

Believers & Civil Responsibility

A Practical Application Of History

Lesson II

Absolute Power Corrupts Absolutely - And - Quickly

I Samuel 13-15 I Chronicles 5 & 9

- A. Barely a King and picking a fit with long term consequences
 - a. Saul was 30 when he became King and ruled 42 years. I Samuel 13:1
 - b. Saul picks a fight with the Philistines and then realizes the odds are against him. He goes from boasting to gather Israel to being a leader whose men are quaking in their boots. To try and regain some control he remembers to call on God but is not patient enough to wait on Samuel and do it correctly and for this sin Samuel tells him God has taken the Kingdom from him and his family. I Samuel 13:2-15
 - c. The Philistines have removed the ability to make weapons from Israel so they have to go into battle unprepared. I Samuel 13: 16-22
- B. Lacking knowledge and control of the things and actions of people occurring on your watch
 - a. Saul takes them into battle but has basically no plan and has not called on God for His guidance.
 - b. Jonathan shows his trust in God and his bravery by going against a group of Philistines based on a "sign from God" and starts a rout of the Philistines. I Samuel 14:1-13
 - c. When Saul gets reports of a rout this time he thinks to consult God through the priest Ahijah and then joined in the battle. I Samuel 14:14-23
 - d. Saul issues an order not to eat until he is avenged - a very nonsensical order - but he doesn't make sure everyone is told even though all are restricted by eat - again poor leadership/communication skills. Even

his own son recognizes the foolishness of the order when he is informed that he has broken the command. Not only are the men too weak to pursue their enemy they are also so famished when they return that they violate God's law by eating blood. Saul actually realizes this and intervenes. He then decides to pursue the enemy but has to be reminded by the priest to have God involved. At this point God will not answer and Jonathan's violation is discovered and while Saul says he is will to carry through with the punishment he doesn't put up much argument when his men disagree and protect Jonathan. I Samuel 14:24-45

C. Successful? In whose eyes?

- a. Who was the better leader - Saul or Jonathan? Jonathan consulted God for instructions, he was willing to step forward at God's sign, he cared deeply for all who served him or with him and he was deeply devoted to his friend David. We do not see the constant waffling back and forth with him we see with his father. It is sad that his father's actions prevent us from ever seeing what type of King he would have been. Saul was constantly getting into situations that someone else had to get him out of, constantly showing his fear and lack of trust in God, used people to get results then looked to get rid of them, and constantly changing his mind to try and look for a new way to bring himself fame and glory.
- b. Saul did learn some lessons from his early mistakes as King and we are told he wins several battles and even says he fought valiantly. But note the phrase "All the days of Saul there was bitter war with the Philistines..." His foolish pride as a young warrior King plagued him AND his people all the days of his life. I Samuel 14:46-48, 52
- c. And then the old Saul returns. He is sent on a specific mission by God with very specific instructions. He fails again and ultimately pays the price with his life, his sons' lives and the loss of many of his people as the Kingdom is torn from his grip. I Samuel 15:1-33
- d. "But I did obey the Lord..." I Samuel 15:10-23. Isn't it amazing how leaders will justify their actions by playing on words? We cannot be

deceived - right is right and wrong is wrong regardless what they say is true.

- e. Samuel is grieved at Saul's failure and never speaks with him again after this incident and we are told that God is grieved at ever having made him King. I Samuel 15:34-35

D. So what does it all mean to us today?

- a. First we need to pick leaders with wisdom. Leaders who know how to pick their battles and how to find ways to win the battles they fight and not just spite their enemies. This doesn't apply to just the battlefield and today that is true more than ever. We need to choose leaders who can battle the erosion of our moral value in this country - things like abortion, homosexuality, denial of God, etc. - and who know how to win those battles. And we need to support them when they take that leadership role.
- b. We need to choose leaders who will be accountable for their actions and the actions of those who follow them and act on their behalf. It is important not only to choose good people to be your assistants but you must keep check on them and their action. You can expect what you inspect is a phrase I have heard for years and it has proven itself many times.
- c. Good leaders produce other good leaders. We need people that will mentor others to fight the battle with them.
- d. We need leaders who will involve God on the front end for every decision. Consulting God as an afterthought may lead to a "no response" in return. Leaders need to be steeped in prayer and surrounded by others who will remind them to consult God on every decision.
- e. A few victories and winning the popular vote don't make you a success. Winning a few battles doesn't give you the right to choose to do it your own way. And we should hold no loyalty to a leader or party who has done good things in the past but are disobeying God now.

