

1 Samuel 13

7-18-10

“Saul’s Slippery Slope!”

I. **INTRO:**

- A. Rick & Lorraine Deleon - Divorce Care.
- B. Dominic Gomez & team(50+ folks) - building homes in *Valle Verde, Mexicali, México*.
- C. Wed Night, Sharing our Faith Series - **This week:** Finding your style in sharing your faith.
 - 1. #1 Imp of Discipleship; #2 Testimony(4 part: *my story, His, ours, theirs*).

II. **SAUL’S SLIPPERY SLOPE!**

- A. We’ve all heard the expression “*a Slippery Slope*”. It is the slide from A to Z via the *intermediate steps* B through Y that is the “*slope*”, & the smallness of each step that makes it “*slippery*”.
 - 1. C. S. Lewis said, The safest road to hell is the gradual one - the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.
 - 2. Others have explained it, “really there is no *slippery slope*, only a long *staircase* where each step downward must first be tolerated.”
 - a) Let’s look at Saul’s *1st 4 steps downward*...that eventually ends up at a **witch’s house** & with **suicide** on the battlefield.
- B. **1st STEP DOWN, SAUL FAILED TO ACT DECISIVELY!** (1-4)
- C. (1) Hebrew is difficult here: (NIV) Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years.
- D. (2) Saul fielded an *anti-Philistine attack force* of 3000 men, which he **deployed** in the territory of Benjamin.
 - 1. It was one thing to win victory of the **Ammonites**; to face the **Philistine war-lord’s** & their well equipped divisions...was quite another! (mouse challenging a Panther)
- E. It was **Jonathan**, not **Saul** who **declared war** by attacking one of the Philistine garrisons.
 - 1. **Yet Saul took the credit** & blew the trumpet(or *toots his horn*) to rally the people.
 - 2. **Jonathan** burst onto the scene as a **brave & victorious** soldier.
- F. **2nd STEP DOWN, SAUL FAILED TO INSPIRE THE PEOPLE!** (5-7)
- G. The Philistines responded with a *counterforce* so large that many of Saul's soldiers abandoned him.
 - 1. **Some ran away, some hid, some left the country!** (a.w.o.l. - *absent w/o leave*)
 - a) People still dodge military service in the same ways.

- H. (5) This same *simile* “as the sand which is on the seashore” was also used for **Gideon** in Judges 7:12 & **Saul’s** army was twice the size as Gideon’s.
1. The difference wasn’t so much **the size** of the army, as **the strength** of the leader’s faith!
- I. They **followed him trembling** - **Fear** is caused by attributing to a person, place, or thing 2 attributes that properly belong to God: **Almightiness & Impendency**.
1. **Almightiness** = the power to take away our autonomy(self-governing).
 2. **Impendency** = the power to do us harm.
 3. So **fear God** means to *only relinquish to Him these 2 attributes*.
 - a) The people of Israel had plainly attributed these powers to the Philistines.
 - b) **Such fear** is always in opposition to *true faith*.
 - c) God was ready to come to His help, **if His help** had been properly asked.
- J. **3rd STEP DOWN, SAUL FAILED TO WAIT!** (8-9)
- K. (8,9) On the 7th day Saul tries to rally his frightened troops, & he unlawfully assumes *the role of priest* to offer up the pre-battle burnt offering.
1. Oh if he only **waited** a little longer. Had he only realized that he was **being tested** & that Samuel was actually coming, just in the nick of time!
 2. Ps.46:1 **God is our refuge** (*He’ll hide us*) & **strength** (*He’ll help us*) **a very present help in trouble** (*an abundantly available help in tight places*).
- L. *John McCarthy* said, “When I see a **slippery slope**, my instinct is to **build a terrace**.”
1. Oh, if Saul would have stopped here to *build a terrace*!
 2. **But wait...Why does God expose men to such searching???** (see Deut.8:2)
 - a) **And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these 40 years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.**
- M. **Saul finds himself living on the slope of a volcano, but enjoys the view & stays.**
1. (my musings) I guess It is tempting to live on the side of a volcano. The soil is rich. The view of the valley is spectacular. Others have lived there for years & they’re ok. People there fall in love, get jealous, desire promotions, marry & our given in marriage. **What’s so bad about living on the side of a volcano? What’s so bad about living near the edge? I’m gonna stay!**

N. **Patience** is a mark of character, & Saul's character was weak.

1. The 19th-century preacher **A. B. Simpson** said, "Beloved, have you ever thought that someday you will **not** have **anything** to **try** you, **or anyone** to **vex** you again? There will be **no** opportunity in **heaven** to learn **or** to show the spirit of patience, forbearance, and longsuffering. If you are to practice these things, it must be **now**." Each day affords countless opportunities to learn **patience**. Let's not waste them!
2. **God's best gifts come slowly**. **Paul** had time to realize this as he lay in prison; **Moses** must have asked, 'Why?' many times during the **delays** in Midian & in the wilderness; **Jesus** Himself experienced the discipline of **delay** in His silent years before His great public ministry began.
 - a) According to *a traditional Hebrew story* Thomas Lindberg writes, **Abraham** was sitting outside his tent one evening when he saw an old man, weary from age and journey, coming toward him. Abraham rushed out, greeted him, and then invited him into his tent. There he washed the old man's feet and gave him food and drink. The old man immediately began eating without saying any prayer or blessing. So Abraham asked him, "Don't you worship God?" The old traveler replied, "I worship fire only and reverence no other god." When he heard this, Abraham became incensed, grabbed the old man by the shoulders, and threw him out his tent into the cold night air. When the old man had departed, God called to his friend Abraham and asked where the stranger was. Abraham replied, "I forced him out because he did not worship you." God answered, "I have suffered him these **eighty years** although he dishonors me. Could you not endure him **one night**?"

O. **4th STEP DOWN, SAUL FAILED TO TELL THE TRUTH!** (10-15)

P. I read that **good coaches** for **ski jumpers** stand at the **top** of the slope and watch the jumpers prepare, **rather than** standing at the **bottom** and watching them land.

1. Thus Samuel, standing at the top of Saul's jump/leap/descent.

Q. When **David sinned**, he came with **confessions**; when **Saul sinned**, he had only **excuses**. He lied to his best friend, & it cost him his crown. (& he'll do it again **15:15**)

R. (11) **Excuses 101**: It was "the people"; it was "your fault"; it was "the Philistines"! Or, "If the **soldiers** didn't desert me...if **you** hadn't come late...if the **Philistines** weren't getting so close!"

1. Billy Sunday defines excuses as, "the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie."
2. Benjamin Franklin said, "I never knew a man who was good at making **excuses who was good at anything else**."
3. **Adam** made the **1st excuse for sin** in the garden (blamed eating the fruit on Eve) & many have followed his bad example.

- a) **Adam** blamed Eve; **Eve** turned & blamed the serpent; & **the serpent** said, “*wait, I don’t have a leg to stand on!*” :)
- b) Excuses only make matters worse.¹
- c) **Q:** Are you skilled at minimizing *your own sins* & emphasizing *the faults of others* like Saul was?

(1) This isn’t the way a man of God leads God’s people.

S. **I saw** (11) - maybe indicates he was walking by **sight** & **not faith**.

T. (12) **I felt compelled** - **Really?** Why didn’t you feel compelled to **pray**? **Or**, to **cry out** to God. Compelled to **wait**. Why didn’t you feel compelled to **do the right thing**?

U. (13) **You have done foolishly, you have not kept the commandment of the Lord** your God.

1. I wonder if Saul was thinking “*come on, I’m no super-saint. I’m no super-hero!*”
2. **God is not looking for Super-Heroes!** There is no such thing as Super-heroes!
3. There’s no such thing as *perfect people* who lead & save the world, & fly with capes. **Those are left to comic books.**²
4. God did it all for Saul, Saul still defects. There is no such thing as Super-heroes!
5. There is no such thing as humans that just “*have it in them*” & that’s just their destiny of “*who they’re going to become*”.
6. There is no such thing as Super-heroes! Yet, there is such a thing as **heroes!**
 - a) **And it involves a lot of ordinary people who make incredibly ordinary decisions to live heroic lives.**

V. (15) Following the tense confrontation between prophet & king, Saul abandoned his plans to attack the Philistines that day & returned instead to his home town of Gibeah. Only 600 troops were still with him at this time. [**Yet can’t God do it w/only 300? Gideon**]

W. Here in Gilgal, Saul **lost** his **dynasty**; in ch.15 w/the Amalekites his sin there will **cost** him his **kingdom**; **then** eventually he’ll **lose** both his **crown** & his **life**.

X. **MIDDLE EAST ARMS RACE!** (16-23)

Y. **A DWINDLING ARMY!** (16)

Z. **A THREATENED ARMY!** (17,18, 23)

AA. **A DEPRIVED ARMY!** (19-22)

¹ Warren Wiersbe: 1 Sam.13; With The Word.

² Hank Fortner: Mosaic Podcast 6-20-10. Heros & Villains, Saul.

BB. Consider the Israelites great danger. (see 5,6 & 19-22)

1. It was bad enough to **lack men**, but to **not be properly equipped**?
2. While the Philistines had 3,000 chariots; 6000 horsemen; a multitude of soldiers; & now iron weaponry!
 - a) Their weapons were of bronze which easily could have been shattered by a steel 1.
 - b) The Philistines had learned the science of *iron smelting*.
3. In such a situation what ought they have known to be the one **indispensable & sure** secret of survival & victory? (see 12:14)
 - a) They had a **Great God!** - If only they would **trust Him!**

CC. **As believers today:** We have a great work done for us on the cross. Our Lord defeated every enemy. His power is available for His people. We have the armor & weapons we need (Eph.6:10). We know the strategy of the enemy. We own all the resources we have inherited in Christ.

1. All He asks is that we **trust Him & obey His orders**, & He will help us **win the battle!**
2. **Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord & in the power of His might** (Eph 6:10)
3. **For the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands.** (1Sam.17:47)

DD. If there is no "*slippery slope*", only a **long staircase** where each step downward is first tolerated, then the next.

1. In what area of your life have you started descending?
What step do you find yourself on? - Is it time to cut a terrace? - Is it time to do an about-face (repent)? Yes, it's an upward climb to get back. Calvary is always an uphill climb. Yes, the cross is heavy. Yes, it pleases God. Yes, it's worth it.