

**“Once Again, Obedience & Faith”**  
**1 Samuel 13:1-15**

**October 23, 2016**

**SI:**

**INTRO:** I've told you this story before, but it's a good one.

A man stopped by the church and asked me to buy him some gas.

He was down on his luck, didn't have a dollar to his name.

So I got in his truck and told him to drive to the gas station.

On the way I asked him: What's your story? Why in this predicament?

He said he had just gotten out of prison. I asked him: What did you do?

Well, they called it attempted murder.

But what really happened was my cousin came at me with a steel pipe,

I held out my knife to protect myself—and he stepped into it!

You can find some commentaries and Bible scholars who have argued that what happened in this chapter was not Saul's fault, it was Samuel's fault.

Remember back in chapter 10, when Samuel anointed Saul king,

he gave him some important instructions.

There is a Philistine outpost in your hometown—Do what your hand finds to do.

Strike the first blow for the liberation of Israel from Philistine oppression.

Of course, attacking that outpost would rile the whole Philistine army.

So Samuel then told Saul very specifically what he must do next.

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.

Gilgal was a place of sacred assembly.

Saul was to go there and wait seven days until Samuel came, offered sacrifices and then gave Saul divine instructions for coming battle with Philistines.

So what happens in this chapter? Saul himself never attacks the Philistines.

Who does? His son, Jonathan. Next week will see the significance of that.

But Saul gets the credit for doing it. He rallies the men of Israel.

They go to Gilgal and word comes Philistine army is on march.

It's a powerful, well-armed force.

Verse 8 says: Saul waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter.

So Saul ordered sacrifices to be made.

Probably as a way of giving his men the assurance of religious ritual.

Then Samuel eventually comes and condemns Saul and tells him that because of what he's done, his impatient refusal to follow God's instruction—

his kingdom will not endure. No succession. No dynasty.

God's going to search out a man after his own heart to be next king.

As I said, there are some who have argued that this was just Samuel setting

Saul up for failure. Samuel was still mad about Israel rejecting him and demanding a king. He wanted a puppet king so he could pull strings. Saul was not jumping through his hoops, so Samuel wanted to ruin him. One commentator called this chapter the prophet's tantrum.

But I don't find that very convincing, sure you don't either. "He stepped into it."

It is a little unclear when exactly Samuel showed up.

You could read verse 8 as saying that Samuel missed the time he was supposed to be there. He said to wait seven days, seven days came and went and no Samuel. So in that case, it could have been the eight day Saul ordered the sacrifices, well after the deadline

But if you read the whole story in context, it seems clear that Saul only waited part of the seventh day before he became impatient and ordered the sacrifices.

And just as they were finished, Samuel arrived.

Samuel wasn't setting up Saul for failure or undermining him—this was a test.

It was a test of Saul's faith.

Would he obey the Lord right down to the very last hour of the seventh day—or would Saul only obey as long as the conditions were tolerable?

That was the test and Saul failed.

His disobedience proved that he did not really trust the Lord.

And that is why God told him his kingdom would not endure.

The Bible often mixes faith and obedience, unbelief and disobedience.

Disobedience is always depicted as a failure of faith, it's an act of unbelief. Whenever sins crop up in our lives—whether attitudinal or behavioral—they are signs of lurking, growing unbelief in God.

I'm not saying that believers never disobey God. We do every day.

But we also know that when we disobey it is fundamentally incompatible with our faith in Christ.

The flip side of the coin, the positive side, is that all righteousness, all truly good deeds that please God come from faith in Christ and his word.

So let's look at both sides of this coin. Two points.

1. Why unbelief is the root of all our disobedience
2. How faith in Christ leads us to obedience in one specific test

**MP#1 How unbelief is the root of all our disobedience, or all our sin**

I was talking to a church member a while back,

and he was telling me about a friend of his whose family was unraveling. This friend of his is what you might call workaholic—his work is his god. As far as his business is concerned, he's been very successful, everything he touches seems to turn to gold, but his marriage has disintegrated and his children are estranged.

This church member said:

There is only so much advice I can give him,  
because he cannot see he really needs to give his life to Christ.

Right around the same time I had another conversation with another member of our church about her sister.

She told me her sister is deeply unhappy, overwhelmed with self-pity, bitterness.

Her sister will call her, and pour out her troubles.

And this member told me that she tries to encourage her and give her a healthier outlook, but she's impervious to it—seems to love her misery.

So she tells her sister, can't you see that until you trust Jesus, you're trapped in this way of thinking and you can't and don't even want to make any changes?

Both of these church had put their finger on the same thing.

The real problem of this friend and this sister was not being a workaholic, or being bitter, but no faith in God.

Until you believe in Jesus Christ, until you trust him and rely on him—you won't obey him, you won't commit to putting away your idols as he tells you to—whether that idol is work or self-pity.

Martin Luther wrote that unbelief is “the root, sap, and chief power of all sin.”

In order to see this more clearly, I want us to step out of 1 Samuel 13,

look at another passage, then we will come back to Saul again.

1 Tim, 6:10, “The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.”

That is simply another way of saying:

Unbelief, lack of faith in God, God is the root of all kinds of evil.

What is the love of money?

The love of money is not the love of green paper.

It's the love of what that green paper represents.

Money is a symbol of human resources.

Whatever human beings can make for you or do for you can be bought with money.

The Bible makes a clear distinction between God's resources and man's resources.

Isaiah 55, “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters

and you who have no money, come buy and eat. Without money, without cost.”

Money cannot buy God's resources.

It can't buy peace and purpose and forgiveness and grace.

Money is the currency of human resources.

You can trade it for what man can offer you and that's all.

So what does it mean to love money?

It simply means your faith is not in God but in human resources.

You are trusting it to meet your needs, to secure your future or happiness.

You believe in money. Your faith is in money.

So when Paul says: The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil—

he is saying that the heart that believes in, trusts, serves, loves human resources produces every kind of evil that there is.

Which is just another way of saying that the heart which does not believe in, trust, serve, and love God and his word will produce every kind of evil.

Unbelief is the root of all sins.

And that helps us understand what was going on with Saul and why there is such a devastating indictment leveled against him in this chapter.

As I said, you can find some writers who say that this was a small mistake—

that Saul's impatience and refusal to wait the full seven days was no big deal— Samuel blew things out of proportion.

But we believe Samuel was speaking as an inspired prophet.

This was the Lord's judgment of Saul's action.

And according to the Lord, this was one more evidence of Saul's lack of real faith.

He wasn't trusting God and believing in his power and his promises.

This was another proof of his unbelief even after he had gotten one opportunity after another to prove his faith through obedience.

What this does for us is that it gives us very sober perspective on our sins.

We can't just call them mistakes, or no big deal.

Every sin you commit is rooted in unbelief. It's refusal to believe God's word.

And Saul's story is in the Bible to make us face the seriousness of that.

He was eventually rejected by God for his lack of faith.

Why do you covet? Why are you discontent with what you have?

Why are you dissatisfied with the life you have or the wife you have or whatever?

Because you do not believe God when he says:

"Godliness with contentment is great gain." 1 Tim. 6

"My God will supply all of your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ." Phil 4

“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.” Heb 13  
And the hundreds of other promises and wisdom about stuff and contentment.  
Instead of believing in what God says, you believe in what these things promise.  
Discontentment is unbelief.

Why are you bitter?

The Bible warns about a bitter root that can cause people to miss the grace of God.  
Bitterness also comes from unbelief.

When you are wronged by another person, or when someone you love experiences  
some injustice or cruelty, a sense of moral outrage is normal and good.  
But bitterness comes when you refuse to believe God’s promise of justice.

God say about himself: “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?”

Do you believe he will do right or not?

Jesus said: “Son of man will come with holy angels and separate sheep from goats.”

Jesus said that, and lots of statements like it that he will come and set things right.  
Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written:

“It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. Romans 12

All your sins can be traced back to unbelief in God, his promises, his word.  
If you refuse to believe in God’s justice, bitterness can destroy you,  
just like impatience revealed Saul’s unbelief and destroyed his kingdom.

Let’s talk about impatience, brings to second point.

**MP#2 How faith in Christ leads us to obedience in one specific test—  
the test I'm talking about is the test of patience.**

I know we're all different, we all struggle with unbelief in different areas of life.

But I'm sure there are some of you here who, like Saul, struggle with patience. Impatience is a form of unbelief.

John Piper says impatience is "what we begin to feel when we start to doubt the wisdom of God's timing or the goodness of his guidance."

Impatience is saying:

God, Your plan stinks. Your timetable is all wrong.

It's irritation at the sovereignty of God.

At the people God has put in your life—

the slow people, the incompetent people,  
the unresponsive husbands, nagging wives and demanding children

It's raging at the circumstances God has planned—

the plans that don't work out, the dreams that are not fulfilled,  
the frustrations, accidents, illnesses, delays and setbacks,  
that are all part of his sovereign plan.

Impatience expresses itself in many ways:

internal rage or angry outbursts.

Making hasty, reckless moves to try to get past the obstacles in your way without waiting for God's guidance.

Or finding a person or circumstance is so frustrating that you just give up, bail out, because it's just not worth it to you.

At its heart, impatience says: I want God to serve me.

I have my agenda and a timetable for my life—God better deliver.

Patience is the opposite:

Saying, I live my life at God's pleasure.

I will accept whatever He has planned for me.

I will accept his timing.

Once again, John Piper:

Patience is to wait in God's place or to go at his pace.

Patience is not indifference. Not saying, "I don't care." or "Whatever."

It's not denying the frustrations of life—

but it's living by faith in God.

I think James 5:7-8 one of the best passages on patience in the Bible.

I printed it on the front of the bulletin. Let's read.  
In the land of Israel, the summers are hot and dry—no rain at all—like our summer.  
Then, around October, it starts to rain.

These rains called the autumn rains.

They soften the ground that had baked hard during summer.  
After autumn rains, Israelite farmer would plow, sow winter grains, wheat, barley.

Grain would grow during cooler, wetter winter months.

But farmers would be looking forward to the spring rains, April, May.  
These spring rains swelled the grain, made it good and ripe.

If the spring rains were delayed. Farmer might become impatient.  
Start thinking—if spring rains don't come, if I wait too long to harvest,  
then my fields are hit with a wave of dry summer heat, I'll lose crop.  
But if I harvest now, even though will be inferior grain, better than nothing.  
James says the patient farmer waits—no matter what, waits for spring rains.

In the Old Testament, patience is called “waiting for the Lord.”

The opposite of waiting for the Lord is running ahead of the Lord.

Trying to get around obstacles and solve problems without his guidance.

Or trying to fight your way past things that he has obviously put in your way.  
Or saying, this is an impossible situation, God's not going to help.

He's not going to send the rain I need when I need it, so I better do something.

That's Saul in this story. God said wait, but his army was scattering,  
so he offered the sacrifices, which was his way of saying—God, timing stinks.  
I've got to take control of this thing.

What happened as a result? Saul was worse off than ever.

He's left with 600 men facing massive Philistine army and no divine guidance.

How do you apply this to your life? A few thoughts.

If there is something good that you want very much,  
that for some reason God has not given you, don't try to get it outside of his will.  
And even if it is not clearly a matter of right and wrong,  
but if your conscience, or wisdom, or your trusted friends, parents say,  
slow down, back up—be careful about this relationship, or this decision—listen.  
Don't let impatience convince you that if you don't get this right now,  
then your life is not worth living.

God has better things planned for you if you will wait for his spring rains.  
Does this mean that you will get what you want?

Only God knows your future. But he promises to send the spring rains. God will come to you, and give you all you need for life and happiness. He will bless you with fruitfulness.

I know this is hardest to hear for those of you who have been impatient, and rushed ahead of God, and now you are suffering the consequences—relational, financial and emotional consequences.

What hope does this give me? I wasn't patient. I didn't listen.

Take heart. Jesus was always patient. Saul was the impatient king.

Jesus was the patient king.

He always waited for Father's perfect timing.

Often said: "My time has not yet come." When that time came, went to the cross.

Your sin of impatience is paid for by his death.

Ask for forgiveness and know that you are forgiven, and commit to trusting him.

And Jesus does more than just forgive your impatience, he redeems it.

The Lord didn't abandon Israel because of Saul's unbelief and impatience.

I mentioned Saul's son Jonathan, said we would talk about him next week.

Jonathan steps into this impossible situation, made worse by his father's impatience and by faith he turns it around, and there is a great victory.

He's a Christ figure. He foreshadows what Jesus Christ can also do in your life, when you repent and trust him.

And that's what you must do—trust and obey.

True believers never show themselves indifferent to God's will

They acknowledge their wrongs and repent when they disobey.

They commit themselves to keeping his commandments even when obedience is difficult, scary, or painful.

Commit yourself to obey, to do what God tells you, however hard that may be.

And if the command is to wait on the Lord, then have faith, and wait on the Lord.