

Masculine Piety in Leadership

Saul: The Rise and Fall of a Leader

August 6, 2000

Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.
1 Corinthians 16:13,14

Introduction

- **Isaiah 3:12-15**-All around us, our covenantal governments are in a state of crisis in regards to leadership. November approaches, and many in the Church foolishly hope that our savior will be voted into office. We must repent of this folly, for true repentance must begin in our homes first, with specifically, Christian husbands/fathers. When men begin acting like men, embracing and discharging their responsibilities within their homes, and representing those homes to all other covenantal entities (beginning first with the Church and then with the Civil Magistrate), then we will see the beginnings of cultural reformation.
- With effeminacy rampant, Christian men must recover that which is truly masculine. Masculinity includes the following: Embracing (vs. blaming others) 100% of the responsibility in the home, showing initiative and direction (vs. passivity), seeking (vs. running from) increasing realms of accountability before God, displaying courage (vs. cowardice) in the face of opposition, and exercising his genuine authority in the home through sacrifice, service, duty, and love (vs. the selfish exercise of power). For a man to faithfully discharge these duties, he will have to contend against those temptations that constantly are at war with him: sloth, biblical ignorance, fear, laziness, and fatigue.

The Rise of Saul: 1 Samuel 8-12

- **Chapter 8**-Samuel's sons were wicked, and so the rebellious people of God saw this as a wonderful opportunity to reject God as their King and request an earthly king. Even after he explained to them what this king would do, the people rejected the word of the prophet and demanded to be like everyone else. In their demand, they condemn themselves by asking for in an earthly king all that God had been and was to them: He was their Judge and the One who went out and fought their battles for them. **Chapter 9**-So, they're given the leader of their dreams: Tall, handsome, and strong. He had all the external attributes a rebellious culture looks for in a leader. While externally fitting the bill as a leader, Saul did seem to possess the internal quality of pre-leadership humility (v 21).
- **Chapter 10**-Saul is anointed King by Samuel and the Spirit comes upon him. Samuel proclaims Saul as King to the people, reminding them again of their rebellion and rejection of God. When selected from among the people, Saul (in true male response when faced with expanded leadership responsibilities) is found hidden among the equipment. He's brought before the people who are mesmerized by his appearance. It's ironic that this preoccupation with sight (what they would see with their eyes) would be his, and their, very downfall.
- **Chapter 11**-Saul performs (confirming him as king) a heroic feat in the saving of Jabesh Gilead from the Ammonites. **Chapter 12**-Finalizing a fourfold progression (Anointing, proclamation, confirmation, and coronation), Saul is coronated before the nation of Israel. Samuel, in a non-typical convocatinal type speech, sternly rebukes the people for their hard-hearted rebellion. To confirm this, he calls down thunder and rain from heaven, and the people finally (only after seeing something) confess their sin. And yet, despite all their disobedience, Samuel exhorts them to seek the Lord and obey Him, for in Him is abundant mercy.

The Fall of Saul: 1 Samuel 13-17

- **Chapter 13: Faith and Duty**- The people saw danger and hid, and when they did follow their leader Saul, they did so trembling (v 6,7). Contrast this display of fear in the face of overwhelming opposition to the display of faith exhibited by Israel when God led them into battle against Jericho (under Joshua) and the Midianites (under Gideon). The nation of Israel had digressed to a nation devoid of faith, rebellious against the word of the Lord. They had rejected their true King, and now they trembled behind their tall and handsome earthly one.
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- Saul, like the people he led, acted (v 11,12) sinfully based on what he saw and felt compelled to do. A true leader, on the other hand, walks by faith, forming a culture of faith in the realm where he has jurisdiction. Rather than leading others by your worrying, fretting, grumbling, and complaining based on what you can see, you should A) Know the Word, and B) Believe the Word, and so set the example of faith. In addition, a leader ought to be driven by duty, not feelings. Christ, in the Garden of Gethsemane, did not *feel* like going to the cross. Yet His food was to do the will of the One who sent Him. So in the face of feelings (i.e. fatigue or fear) that would betray our duties, we must pray for grace and then discharge our responsibilities.
- **Chapter 14: Initiation**-Saul's leadership virtues continue to erode, as he becomes more pronounced in his unbelief and passivity in leadership. Jonathan initiates the attack against the Philistines, while his father was sitting under a pomegranate tree (v 1-3). Once the attack began, Saul sought the will of God through the priest Ahijah, but when the noise became greater than his desire to know the will of the Lord, Saul commanded Ahijah to stop, and so rushed off into battle without any guidance, or confirmation of victory from the Lord (v 18-20). And finally, when Saul did seem to exhibit some degree of initiative in attacking the Philistines, he did so in an autonomous manner, for he allowed the priest to initiate the obtaining of the Lord's guidance (v 36,37).
- **Chapter 15: Embracing Responsibility and the Fear of God**-Told to utterly destroy the Amalekites (v 3), Saul was unwilling (v 9) to do so. No matter how he spun his rebellion, his decision making revealed a man desiring his own will vs. the Lord's. Note the classic male/Adamic denial of responsibility. Confronted with his sin by Samuel, Saul makes a demarcation: When he's referring to sin, he attempts to deflect responsibility by using terms such as "They" and "the people" (v 15, 21). When he's referring to righteousness, he attempts to take credit by using terms such as "we" and "I" (v 15, 20). Note also that when Saul is speaking to Samuel, he references the Lord as "your" Lord (v 15, 21, 31). Finally, after Samuel had equated his rebellion with witchcraft, Saul admits defeat, confessing his sin because of his "fear of the people" and his obedience to "their voice" (vs. God's). But was he repentant of his hunger for the praise of man? In verse 30, he still wanted to receive honor in front of the Elders and before Israel. It appears nothing had changed.
- **Chapter 17: Courage**- This account should have forever been known as "Saul and Goliath." It was Saul's duty as King to lead his people into battle. He was to discharge all the responsibilities within his jurisdiction, and show Israel the courage required of a leader. However, the words of a Philistine (v 11) carried a greater weight than the word of God, so Saul huddled in fear along with all the others. David, when he hears "the same words" (v 23), reacts with dismay, but not at Goliath. His dismay is that this uncircumcised Philistine should defy the armies of the living God (v 26). David does not cower in the presence of what he sees (the size of Goliath), nor does he shrink back because of what he hears (the words of Goliath). Notice who each was looking to: Saul said to David, "You are not able" in v 33, and David states in v 37 "The Lord...He will deliver." One had faith, and the other did not.

Conclusion-The Breadth and Depth of Responsibility

- **Psalm 128**- This Psalm teaches the federal, covenantal, jurisdiction and authority that a husband/father has over his household. She is your wife, and they are your children. It is your house, and it is your table. To some, this might seem a little "puritanical". Much like the passage in 1 Peter 3, where we're told that Sarah called Abraham lord, our feminized, egalitarian, modern minds are embarrassed that the Bible would insinuate such a hierarchical relationship. Isn't marriage 50/50? Isn't it "our" home? So what does this authority mean? It means that full and complete accountability and responsibility for the house and everyone in it is assigned to the man. So men, what goes on at your table? Is there vibrant fellowship and laughter, or sullen silence, anger, or preoccupation with your job? Is it used in your exercise of hospitality and feasting, or does it sit barren except for the occasional meal together? Is it used for His glory, with singing and instruction abounding around it, or is it seen as an end in itself?
- As men, we must defend the borders of our jurisdiction, faithfully doing all that has been assigned to us to accomplish. We must thoroughly know what is biblically expected of us, understanding the breadth and depth of responsibility in each duty. Once the weight of this accountability is grasped, then being overwhelmed is soon to follow. Driven to our knees, we must confess our sin, and pray for mercy and grace. Then we ought to get up, embracing and assuming our assigned responsibility.