reputation? 24:22

Few international celebrities have been so baffling as Charles Lindbergh. It was unreasonable to many--yet remarkable to others--why he did not capitalize more on his flight across the Atlantic in 1927. But commercializing the flight was the last thing he wanted. One friend estimated that Lindbergh could have made \$5 million (1927 dollars) in one week if he would have accepted the hundreds of offers to sign testimonials, write books, or go into the movies.

William Randolph Hearst offered “Lindy” \$500,000 if he would star in a film about aviation. He declined a vaudeville contract to which was attached a \$1,000,000 guarantee. A movie company made him another \$1,000,000 offer; it was turned down. Another movie company upped its offer to \$5,000,000. Money came to him as gifts, but it was always returned. An associate summed it up: “Lindbergh won’t take money he hasn’t earned.”

“I would rather be right than be president.”
—Henry Clay (1777-1852) U.S. Senator

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

History, as God apparently sees it, is composed of great, far reaching influences by people most of the world would count as insignificant. Helpfulness and goodness is really what immortalizes people, not riches and power and glamour.

Samuel died. All Israel was startled as they recalled how great a man he was. He was not a king; he had none of the trappings of power or wealth. But he was a servant of truth and righteousness. He built the fiber of righteousness into the nation. He was a teacher and a counselor. It is something to live so that one's death will be truly mourned by a whole nation of people.

Abigail saved a king. Here was a woman who, by gentle persuasion, and wisdom, saved David from ruining his future. Her wise action proves the correctness of the proverb, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." Few men have the humility to listen to the advice of a woman. Many men might be better had they done so. Christian people will glorify God when they heed true wisdom wherever they find it. David eventually married Abigail. "A good wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her and he will have no lack of gain." Prov. 31:10-11.

Remember this: You do not have to be a king, or rich, or be a celebrity to wield power. All you have to have is a humble heart and a mind focused on the will of God. If you do that you may have more influence on the world for good than all the kings and rich people and celebrities combined!

QUESTIONS:

1. What does churlish mean? 25:3 why do you think Nabal was so disposed?
2. What was the basis of David's request of Nabal? 25:8-9
3. What was Nabal's attitude toward David? 25:10-11. Is that attitude ever expressed in our day?
4. Explain all the different ways Abigail appealed to David to persuade him against personal vengeance upon Nabal. 25:23-42
5. Why did David risk his life by going up to the sleeping Saul and taking his spear and water jar? 26:1-12
6. What did those who told David, "Go serve other gods," intend for him? 26:17-20
7. Did Saul keep his word to do no more harm to David? 26:21-25

"Be not ashamed, women, your privilege
encloses the rest and is the exit of the rest,
You are the gates of the body, and you
are the gates of the soul."
--Walt Whitman, 1855

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I---I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference...” so said Robert Frost in his poem, *The Road Not Taken*.

In this lesson we have two men facing diverging roads. Both are in great distress; both are entirely unable to decide what to do or what to hope for. One (Saul) has utterly forsaken God, and feels that God has departed from him, so in deep desperation he takes the road of occultism until at last he is prostrate in the depths of torment and despair. The other (David) has yielded to distrust in God and has fallen into sinful compromises, but has not utterly abandoned the Lord; the sinning, sorrowing David still has in his heart the fear of the Lord.

The fallen Saul, ruinously defeated and despairing, commits suicide (31:4). David, chastened by the plundering of his camp and the loss of his family as prisoners of war to the Amalekites, strengthens himself in the Lord and seeks God’s will (30:4,6,8).

Jesus said that **all** human beings face two diverging roads. One is an easy road with a wide gate; it leads to destruction. The other is a hard road with a narrow and difficult (pressurized) gate; it leads to life. It is easy to give up and give in to falsehood, self-indulgence and self-pity. It is difficult to accept the truth and obey it. The hard road is less traveled, but it makes all the difference!

When George Frederick Handel (1685-1759) composed *The Messiah*, for twenty-three days he completely withdrew from the things of this world. So immersed was he in his music that the food brought to him was often left untouched. Describing his feeling when the “Hallelujah Chorus” burst on his mind, Handel said, “I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God Himself.” Handel took the road less traveled and we are all blessed because he did!

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did David assume his situation called for escape to the land of the Philistines? 27:1-7
2. What additional expediency did David think he was forced to practice as a result of his acceptance by the Philistines? 27:8-12
3. Why had Saul put the mediums and wizards out of the land? 28:3. Is God really serious about prohibiting the practice of the occult? Why?
4. Why did the Lord not answer when Saul inquired of him--doesn't the Lord always answer those who seek him? 28:4-7
5. What did Samuel mean when he said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” 28:15
6. Is there any significance in the fact that Samuel’s message for Saul was precisely the same message he had given him when he was still in this world? 28:16-18
7. How would Saul and his two sons be with Samuel on the morrow? 28:29

At Noyon, France, in a family of brothers, there were John and Charles. John from his earliest days was studious, thoughtful, and reverent. At the early age of twenty-seven he wrote one of the world’s most famous books--*The Institute of the Christian Religion*. When he died at Geneva, Switzerland, in 1564 he bequeathed

to the world great principles of democracy and religious freedom.
He was John Calvin.

The other brother, Charles, pursued a course of profligacy and dissipation and lived a life as worthless and infamous as his brother’s life was noble and glorious. How do you explain the difference between those men? Not in heredity, not in environment, the same home, the same early influences.

The difference is to be explained in *choice*.

---Clarence. E. Macartney

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

How do you deal with adversity? James Russell Lowell said that adversities “are like knives, that either serve us or cut us, as we grasp them by the blade or the handle.” The apostle Paul said in the Epistle to the Hebrews that the chastening of the Lord may be either a power to strengthen us and make straight paths for our feet or a source of bitterness troubling and defiling us until we reject our spiritual birthright (Heb. 12:1-17).

In this lesson we see the truth of these two statements being lived out in the lives of real people. Saul, having disobeyed the word of God, turned to a witch for guidance. Jehovah, the only Sovereign of the other world, sent Samuel back with a final warning to Saul that his course and God’s will were in opposition. Saul’s reaction was bitterness. He and his army were attacked by the Philistines; the Israelites were defeated and humiliated; Saul’s sons were slain in battle; and Saul committed suicide. David, distrusted by the Philistines, his camp plundered and his family kid-napped, faced mutiny from his own soldiers. But David strengthened himself in the Lord, sought the Lord’s guidance and smote his enemies. (see Psa. 119:67-72; Rom. 5:3-5)

Do not be deceived. Prosperity, ease and indulgence do not produce a “good life.” Francis Bacon said, “Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes; and adversity is not without comforts and hopes.”

Do not let adversity make you bitter. Grasp it by the handle of faith and let it become the cutting edge in your life to produce the holiness without which no man shall see God (Heb. 12:14).

Many years ago a young mid-western lawyer suffered such deep depression that his friends thought it wise to keep all knives and razors from him. During this time he wrote, “I am now the most miserable man living. Whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell. I awfully forebode I shall not.” He was wrong. He did recover and went on to become one of America’s most loved presidents---Abraham Lincoln.

Both optimists and pessimists contribute to society. Proof? The optimist invents the airplane and the pessimist invents the parachute!

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think the Philistines refusing to let David join them in war against Saul was providential? 29:1-11. Do you think David was really sincere about wanting to fight with the Philistines?
2. Why did the soldiers of David want to stone him? 30:1-10. How did David handle this challenge to his leadership?
3. What does the treatment of the Egyptian by the Amalekites indicate about their character? 30:11-15
4. Do you think David was right in giving those who did not fight the Amalekites as much of the spoils of war as those who did? 30:16-31.
5. Saul committed suicide. Is this an unforgivable sin? What does the Bible say about it? 31:1-7
6. Why did the men of Jabesh-gilead risk their lives to remove the bodies of Saul and his dead sons from the walls of Beth-shan? 31:8-13. Why did they burn their bodies? Is cremation unscriptural?

Robert Fulton was utterly discouraged with his invention of the steamboat and the jeering public response it had brought him. But then one day a man went on board the boat, and this conversation ensued: “Mr. Fulton, I presume?” “Do you return to new York with this boat?” “We shall try to get back, sir!” “Can I have passage down?” “You can take your chance with us, sir!” “How much is the passage money?” Fulton had never thought about that.

After a moment’s hesitation, he named the sum of \$6.00. The man became the first person to pay for a steamboat passage in history! Four years later, Fulton met this man and told him: “The vivid emotions caused by your paying me that first passage money will always be remembered.

That, sir, seemed the turning point in my destiny--the dividing line between light and darkness--the first actual recognition of my usefulness from my fellow-men.”