**Faithful Regardless**

***Blessings or Consequences – 1st Samuel 13***

Saul was feeling what it was like to be King. He knew that there was a lot of pressure on him, and He also knew what God required of him.

His faithfulness and obedience were out to the test. He was about to see just how serious God is about keeping His commands and acting obediently.

**1st Sam 13:1-23 “**Saul was thirtyyears old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years.

**2**Saul chose three thousand men from Israel; two thousand were with him at Mikmash and in the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin. The rest of the men he sent back to their homes.

**3**Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost at Geba, and the Philistines heard about it. Then Saul had the trumpet blown throughout the land and said, “Let the Hebrews hear!” **4**So all Israel heard the news: “Saul has attacked the Philistine outpost, and now Israel has become obnoxious (repulsive, odious, a stench) to the Philistines.” And the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal.

**5**The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, with three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Mikmash, east of Beth Aven. **6**When the Israelites saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. **7**Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead.

When Saul was first anointed and commissioned by Samuel, he was given a specific prophesy with a set of instructions of what will happen, and we he should do. Every single one of them come to pass just as Samuel had told him it would. The final step in these instructions were about Gilgal;

**1st Samuel 10:8**“Go down ahead of me to Gilgal. I will surely come down to you to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, but you must wait seven days *until I come to you* and tell you what you are to do.”

Saul waited 7 days, but did not wait for Samuel…

7”Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear. **8**He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul’s men began to scatter. **9**So he said, “Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings.” And Saul offered up the burnt offering. **10**Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him.

**11**“What have you done?” asked Samuel.

Saul replied, “When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Mikmash, **12**I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the Lord’s favor.’ So, I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.”

**13**“You have done a foolish thing,” Samuel said. “You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. **14**But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command.”

It seems like a rather severe consequence. Saul waited the seven days but fell short of waiting for Samuel. For this act of disobedience, the kingdom was stripped from him. Saul was the first King. His methods and behaviors were precedent-setting. God was very serious about Saul following His instructions clearly and precisely and not relying on his own self-sufficiency, and certainly not leading by succumbing to fear.

As we look at this scripture, we cannot help but think of our own lives. If God can remove the mantle of authority of the first King of Israel due to disobedience and not keeping His commands, how does that apply to us?

Are the promises of God unconditional, and not predicated on our obedience and disobedience?

The answer to that is YES, and NO.

Our salvation, in as much as we are saved by grace through faith, not by works, is based on “Unmerited Favor” or an “Undeserved Gift”, that’s what “Grace” (gr: charis) means.

**Eph. 2:8**“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9**not by works, so that no one can boast.”

When we are given the spirit of adoption, we become children of God. Our place in His family does not rise and fall, or end and restart based on our conduct and behavior.

**Romans 8:15-17** “the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, *“Abba,* Father.” **16**The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

HOWEVER, our place and participation in His plan and will, can change based upon our obedience. God does not force us to do His will, He invites us. We can accept or decline. If we accept His invitation and respond obediently to His will, we will be part of His will and He will accomplish His purposes in us.

If we don’t, we can forfeit those purposes and miss out on the plans He had for us.

This is clearly evident in Saul’s life in the verse;

**V.13** “You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time.

If you had…, he would have…

If Saul would have had a little more patience and more faith, His kingdom would have been permanent and victorious, and the kingdom would have stayed in his family forever, but instead it was torn away from his family and given to David’s.

His impatience, and unwillingness to wait for Samuel, showed lack of faith in Samuel, and therefore, lack of faith in God.

Remember Eli the high priest? His family had been called and anointed by God to serve Israel in the priestly office. But Eli’s two sons had no regard for the Lord or His calling (1 Sam. 2:12). They desecrated the tabernacle, stole from the sacrificial offerings, and blasphemed God. They had a sense of entitlement and indispensability because they had been born into a family of power and privilege. But God tore the priestly calling away from them and from Eli’s family and gave it to Samuel, who led the nation in their place.

If Saul or Eli had been faithful and obedient, they would have been rewarded, but because they were not, the opposite is true.

The Bible is filled with stories of men and women who stepped out in faith and fulfilled God’s plan for their lives. Many of them risked everything to follow God’s calling and some even paid the ultimate price for it.

Keeping God’s commands and being obedient to do what he asks, requires faith.

* Faith to believe that His way is best.
* Faith to trust that He has a plan for your life,
* Faith to know that obedience to Him is better than your own thoughts or ideas,

That faith, is what God rewards.

**Heb 11:6“**And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

**7 “**By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.”

**8 “**By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.”

**22 “**By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.”

**23 “**By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.”

All of these and more listed in the Hebrews 11 “Hall of Faith” would have had different outcomes if they were did not have faith in God and were not obedient to His commands.

Based on what was said to Saul, all of those listed in the Hall of faith could have just as easily failed in their divine missions and faded into obscurity instead of renown.

Weren’t they chosen by God? Yes, they were.

But each of them was required to walk in faith and be obedient, and if they did not, they would have failed.

In the case of Saul, God gave him another chance to show his faith and be obedient in destroying the Amalekites in 1st Samuel 15, he failed at that mission as well, and even lied about it. That chapter ends with a sad statement about Saul’s reign.

**1st Samuel 15:35** “And the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.”

*[ Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke, has preached to millions of people in Africa and has seen over 70 Millions people come to faith at his crusades. When asked how he felt to have God choose him over anyone else for this important mission, he says that he knows he wasn’t God’s first choice, at least two others were called but did not fully respond in faith and obedience.]*

**Lesson of Esther:**

*The evil Haman the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted destroy them and had tricked the king into declaring an edict that would lead to their ruin and destruction. Esther was one of many queens who served the king.*

*Her Cousin Mordecai pleaded with her to boldly go before the king in an unauthorized manner and plead for the lives of her people.*

**Esther 4:13-16** “he sent back this answer: “Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. [14](http://biblehub.com/esther/4-14.htm) For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for **such a time as this?”**

[15](http://biblehub.com/esther/4-15.htm) Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: [16](http://biblehub.com/esther/4-16.htm) “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”

The message here is that your faith and your obedience have impact and consequences, both for you and the people whom you are called to. If you fail or disobey, God may still accomplish his objectives through someone else, but you will forfeit the blessing in your life.

Let’s not become arrogant or overly confident that God will bless our work, our ministry or are plans, whether or not we are faithful and obedient.

**It’s possible to forfeit God’s blessing in our lives.**

**God’s promises and commands require our obedience:**

* **Psalm 37:4&5** Delight yourself also in the Lord,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

*But what happens if you don’t delight yourself in the Lord?*

* **Matt 6:33** But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

*What happens when we don’t seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.*

* **2 Chron 7:14 -** if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

*But what if His people don’t humble themselves and pray and seek His face and turn from their wicked ways?*

I think it’s obvious what happens. The blessings do not come, and the consequences often do.

God wants to bless us.

He wants us to experience both His *Mercy* and His *Grace.*

**Mercy** – not receiving the consequences we deserve

**Grace** – Getting a blessing that we don’t deserve.

And in the area of salvation and eternal life, it’s impossible for us to attain it by any other way than God amazing grace and incredible mercy.

However, let’s not presume upon God’s mercy and or his grace in matters of faith and obedience.

**Gal 6:7**“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. **8**Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. **9**Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

**Don’t give up!**

**Stay faithful to God.**

**Stay obedient to His word.**

**Allow him to do great things through you and all around you.**

**“He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”**

**Let’s not only seek him,**

**Let’s faithfully and obediently serve Him as well.**