

Kingmaker: The Qualities of a Godly Influencer
King Saul's Do or Die Moment
1 Samuel 13

Intro

Good morning. You can go ahead and have a seat.

The 19th century American novelist James Lane Allen is attributed as saying, “Adversity does not build character; it reveals it.” When faced with trials of various kinds, these trials will either reveal your faith in God or they will reveal your desire to sin.

Listen to God’s Word as the author of Hebrews gives us example after example of men and women who, when faced with various trials, counted them as joy while their faith was tested and revealed. This passage has rightfully been deemed the “Hall of Faith.”

Hebrews 11:1-12:4 (NLT)

1 Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. 2 Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

3 By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God’s command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

4 It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel’s offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

5 It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—“he disappeared, because God took him.” For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. 6 And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

7 It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith.

8 It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. 9 And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. 10 Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

11 It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. 12 And so a whole nation came from this one

man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.

13 All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. 14 Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. 15 If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. 16 But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

17 It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, 18 even though God had told him, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted." 19 Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.

20 It was by faith that Isaac promised blessings for the future to his sons, Jacob and Esau.

21 It was by faith that Jacob, when he was old and dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and bowed in worship as he leaned on his staff.

22 It was by faith that Joseph, when he was about to die, said confidently that the people of Israel would leave Egypt. He even commanded them to take his bones with them when they left.

23 It was by faith that Moses' parents hid him for three months when he was born. They saw that God had given them an unusual child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's command.

24 It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. 27 It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible. 28 It was by faith that Moses commanded the people of Israel to keep the Passover and to sprinkle blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would not kill their firstborn sons.

29 It was by faith that the people of Israel went right through the Red Sea as though they were on dry ground. But when the Egyptians tried to follow, they were all drowned.

30 It was by faith that the people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls came crashing down.

31 It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

32 How much more do I need to say? It would take too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets. 33 By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. 35 Women received their loved ones back again from death.

But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection. 36 Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. 37 Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated. 38 They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

39 All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. 40 For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. 3 Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. 4 After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.

Pray

God, by being here or listening online today, we are witnesses that we haven't yet given our lives in our struggle against sin. But You did. As we preached about last week, Your body was broken, and Your blood was poured out on our behalf. Yet it was our sin that You died for. It was *my* sin that You died for. Please ingrain this truth in our souls. Please help us to dwell on this Gospel so we won't be weary in our fight against sin. Fix our eyes on You. Jesus, we ask this in Your holy and righteous name. Amen.

Today, we're back in our series going through the book of 1 Samuel. The last time we were in 1 Samuel, we heard Samuel's farewell address to the nation of Israel in chapter 12. He was incredibly clear that if the people *and* the king obeyed God, things would go well for the whole nation. But if either the people *or* the king rejected God, things would not go well for them at all. Samuel's words will prove to be true because today we are studying 1 Samuel 13 and:

Proposition: In 1 Samuel 13 we see the Kingdom of Israel suffer 2 consequences because of King Saul's insecurity.

The 1st consequence the Kingdom of Israel suffered because of Saul's insecurity was

1) **Israel Fled After Victory (1-7)**

Time to take notes

- A. **[1] Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years over Israel.**
- B. Scholars disagree on the exact translation and interpretation of this verse because it is obvious that Saul was not 1 year old when he began to reign as king. Most scholars think he was probably around 30-40 years old when his reign began. Therefore, there is debate over what exactly this one year and two years are referring to and your Bible probably has a footnote about an alternate translation.
- C. There are several probable explanations for referencing this timeframe in this manner. For the sake of our time this morning, I've put more in my notes online about this for you to read later.
- D. Regardless of the variation in the specific and original intent of this verse, what is clear is that this introduction is an obvious deviation from the standard introduction of the Kings of Israel. Therefore, "the sorry state of [verse 1] is an initial marker of the direction Saul's fortunes will soon take. ... It has been remarked appropriately, "The ... formula introducing Saul is as defective as the king himself!"¹
- E. **[2] Saul chose three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent home, every man to his tent. [3] Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear." [4] And all Israel heard it said that Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become a stench to the Philistines. And the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal.**
- F. When Saul was made king, Samuel instructed him to lead the nation against the greatest threat facing them: the Philistines. Well, here Saul finally gets around to doing what was commanded of him. He chose 3,000 men to form a new standing army. After he chose this 3,000, he dismissed the rest of the soldiers, and then he took them to Michmash and Gibeah underneath his and his son Jonathan's leadership. "At this point Saul had no large-scale conflict with the Philistines in mind."²
- G. A garrison refers to a body of troops stationed in a particular location, primarily for the purpose of defending it. The term can also be used to describe the place itself where these troops are stationed, such as a fort, fortress, stronghold, or military base. This is what Saul goes up against and captures.

¹ Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (1 Sa 13:1). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

² Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (1 Sa 13:2-4). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

- H. “Perhaps it took a year of thinking about this [command] to work up his courage, and perhaps it was Jonathan’s initiative that forced his hand, but Saul finally committed himself to do as the prophet had directed. Gibeah was the location of the Philistine garrison that Samuel had ordered Saul to capture, and Jonathan’s victory there started Saul down the road appointed by the prophet.”³
- I. **[5] And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. [6] When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble (for the people were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns, [7] and some Hebrews crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.**
- J. This is a pitiful scene. “Something is not working right in Saul’s Israel”⁴ and our first indication is how the nation of Israel is referenced. If you’re unfamiliar with the Old Testament, you probably missed the significance of 1 word in verses 3 and 7. The people were called “Hebrews.” This was a term that typically only foreign nations used to describe Israel. However, Saul used it himself in verse 3 and now in verse 7 our author echo’s Saul’s description.
- K. These “Hebrews” weren’t the strong Israelites that crossed the Red Sea or that captured Jericho. Instead, they fled like cowards and went into hiding in caves and holes and rocks and tombs and cisterns. Literally, anywhere they could manage to flee to, they fled. They were terrified. And even those who remained with Saul, were trembling.
- L. “This massive Philistine force had now occupied Michmash, the very spot that Saul had just vacated. They had ten times as many chariots as Saul had men and twice as many horsemen! That was just the beginning of the Philistine force. There were more Philistines than could be counted. Saul’s reign began ... in fearful circumstances.”⁵
- M. Saul’s military “strategy,” if you even want to call it a strategy, was incredibly foolish. He poked the bear and wasn’t prepared for the bear.
- N. “Gordon Keddie compares Jonathan’s strike at Geba to Japan’s attack on the United States at Pearl Harbor, the result of which was the stirring up of a massive enemy to full-scale war.”⁶

³ Phillips, R. D. (2012). [1 Samuel](#). (P. G. Ryken & R. D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., Eds.) (1st ed., pp. 195–198). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

⁴ Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (1 Sa 13:5–7). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁵ Woodhouse, J. (2008). [1 Samuel: Looking for a leader](#) (pp. 229–232). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

⁶ Phillips, R. D. (2012). [1 Samuel](#). (P. G. Ryken & R. D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., Eds.) (1st ed., pp. 195–198). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

- O. “However, [to give Saul credit, he] did not go into hiding. He was the king. He remained in Gilgal, as Samuel had instructed him. He probably had no idea what to do next. In any case Samuel had told him to wait in Gilgal for further instructions.”⁷
- P. You have the imposing Philistine force on one side, and you have the fleeing Hebrews on the other. In between these contrasting groups sits Saul, alone in Gilgal. He is at the center of our text with a fleeing army as consequence of his actions.⁸
- Q. “A single person, by faith, can say, I will not be afraid of 10,000; but here thousands of degenerate Israelites tremble at the approach of a great crowd of Philistines. Guilt makes men cowards.”⁹

The 2nd consequence the Kingdom of Israel suffered because of Saul’s insecurity was

2) Israel Was **Unequipped** to Fight (15-23)

Time to take notes

- A. Now, you might be thinking, “*Unequipped? They just got into a fight and won.*” Let’s pick up later in the chapter.
- B. **[15] And Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal. The rest of the people went up after Saul to meet the army; they went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men. [16] And Saul and Jonathan his son and the people who were present with them stayed in Geba of Benjamin, but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. [17] And raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies. One company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual; [18] another company turned toward Beth-horon; and another company turned toward the border that looks down on the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.**
- C. Do you see the contrast from where we started?
 1. Saul had 3,000 men between him and Jonathan. Now, he only has 600 men. That’s an 80% loss!
 2. The Philistines were at Geba when Saul attacked them from Michmash and Gibeah. Now, the Israelites are in Geba, and the Philistines are encamped with a garrison at Michmash.
 3. The Israelites attacked the Philistines’ garrison. Now, the Philistines are sending 3 different raiding parties into Israelite land. These parties were “commando-like [military] parties whose specialty [was] demolition and destruction of ... supplies and resources.”¹⁰
 4. They now dared Israel to attack. What a turn of events!

⁷ Woodhouse, J. (2008). *1 Samuel: Looking for a leader* (pp. 229–232). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

⁸ Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). *1 & 2 Samuel* (1 Sa 13:5–7). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁹ Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible (Complete)*.

¹⁰ Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). *1 & 2 Samuel* (1 Sa 13:15–18). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

- D. “It is clear that Saul and his small band at Geba were powerless to do anything.”¹¹
- E. But wait, there’s more!
- F. **[19] Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, "Lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears." [20] But every one of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, or his sickle, [21] and the charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads. [22] So on the day of the battle there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan, but Saul and Jonathan his son had them. [23] And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.**
- G. The Philistines are good to sharpen the tools of the Israelites for a certain fee. A fee that was actually quite high. It would cost about the same or more to get your mattock or axe sharpened than you were required to give to the sanctuary on a *yearly* basis.¹²
- H. But wait, there’s more!
- I. “[The Philistines] keep to themselves the skills of their trade to prevent Israel’s tools from becoming weapons turned against them.” They dominated the Israelites’ military by disarming them and controlling the market on weaponry.¹³
- J. Think about how long it would take to rid a nation of its weapons! If our country outlawed firearms, it would take a LONG time to fully rid the country of our guns. Then, think about how long it would take to rid our country of the *skill* of making firearms. This skill is older than our nation itself. I’m sure that some of you are thinking, “Over my dead body!”
- K. Spoiler alert though. In God’s grace, the Israelites were still able to maintain certain deadly weapons like the sling that David used to kill Goliath. The intention is “to show that Yahweh saves his people even when they have no human military advantage.” You see, eventually Christ would disarm all “rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” (Colossians 2:15).¹⁴
- L. But that doesn’t leave room for excuse for Saul. As much as he tried to be, he was failing to be a king like the kings of the other nations. He left his soldiers without swords and spears. Yet he could’ve provided for them from the spoils of the Ammonites that he conquered in the beginning of his reign.¹⁵

¹¹ Woodhouse, J. (2008). *1 Samuel: Looking for a leader* (pp. 236–238). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

¹² Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). *1 & 2 Samuel* (1 Sa 13:19–22). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

¹³ Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). *1 & 2 Samuel* (1 Sa 13:19–22). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

¹⁴ Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). *1 & 2 Samuel* (1 Sa 13:19–22). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

¹⁵ Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible (Complete)*.

- M. **John Gill** – “Of so little use and service was a king to Israel [that] never was their country more exposed to rapine and violence than now.”¹⁶
- N. Saul basically ain’t got an army. What army he does have, ain’t got no weapons. The nation is worse off with its king now, than it was without its king before. Their tall, dark, and handsome king has failed them.¹⁷
- O. What happened? How did Israel get into this situation?

The Kingdom of Israel suffered consequences because of King Saul’s insecurity when

3) **Saul Rationalized His Sin (8-14)**

Time to take notes

- A. Let’s go back up to verse 8. Saul is sitting alone in Gilgal.
- B. **[8] He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. [9] So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering.**
- C. As we saw, Saul’s situation was indeed desperate. He was facing an army of “30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore.” And he only had 600 men to combat this imposing force. Not sure what to do, he remembered what Samuel had instructed him.
- D. **1 Samuel 10:7-8** – “Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you. Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do.”
- E. Each day Saul waited, the Philistine force grew stronger. Each day Saul waited, the Israelite force withered away. As the end of the 7th day approached, Samuel was still nowhere to be seen. Saul couldn’t wait anymore. He had to take things into his own hands.¹⁸
- F. He reverts back to religion. “*What did Samuel say he was going to do when he got here? Oh yeah, he was going to offer a sacrifice. The power must be in the sacrifice. I’m the king. I need to appease God and get His favor by doing the burnt offering myself.*”
- G. **Tony Evans** – “[Saul] was a military commander with a deserting army, a massive enemy who might pounce on him at any moment, and a priest who was nowhere to be found on the last day of their agreed-on waiting period. Saul was clearly hoping Samuel could see the tight spot he was in and understand.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Gill, John. *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* (66159).

¹⁷ Newheiser, J. (2011). *Opening Up 1 Samuel* (p. 77). Leominster: Day One.

¹⁸ Woodhouse, J. (2008). *1 Samuel: Looking for a leader* (pp. 232–236). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

¹⁹ Tony Evans Study Bible

- H. But that ain't how God works. He's treating the one true God like the gods of all the other pagan nations. There is *no* religious formula that gets God to bend His will to ours. Doing the acts of religion without love for God is to spit in the face of God. The Scriptures are very clear on this.
- I. **Genesis 4:4b-5a** – “And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.”
- J. **1 Samuel 15:22** – “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.”
- K. **Hosea 6:6** – “For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”
- L. **[10] As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him.**
- M. Saul no doubt confidently goes out to greet him, ready to tell him how he saved the kingdom and took things into his own hands. **Show off the confidence** – “*Ya know what Samuel, you weren't here. But I'm the king and ya boy got this thang under wraps.*”
- N. But that air of confidence vanished like a breath in the wind.
- O. **[11] Samuel said, "What have you done?"**
- P. “*Saul, what have you done? What have you done?*”
- Q. Like God in the garden with Adam and Eve, “Where are you?” Like God spoke to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” Like God spoke to Achan, “Tell me now what you have done.”
- R. However, it isn't as though God didn't know what Adam, Cain, Achan, or Saul had done. Samuel arrives in Gilgal to find Saul with blood on his hands. Literal blood on his hands from the sacrifice. He couldn't wait any longer. He performed the burnt offering on his own. There is no hiding what he has done.
- S. Rather, by asking, “What have you done?” God is providing an opportunity for Saul to confess and repent. What a gracious God!
- T. But how does Saul respond?
- U. **And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, [12] I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering."**

- V. Can you see the bewildered look on Saul’s face? *“What do you mean, ‘What have I done?’ My army was running away like scared lil boys. The Philistines were raiding our land. There was nothing else left to do. I had to do something. I couldn’t do nothing. I forced myself to offer the burnt offering, Samuel. It wasn’t like I had a choice. I had to get God’s favor. Samuel, the real question is, ‘Where were you?’”*²⁰
- W. Put a pin in that question, because we’re gonna come back to that later.
- X. Saul rationalizes his sin and rejects the opportunity to confess and repent. Saul reverts back to religion. “[He] sought to cover his disobedience in a cloak of religiosity.”²¹
- Y. 1 John tells us how dangerous this is. **1 John 1:8-10** – “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”
- Z. God knew what Saul had done. And as the prophet of God should, Samuel sees right through the religious smokescreen.
- AA. [13] And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you.**
- BB.** Samuel effectively said, “You thought God’s hand could be forced to give you victory by performing a sacrifice? You fool. You and your pagan mindset are indeed a king like all the nations.”²²
- CC.** God put Saul in a situation to test whether or not he, as the newly commissioned King of Israel, would submit himself to God and to God’s commands as given by Samuel. He was instructed to wait. *“Saul, act in patient obedience. Wait.”* But in the final hour, Saul disobeyed.^{23 24}
- DD.** **Matthew Henry** – “Hypocrites lay a great stress upon the external performances of religion, thinking thereby to excuse their neglect of the weightier matters of the law. ... Foolish man! to think that God would be well pleased with sacrifices offered in direct opposition both to his general and particular command. ... Those that disobey the commandments of God do foolishly for themselves. Sin is folly, and sinners are the greatest fools.”²⁵
- EE.** Samuel continues.

²⁰ Woodhouse, J. (2008). *1 Samuel: Looking for a leader* (pp. 232–236). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

²¹ Phillips, R. D. (2012). *1 Samuel*. (P. G. Ryken & R. D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., Eds.) (1st ed., pp. 198–201). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

²² Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). *1 & 2 Samuel* (1 Sa 13:8–14). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

²³ Payne, D. F. (1994). *1 and 2 Samuel*. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 310). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

²⁴ Woodhouse, J. (2008). *1 Samuel: Looking for a leader* (pp. 232–236). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

²⁵ Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible (Complete)*.

- FF.** For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. [14] But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."
- GG.** If you haven't been feeling for Saul already, at this point, most of us are likely to sympathize with him. *How can we say he was foolish? How can we call his act sin? Why is God being so harsh with him and stripping away the throne from him and his family for this one little mistake?* He was facing a desperate situation with an impossible task. Against every instinct, against every fiber in his being, he was told to **NOT** act. He was told to wait. *What reasonable human being could fulfill such a task?*
- HH.** However, it is a huge mistake for us to think that obeying God is an easy thing. Disobedience, rebellion, sin is easy. Trusting God is simple, but it is incredibly difficult. It can feel impossible in the moment. In fact, it can feel quite foolish.²⁶
- II.** But you remember that question, "Samuel, where were you?" Well, Samuel might not have been physically present with Saul in that moment, but God had never left Saul's side. God was there the whole time. Did you catch that earlier in 1 Samuel 10?
- JJ.** **1 Samuel 10:7-8** – "Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you. Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do."
- KK.** When Adam sinned, God was there. When Cain killed Abel, God was there. When Achan took some of the devoted things for himself, God was there. When Abraham was told to leave his homeland, God was there. When Moses crossed the Red Sea, God was there.
- LL.** God was there with Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel. God was there with those who conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. God was there when women received back their dead by resurrection.
- MM.** Yet, God was also there when others were tortured, mocked, flogged, chained, and imprisoned. God was also there when they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated, wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. God was also there when they were stoned, sawn in two, and killed with the sword.
- NN.** No matter what happens in this life, **Psalm 73** is true. "Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

²⁶ Woodhouse, J. (2008). [1 Samuel: Looking for a leader](#) (pp. 232–236). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God, you are the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (23-26).

- OO.** So, when Saul looked across the hills and saw soldiers as numerous as sand on the shore, God was there. And God was ready to supply Saul with all the strength he needed.
- PP.** **R.D. Phillips** – “The reality is that God does test his people with severe trials, giving grace to those who trust in his might. ... How often God’s people fail when a little more obedience would have won through to success!”²⁷
- QQ.** However, on this day, in one moment, Saul committed a tragic, life-altering sin.²⁸ You see, it is rare that anyone ever randomly wakes up and chooses today to forever alter the course of their life. Pearl Harbor happened after immense planning. 9/11 happened after immense planning.
- RR.** But sins with great consequences can sometimes appear not so large at the time. Yet there are countless steps along the way that lead to that one tragic moment. Along that way, we develop our character, we develop our thought patterns, we develop our modus operandi.
- SS.** And then eventually, we face our “do or die” moment. This was that “do or die” moment for Saul.
- TT.** I can imagine Saul waking up on that 7th day to the morning’s first light, eagerly awaiting the arrival of Samuel on this final, appointed day. He stepped out of his tent to see the sunrise peeking over the horizon and casting away the remnants of the cold Middle Eastern night as the dark shadows gave way to rays of sunshine. The air would begin to shift from crisp and cold to *[breathe]* sweet and warm. The animals would begin to stir as the dawn of a new day seemingly birthed a new creation filled with endless possibilities.
- UU.** I know coffee didn’t exist yet, but I see Saul as he sips from a hot cup of his finest freshly brewed black Arabian coffee and takes in this glorious scene. His eyes shift toward the Philistine encampment across the hills. He sees men beyond number arise and don their battle armor, preparing their weapons to raid yet another Israelite city.
- VV.** Then he turns his eyes once more towards the tired, pitiful array of tents on his side of the sparsely occupied valley. The few men that still dared to remain at his side groggily stumbled about. They had no swords to sharpen, no spears to straighten, and no weapons of war to ready.
- WW.** As he surveyed this scene, I highly doubt Saul calmly said to himself, *“You know what, today seems like the perfect day to disobey God and throw my life away.”*

²⁷ Phillips, R. D. (2012). [1 Samuel](#). (P. G. Ryken & R. D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., Eds.) (1st ed., pp. 198–201). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

²⁸ Newheiser, J. (2011). [Opening Up 1 Samuel](#) (pp. 76–77). Leominster: Day One.

- XX.** But, this was Saul’s “do or die” moment. And he pulled an Adam: he didn’t do, he died. This was the beginning of the Lord’s rejection of Saul. In this one moment, Saul’s kingdom was stripped away from him and his family. After this moment, Saul’s reign would be illegitimate and temporary.²⁹
- YY.** According to Samuel, had Saul obeyed, his kingdom would’ve lasted forever. But God is concerned with the motives of the heart. And his heart did not seek God. He sought his own will, and he wanted God to bend the knee to him. But God will not kneel.³⁰
- ZZ.** Saul responds to temptation like Adam. So is God’s response to Saul similar to His response to Adam. The severity of God’s judgment on Saul must be seen in the light of God’s holiness. There is no little sin because there is no little God to sin against. There is no little sin because there is no little God to sin against.^{31 32 33}
- AAA.** Therefore, Saul’s kingdom would pass to someone else whose heart was surrendered to God. A few chapters later, God would double down on this phrase with Samuel.
- BBB.** **1 Samuel 16:7** – “But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.’”
- CCC.** “The expression “a man after [God’s] own heart” has entered Christian jargon, usually as a statement about the qualities of the person. ... However, the expression is literally, “The Lord has sought for himself a man according to his own heart.” This is about the place this man had in God’s heart rather than about the place God had in the man’s heart. It was a way of saying that God had chosen this man according to his own will and purpose.”³⁴
- DDD.** “Repeatedly the people had been presented with Saul as the king the people had asked for and had chosen for themselves.” Now, God was gonna do the choosing.³⁵
- EEE.** God was going to raise up a King who would obey God’s Word. We see glimpses of this in King David who reigned after Saul. But ultimately, the New Testament reveals that this promised One, this man truly and fully after God’s own heart, was Jesus.³⁶

²⁹ Phillips, R. D. (2012). [1 Samuel](#). (P. G. Ryken & R. D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., Eds.) (1st ed., pp. 198–201). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

³⁰ Phillips, R. D. (2012). [1 Samuel](#). (P. G. Ryken & R. D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., Eds.) (1st ed., pp. 198–201). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

³¹ Phillips, R. D. (2012). [1 Samuel](#). (P. G. Ryken & R. D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., Eds.) (1st ed., pp. 198–201). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

³² Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 445). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³³ Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible (Complete)*.

³⁴ Woodhouse, J. (2008). [1 Samuel: Looking for a leader](#) (pp. 232–236). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

³⁵ Woodhouse, J. (2008). [1 Samuel: Looking for a leader](#) (pp. 232–236). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

³⁶ Phillips, R. D. (2012). [1 Samuel](#). (P. G. Ryken & R. D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., Eds.) (1st ed., pp. 202–206). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

FFF. Like King Saul, Jesus began his ministry with a tremendous trial. His was temptation in the wilderness. But unlike Saul, Jesus passed every test in His life through obedience to the Word of God. Jesus' success as the man after God's own heart means that we have a king who reigns secure from an eternal throne that will never be stripped away.³⁷

GGG. Through Jesus' righteousness we have a Mediator who reconciles the fallen children of Adam through his own perfect obedience. Jesus is the "man after [God's] own heart" in our place. He perfectly fulfilled the entire law of God in our place. Casting ourselves upon Jesus in faith, we have the comfort of knowing that Christ's obedience in life and his sacrificial atonement in death reconcile us to the embrace of our loving God.³⁸

HHH. Then, Jesus works in our lives and sends the power of the Holy Spirit to us so that we might be men and women after God's own heart through obedience to God's Word. As we trust God, we will have nothing to fear from the Philistines of this world, knowing that one day we will stand before the face of God and hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant," because of Jesus.³⁹

III. It was Jesus alone who resisted temptation to the point of shedding His blood. It was Jesus alone who prayed in the garden for God's will to be done, not His. It was Jesus alone who allowed Himself to be hung on a cross and crucified for our sins. Sins that He didn't commit. It was Jesus alone who was perfectly obedient and faithful, even to the point of death.

Challenge:

Are you living a life of faithful obedience to God or are you rationalizing your sin? If you truly want to be obedient, God will supply your strength. But if you truly want to sin, you'll supply your excuse.

There are the typical rationalizations that make their rounds in Christian circles:

- I'm just too busy to consistently sit down to read my Bible and pray.
- Them kids are crazy, ain't no way I can serve in Kidzone.
- I don't know enough to lead a Life Group.
- Money is so tight right now, tithing just isn't an option.
- I can't afford to miss work to go on that Missions trip.
- She is way more gifted than me, so I'll let her do it instead.
- I don't know enough about the Bible to share the Gospel with him.
- God didn't write me a message in the clouds, so how am I supposed to know what God really wants me to do.

But there are more subtle rationalizations that can infiltrate our lives:

³⁷ Phillips, R. D. (2012). [1 Samuel](#). (P. G. Ryken & R. D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., Eds.) (1st ed., pp. 202–206). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

³⁸ Phillips, R. D. (2012). [1 Samuel](#). (P. G. Ryken & R. D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., Eds.) (1st ed., pp. 202–206). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

³⁹ Phillips, R. D. (2012). [1 Samuel](#). (P. G. Ryken & R. D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., Eds.) (1st ed., pp. 202–206). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

- I can't hit the numbers expected of me at work, so I fudged some reports.
- It's been a rough week. I'll just grab a quick drink with the guys before I go home to face my family.
- We really love each other, so why wait till we get married to live together.
- If she didn't want everyone to know, then she shouldn't have told me.
- I didn't spank my boy *that* hard.
- It's just coffee with someone from church. It's just lunch with a coworker. It's just a few texts here and there.
- My wife always has a headache. So, I watch porn sometimes. But that's better than actually cheating on her.

But when we leave room for sin, our sin will eventually not be so subtle. Like Saul, our sin will kill us:

- I can't remember the last time I read my Bible. God feels so far away.
- My family really needs Sundays to recover from our busy week before diving into *another* busy week.
- This company makes so much money and I'm so underpaid, they'll never notice the little that I take off the top for myself. They owe me anyways.
- We've been together for so long that we're basically married already. We don't need a piece of paper from the government. Besides, the finances work better this way.
- He really understands me and listens to me. My husband never appreciates me the way he does.
- I'm just not in love with my wife anymore.
- Yeah I started that rumor that got her fired, but how else would she have gotten that promotion.
- She nags and nags and never shuts up, so I finally hit her.

You have sinned. You have fallen short of the standard of obedience that God has laid out for you. Will you respond like Saul and seek to rationalize away your sin? Or will you choose to confess and repent?

Ever since the creation of the Church, hypocrisy has been an issue. In fact, it's widely accepted that hypocrisy is *THE BIGGEST* issue in the Church. If you're here today or watching online and you've been hurt by the hypocrisy that fills church after church, I want you to know that God is with you. He feels your pain. His Church is meant to be a witness of the saving power of Christ in our lives, not a brothel for our sin to grow like bacteria in a petri dish.

Yet, we are still filled with sin. The Church is full of sinners, always has been and always will be until Christ comes back and calls His entire Church home. This means that as long as the Church is full of sinful people, us sinners will seek to rationalize our sin. However, this occurs at the expense of our witness as Christians and to the detriment of those around us.

To give us one last example, the Apostle Paul addresses the rationalization of the early church in the city of Corinth.

1 Corinthians 5:1-2a, 6-7a – “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? ... Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump.”

Just like a little leaven makes the whole bread rise, so it is with sin. A lil rationalization here and there and your whole body is full of sin. In Galatians, Paul calls these sins works of the flesh. And when we allow them to remain in our lives, when we rationalize them instead of fighting them, our lives begin to be consumed with them.

Galatians 5:19-21 – “Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Look at that list! If you truly want to sin, you’ll supply all the excuses you can imagine so that your life will look like that list. But if you truly want to be obedient, there is hope: God will supply your strength.

Philippians 4:19-20 – “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

When you have faith that God will supply your strength, your life will look incredibly different.

Galatians 5:22-23a – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

Hebrews 12:1-4 (NLT) – “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne. Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won’t become weary and give up. After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.”

Charles Spurgeon said, “I have learned to kiss the waves that throw me up against the Rock of Ages.”

With the enemy at my back
 With a raging sea of despair before my face
 When I reach the edge of my bravery
 I’m gonna sing at the banks of that unparted sea⁴⁰

God is our justice. God is our grace. God is our freedom. God is our refuge. God is our strength. God is with us.

Won’t you join me in singing?

Hebrews 13:20-21 (NLT) –
 “Now may the God of peace—
 who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus,

⁴⁰ <https://open.spotify.com/track/3jWIXPUA6KAHoatVUAxBv?si=1cbe851f765c451e>

the great Shepherd of the sheep,
 and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood—
 may he equip you with all you need
 for doing his will.
 May he produce in you,
 through the power of Jesus Christ,
 every good thing that is pleasing to him.
 All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

1) Verse 1

- A.** **Notes on 13:1** – “If the setting of the reaffirmation of Saul’s kingship and Samuel’s address on that occasion is the first anniversary of his coronation, it may be that the events of this chapter occurred after his second anniversary. This is a possible interpretation of the textually difficult passage translated by the NIV as Saul was 30 years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel 42 years. The Hebrew is literally, “Saul was years old when he began to reign and he reigned two years over Israel.” Obviously a figure has dropped out of the first part of the statement, and the second part cannot mean that he reigned for a total of only two years. Old Testament chronology implies—and Paul in his address at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:21) distinctly teaches—that Saul reigned for 40 years, no doubt a round number but close to the actual figure. There is no reason to think that the number “two” is suspect, however, for all manuscripts and versions retain it. It is only the desire to see 1 Samuel 13:1 as a regular formula for kingship (as in 2 Sam. 2:10; 5:4; 1 Kings 14:21; 22:42; etc.) that leads many scholars to postulate that “40” or some other figure is missing. In the context, however, the historian is not introducing a kingship formula (why do so here, well into Saul’s reign?), but is probably indicating that the Ammonite threat had come in Saul’s first year and now, in his second, the Philistines must be encountered.”⁴¹
- B.** “A problem remains with the first part of the Hebrew statement, “Saul was years old....” Many scholars, following Origen (ca. a.d. 185–254), postulate “30” (so niv). Since Jonathan, Saul’s son, was already grown then and served as a military commander, Saul would have been older than 30. It is more likely that the figure to be supplied is “40” though this too is difficult to reconcile with the description (1 Sam. 9:2) that Saul was, at the time of his anointing, “an impressive young man.” Of course “young” in this latter passage may not be a good translation for the Hebrew *bāḥûr*, a word that could be rendered “choice.” The best translation of 13:1 would seem to be, “Saul was [40] years old when he began to reign, and he reigned over Israel for two years.” This is further supported by the next verse which begins with a verb in the preterite tense, a construction indicating a close connection with the previous clause.

⁴¹ Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 443–445). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

“Saul chose ...” (v. 2) implies that after he had reigned for two years Saul began to select and train a regular army, not the larger militia he had used previously.”⁴²

- C.** “It is at this point in the account that the historian formally begins his account of Saul’s rule. This is indicated, in a manner typical of later accounts of the reigns of kings, with a formal summary of Saul’s reign. Such details as the age of the king when he took office and the length of his reign are typically recorded at the beginning of the account of a king’s rule (see, for example, 2 Samuel 5:4; 1 Kings 14:21). The problem is that the Hebrew text of 1 Samuel 13:1 tells us that Saul was, literally, “a son of a year” (which would usually mean one year old!) when he became king and that he reigned over Israel for two years. A literal translation of the Hebrew would be: “Saul was a son of a year when he reigned, and two years he reigned over Israel” (v. 1). Most translations and commentators see a textual problem here and either propose emendations or indicate the problem in the translation, as does the esv: “Saul was ... * years old when he began to reign, and he reigned ... and two* years over Israel.” The esv footnotes (*) then state, respectively, “The number is lacking in Hebrew and Septuagint” and “Two may not be the entire number; something may have dropped out.” An alternative and, in my opinion, far more satisfactory solution is possible. Taking the Hebrew text as it stands, “a son of a year” may point not to Saul’s actual age, but to the unusual circumstance whereby Saul became the one designated to become king. For Saul this was not at his birth (as would usually be the case for a crown prince), but only when Samuel anointed him (in 1 Samuel 10:1). It is possible, then, that the “year” of which he was a “son” was the time between that day (when, we might say, he became the crown prince) and the day that he began his reign at Gilgal in 1 Samuel 11:15 on the terms so clearly spelled out by Samuel in 1 Samuel 12. It is then likely that the “two years” that 1 Samuel 13:1 tells us Saul reigned over Israel (which seems too short for all that happened while Saul was king, through to his death in 1 Samuel 31) refers strictly to the period between his becoming king (1 Samuel 11:15) and his being finally rejected as king, which happens as soon as 1 Samuel 15:28. The account of Saul’s reign, strictly speaking, is then just the three chapters of 1 Samuel 13, 14, and 15. If this is right, the tragedy of Saul’s kingdom is already indicated in this opening summary. After all the preparation, after all that had happened to circumvent the disastrous proposal of chapter 8 and to ensure that Israel’s king would not be “like all the nations,” after the promising start in chapter 11, after the real possibility held out in chapter 12, it really lasted only two short years. On this understanding, 1 Samuel 13, 14, and 15 cover these two years.”⁴³
- D.** “Some interpreters (among them Firth, 151) take this part of the verse as substantially correct. They explain the two years as the period of time from Saul’s acclamation as king to the point of his rejection by Yahweh, after which his de facto reign lasted many years but was not recognized as legitimate by God. Ancient statements as to the length of Saul’s reign could be based upon Heb. texts still containing the original number, or they could be estimates. Josephus gave him a reign of forty years,⁸²⁹ which is plausible for various reasons. Acts 13:21, written about the same time as Josephus, seems also to agree on the forty-year length of Saul’s reign. But note that there are other ways of interpreting the Acts reference, as explained

⁴² Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 445). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴³ Woodhouse, J. (2008). [1 Samuel: Looking for a leader](#) (pp. 227–229). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

by Provan et al.: It may well be that “forty years” refers to the administrations of both Samuel and Saul (just as the “450 years” in Acts 13:20 seems to refer to the time in Egypt, the wilderness wandering, and at least the start of the conquest of Canaan [vv. 17–19] or, according to the Byzantine textual tradition, to the period of judges up to, but not including, Samuel. Modern suggestions of specific numbers to be inserted vary. For a recent summary of the most probable lengths of Saul’s, David’s, and Solomon’s reigns, see Provan et al. The niv option is thirty years at accession and a reign of forty-two years. However, forty-plus years is a lengthy reign for a man generally regarded as a failure, and the data in 1 Samuel regarding the events of this period is remarkably sparse. Merrill takes a slightly different approach, rendering the verse: “Saul was [forty] years old when he began to reign. When he had reigned for two years....” In his view, forty years old is reasonable since he had an adult son (Jonathan) at the time. While Merrill’s proposed age is reasonable, the question remains whether the syntax of the present mt can sustain a subordinate temporal “when” clause in מָלַךְ עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנַיִם וְאַרְבָּעִים (malakh al-yisra'el shanim ushetey). While Merrill and Firth explain the “two years” as authentic, both must assume the loss of a number in Saul’s age at accession to the kingship. The present unlikely text could be the result of the loss in transmission of one or both of the numbers or a parody on the regnal formulae, intended to show that Saul was not a real king. Most interpreters do not consider the present mt intentional.⁸³⁵ But Jobling (79–80) is justifiably amazed at the notion that vital information could have just innocently “dropped out” of the tradition: Most commentators blandly tell us that the numbers have “dropped out” (so nrsv note), as if there were something innocent about the process. What we are dealing with here are the vital statistics of the first king of Israel to be chosen by Yahweh and anointed in his name! If they were wanted, they would be there; if they had gotten lost they would have been found again. We will never know, but we may suspect. Did someone decide that these data should not be part of Israel’s memory, that they should be consigned to oblivion? The sorry state of 13:1 is an initial marker of the direction Saul’s fortunes will soon take. Whatever the real and authentic data for Saul’s age at accession and length of reign, the present text of the mt bears all the earmarks of having been deliberately altered in order to show how unsuccessful and wicked he was. Two years was not only the length of the reign of his hapless son Ishbaal (2 Sam 2:10), but also of the wicked kings Nadab (1 Kgs 15:25), Elah son of Baasha (1 Kgs 16:8), Ahaziah son of Ahab (1 Kgs 22:51), Pekahiah son of Menahem (2 Kgs 15:23), and Amon (2 Kgs 21:19). In using the customary formula (e.g., 1 Kgs 14:21; 2 Sam 2:10; 5:4), the compiler includes Saul in the sequence of kings, which continues without interruption until the destruction of Jerusalem (587 bc). Since Saul’s exact age at the onset of his kingship was disputed and uncertain, as well as its exact duration—did it end with David’s anointing, or with Saul’s death?—the compiler has deliberately left the data incomplete. It has been remarked appropriately, “The regnal formula introducing Saul is as defective as the king himself!” (Arnold, 197, following Gordon and others). Was the purpose of including this formula to honor this man as a legitimate king of Israel, or to ridicule him? Opinions differ. The Targum takes it to mean that he was “like a one-year-old, who has no sins.” Czövek thinks that, metaphorically, Saul was like an infant under the supervision of Samuel, and that this foreshadows the unlikelihood of his exercising a permanent charismatic leadership: Saul could not possibly be just one year old when becoming king, and did not reign for two years only. This absurdity, however, is so blatant that one is forced to wonder whether this statement might be intentional, with some non-literal intent. I have suggested that Saul emerged as a dependent person. In the shadow of Samuel, who kept him under his prophetic

control, the king could not gain autonomy, so essential for a charismatic leader.... Saul will not be able to win independence of his mentor. The king started his reign as a one year old completely dependent upon others, and did not reach maturity. Saul remained a child till his death. His short reign implies that it must have been unsuccessful, as in two years one cannot accomplish much, particularly if an infant. 13:1 thus serves as a summary of Saul's kingship. However one interprets the intention of the scribe-narrator, the stereotypical formula of an Israelite reign, with its impossible numbers, stands here to mark the official beginning of what will prove to be a very sad failure. Such potential for good is so tragically wasted. Yet, despite his failure, this is a man who bequeathed his name to the great Apostle Paul (previously Saul, also a Benjaminite) and to a major street in Jerusalem today: Sēdērōt Ša' ūl ha-Melek ("King Saul Boulevard")."⁴⁴

- E. "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God,' " (Psalm 14:1a; 53:1a). The trouble is, that is not what it looks like. It's not what it feels like. Those who deny God in their thinking, speaking, and living do not always (or even usually) seem to be fools. The words of the psalm are not, of course, a statement about the intellectual capacity of atheists, nor about the rational validity of the proposition, "There is no God." There are many very clever atheists. The proposition "There is no God" can be defended with impressive, intelligent arguments. Some of the brightest people in the world today are atheists. The best arguments against the existence of God are not simply stupid. Or are they? My point, however, is that Psalm 14:1 does not say, "The fool says in his mind, 'There is no God.'" It is the one who says this in his heart who is scorned as a fool. This is more serious, and more searching. Many may never say in their mind, "There is no God," but nevertheless say just that in their heart. The issue is the acknowledgment of God not just in my understanding, but in my consciousness, in my desires, in my anxieties, in my ups and in my downs, in my inmost thoughts—and therefore in my character and in the things I say and do. The psalm says that the person who in his heart says, "There is no God" is a fool. The trouble is, that is still not what it looks like, is it? Some of the least foolish-looking people take no account of God. In fact, if we are honest, we would probably admit that it sometimes looks very foolish indeed to take God too seriously! That is why most readers of the story of the young King Saul in 1 Samuel 13 feel considerable sympathy for him, and many readers (certainly many commentators) feel uncomfortable with old Samuel when he calls the new king a fool (1 Samuel 13:13). We will only appreciate the importance of this incident when we realize how outrageous and unreasonable Samuel's charge must have seemed. We will soon see that the narrator has used considerable skill in helping us to apprehend just that. The account of how Saul became Israel's first king began rather unpromisingly in 1 Samuel 8. Through various twists and turns we have seen how Saul was eventually made king at Gilgal under the very clear terms that he and the people must still obey and serve the Lord (see 1 Samuel 11:15; 12:14, 15)."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Hoffner, H. A., Jr. (2015). *1 & 2 Samuel* (1 Sa 13:1). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁴⁵ Woodhouse, J. (2008). *1 Samuel: Looking for a leader* (pp. 227–229). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.