

**Sing before the service:** Psalm 1:1

Our help is in the Name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

Beloved, grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

Psalm of praise: 103:9

Prayer

Psalm 18:19

Scripture reading: 1 Samuel 13

Scripture text: 1 Samuel 13:14

**But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command.**

(1 Samuel 13:14 NIV-UK)

The king who ruled over the people of the Covenant in the time of the Old Testament was subject to a number of conditions. He could not follow his own way. Let's consider the following:

- God was the true King of his chosen people.
- The king on earth had to act according to the will of God.
- He practically had to rule the people according to God's counsel and will.

The king knew very well what the Lord's will was because the prophets kept him informed about it.

- Throughout the history of the Old Testament the prophets always taught the king the Word of God – whether called for or uncalled for.
- Sometimes the prophets were popular, and at other times most unpopular, but they continued to make known what the Lord revealed to them.

## **1. Saul being tested**

In the passage we read Saul's kingship is tested.

- If he was going to be king according to God's command, God would establish his kingship.
- If he wanted to follow his own will, God would take away his kingship.

We find Saul at Gilgal in a critical situation. He had been waiting for seven days – the time set by Samuel – but Samuel did not arrive.

- Saul did not know what to do next, because Samuel had to tell him what to do.
- Samuel would offer up the burnt offerings and the fellowship offerings. And on that occasion he would tell the people what they should do.

Samuel's arrival was therefore of utmost importance. But Samuel did not turn up!

In the meantime the Philistines assembled to fight Israel and Saul's troops were terrified and began to scatter.

- Only six hundred of them remained!

And then Saul decided to take things into his own hands:

- He gave the command to bring the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings.
- He would offer up the burnt offering!

***By doing that he exceeded the limits of his position as king! He, the king, made the offering – as if that would be the solution to their critical position without the prophet’s instructions on what to do in this state of emergency.***

Just as he had finished making the offering Samuel suddenly arrived!

- In other words, Saul had not waited long enough.
- Samuel did arrive late – but not that late.

Hence it appears that God tested Saul to see if he would wait for the prophetic instructions.

- God sent his prophet with his instruction – and for this occasion God had set the time and the place.
- He also examines the heart of the people He has called to be in his service to see whether they are able to do the work and whether they want to do it.

## **2. God’s view**

Just consider for a moment that Saul’s situation at that time bears a resemblance to Adam and Eve’s situation when they were tested by the Lord (Genesis 3).

- The Lord subjected Saul to a very difficult test.
  - It was a serious matter – they were at war against the Philistines and people’s lives as well as the future of the Israelites were at stake.
- But, even more important – it’s all about obedience.
- The troops of that part of the world found it hard to understand this, because to them a king did not have to obey anybody – people had to obey the king’s commands.
  - He had the power, and he commanded people to obey his orders.
  - Now the king had to wait for somebody else to tell him what to do.
  - This is probably one of the reasons why Saul’s troops started to desert him.

Hence God tested him. He wanted to see whether Saul’s kingship was sound.

- This would find expression in his obedience to the actual King – the Lord.
- Contrariwise, Saul’s arrogance finds expression in his reply to Samuel: He felt compelled to bring the burnt offering.
  - He felt compelled and brought the burnt offering.
  - He wanted to act powerfully – from a human point of view.
  - Having to wait until the Lord would eventually attend to him through his prophet was regarded by him as a weakness.

Hence the Lord replied: You acted foolishly.

- If you had kept the command the Lord gave you, He would have established your kingdom over Israel.
- But now your kingdom will no longer endure.

And then the punishment – the Lord had sought out a man after his own heart.

- The Lord had chosen someone else.
- The Lord would appoint this other man as king over his people because Saul had not kept the command the Lord had given him.

Where Saul and his troops had been cheerful a short while ago the king stood dumbfounded – the Lord had rejected him.

- Also, he had no idea what he had to do with his troops.

- Is this not the time and place to show remorse and to repent?
- Or should one just carry on and pretend to be strong?

### 3. Application

This passage deals with responsible kingship. This text in the Old Testament also applies to us. How? Consider the following:

- We are created in the image of God.
- It means: being able to live with a true knowledge of God and in true righteousness and holiness.
- This is the image of king, priest and prophet of God.

This image was destroyed when Adam fell into sin and ever since we have all been similar to what we learn from the life of Saul – unable to bear our image of kings correctly.

- In practice it means that we so easily give up doing what is right and often even find an excuse or reason for doing what is wrong.
- Saul is such a clear example of this.
  - The motive is so obvious – we do not want to obey God's commands.
  - We regard it as compulsory slavery.
  - We want to be free – free to do as we like and free to decide what is right or wrong. This is of course nothing but grumbling and rebellion against the Lord.

We must never lose sight of the fact that God, according to his will, showed mercy to us and also came to our rescue – our salvation.

- Because we destroyed and lost our image, God restored it. Jesus Christ came to earth to live and die.
- On the one hand He reconciled us to God.
 

*This means that He made propitiation for all the times we did not keep God's command to be holy and to act according to his will.*
- But it also means that Jesus made it possible that our power of discrimination would not fail us as it happened to Saul.
- The Holy Spirit came at the command of the Lord Jesus and lives within the church.
  - He is the guide and master of our spirit and mind so that we can distinguish between good and evil.
  - In other words, so that we are able to know and clearly see what God expects of us and the way He wants us to live.
  - Let us listen to it in terms of our Scripture text: The Lord Jesus restored our kingship and re-established it!

Let us then live in the grace of God and do what Saul did not want to do.

- He did not want to keep God's command.
- He did not want to fall in with the time that God had planned.
- Also, he did not want to be subjected to the Lord's course and description of the history. Consequently, in his arrogance, he responded to the test by disgracing the Lord.

Think clearly before taking any decisions.

- Reflect on what the Lord expects you to do.
- Forget about your own importance and your arrogance.
- Humble yourselves before the Lord, and receive his blessing.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer

Closing hymn: Psalm 144:1

The Lord will bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord lift His countenance to you and give you peace.

**Amen.**

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