

LITTLE IN THINE OWN EYES

TEXT: *1 Samuel 15:17: And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the Tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?*

Saul possessed the intellectual, moral, and spiritual qualities that constitute a great public leader. He was heroic, enthusiastic, and generous. The early part of his reign was adorned with soul-stirring examples of heroic deeds. He was all that the human heart could choose.

He represented the best possibilities of human nature. As the people looked at his splendid figure, they shouted again and again that patriotic cry, “*GOD SAVE THE KING*”. This same cry has been heard so many times since, but — as in the case of Saul — it has so seldom been fulfilled.

God had to let Saul stand before the ages to show that man — at his best — is only a man, and that human self-sufficiency always ends in failure and desperate sorrow. This is the lesson that God is still trying to teach His children. How few of us have found this out so fully that we can say:

. . . human self-sufficiency always ends in failure and desperate sorrow.

Romans 7:18a: For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:.

Our flesh is at constant war with our spirit, so there is but one thing that we can do with it — we must keep it under subjection by nailing it to the Cross of Jesus Christ. We are to reckon it dead, and are to die daily to self, that carnal flesh. As the apostle Paul said:

Galatians 2:20: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.

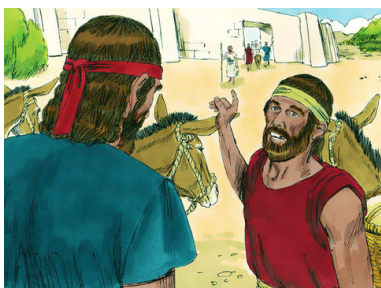
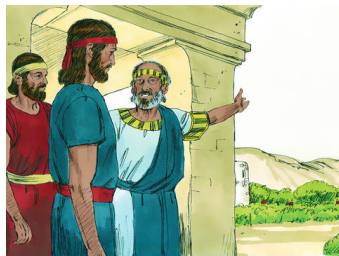
The spirit of self can rise up within any person, and Saul is a good example. Saul was good and attractive, both naturally and spiritually, and had many elements of sterling virtue and genuine humility. Like a dutiful son, he went to search for his father’s asses:

1 Samuel 9:1-4:

1 Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.

2 And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the Children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

3 And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses.



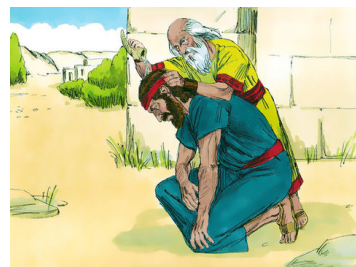
After searching for the asses everywhere in vain, his servant suggest they visit the man of God — Samuel — who would be able to guide them.

1 Samuel 9:5-6:

5 And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us.

6 And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go.

When Saul came to Samuel, it was then that Saul was given the extraordinary message that he was to be anointed as king. There was no unbecoming, self-consciousness about Saul. He kept his secret with discretion and modesty, and even when telling his uncle about the words of Samuel, he said nothing to him about the greater message concerning the kingdom.



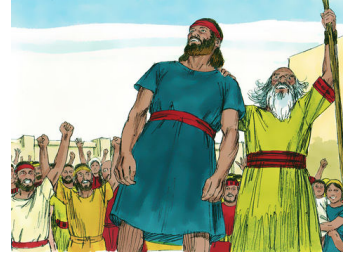
When he left the presence of Samuel, he did just what he was told to do, and when he met the company of prophets, he joined them and received a re-baptism of the Spirit which they had, and he prophesied among them with genuine humility. Even when they sought for him in order to bring him out before the people to announce that he was their choice as the national ruler, they could not find him, for he was hiding among the baggage, very humble and meek.

1 Samuel 10:22-24:

22 Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff.

23 And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.

24 And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.



Sadly, this is the very man who eventually let the dark and dreadful blight his own life which ruined his kingdom and his family. **Oh, how self-deceptive is the human spirit. Oh, how pride can get into one's heart until it destroys him.**

In speaking of his earlier life, the Prophet Samuel paid a tribute to his earlier humility.

1 Samuel 15:17: And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the Tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?

We cannot doubt that Samuel's language is perfectly sincere, and that he is giving Saul credit for having had genuine humility. What then was the defect? May it have been this: It is one thing to be little in our own eyes, but it is another thing to stay that way.

**True humility is not thinking mainly of ourselves,
it is not thinking of ourselves at all.**

**What we need is not so much self-denial
as self-crucifixion and utter self-forgetfulness.**

The perfect child is just as unconscious in the highest place as in the lowest, and the true Spirit of Christ in us recognizes ourselves as no longer ourselves, but as *one with the Lord Jesus*. May we truly say:

Galatians 2:20b: . . . yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:

1 Corinthians 15:10a: By the grace of God, I am what I am:

But what are we to learn from this combination of so many excellencies in one life, and its ultimate failure and ruin? Alas, we are to learn that satan's choicest wile is to mingle the good with the evil, and to cover his poison as a sugar-coated pill; for he knows we would never take it in its unmixed and undiluted evil. Satan's choicest agents are those who are attractive and naturally lovely — *you!*

You may be beautiful, you may be wise, you may be cultured, you may be moral, you may be living for yourself and, at last — like Saul — you may be self-destroyed.

Satan doesn't want your property outright now. He only wants a mortgage on it, and he is content to take a mortgage for a thousand dollars if he cannot get one for a hundred thousand. He can wait for the day of foreclosure. All he wants is to have his hand in it. It is the mixed lives that are doing mischief.

It is the mixed lives that are doing mischief.

2 Corinthians 6:17-18:

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

The first test came to Saul in an hour of severe trial when, beleaguered by his enemies and deserted by almost all his soldiers, he seemed to be facing destruction. Waiting seven days for the Prophet Samuel to come and begin the battle by the usual sacrificial offering, Saul at last grew discouraged and impatient. Then he presumed to take upon himself the priestly functions which belonged *only* to Samuel, and to offer up the sacrifice without waiting for the Prophet. As he was offering it, Samuel came and instantly pronounced upon Saul the terrible sentence:

1 Samuel 13:13-14:

13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the Commandment of the Lord thy God, which He commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever.

14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.

Many a life succeeds while all is successful, but in the hour of trial *Self* always shows itself. Saul was a splendid king until the first great trial met him, and then he became discouraged, distrustful, self-asserting, presumptuous, and dared to take in his own hands things that belonged only to God. He usurped the throne of God himself and showed his true nature. He was a man of his own heart, NOT God's heart. Henceforth, God sought a man [David] after His own heart who would do God's Will and not his own, thus being a true representative of Israel's true King.

1 Samuel 13:8-14:

8 And he [Saul] tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

9 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.

10 And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

11 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.



13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which He commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

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As soon as Saul had shown himself in his real character, God immediately delivered the people from the peril of the Philistines by using just two men – Jonathan, the son of Saul, and Jonathan's armor bearer.

1 Samuel 14:1:

Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the

Philistines' garrison, that is one the other side, But he told not his father.

1 Samuel 14:6-17:

6 And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.

7 And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart.

8 Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto these men, and we will discover ourselves unto them.

9 If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them.

10 But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this shall be a sign unto us.

11 And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves.

12 And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.

13 And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him.

14 And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow.

15 And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling.

16 And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another.

17 Then said Saul unto the people that were with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armourbearer were not there.

By using just these two men, God showed Saul how little He needed his strength or any human strength or wisdom, and how all-sufficient God is to those who truly trust Him. Even this victory Saul almost wrecked by his interference and willfulness by issuing a terrible command:

1 Samuel 14:24-35:

24 And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food.

25 And all they of the land came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground.

26 And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath.

27 But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.

28 Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food this day. And the people were faint.

29 Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.

30 How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?

31 And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint.

32 And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground: and the people did eat them with the blood.

33 Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day.

34 And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay them here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew them there.

35 And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD.

It became apparent by Saul's own folly that he could not be trusted with God's work, and that his persistent self-will would always hinder the Will and the work of God.

Not instantly did the crisis come upon Saul. God let this spirit of self work out to its full development slowly; but it was evident from this hour that Saul's life must fail, and that Samuel's prophecy was, alas, true.

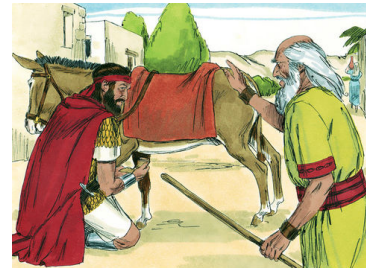
God gave Saul another opportunity and a second test. He sent Saul on an important expedition to destroy Amalek (the Amalekites), the race of Esau that had tried to hinder Israel in their passage through the wilderness.

1 Samuel 15:1-3:

1 Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over His people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the Words of the LORD.

2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.



There is a deep spiritual meaning to this story: Amalek is a type of the flesh, and the destruction of Amalek is just an illustration of the very principle which Saul's life so strongly emphasized — the flesh. Saul's failure to destroy Amalek is, therefore, all the more significant because it shows how deeply rooted the "self" principle was in his own soul.

1 Samuel 15:9: But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

Saul — the man who spared Agag — was the man who spared the principle of self in his own heart; and the two pictures blend with an awful significance for everyone of us.



Saul believed he had successfully accomplished the invasion, and returned victorious.

1 Samuel 15:13-14:

13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

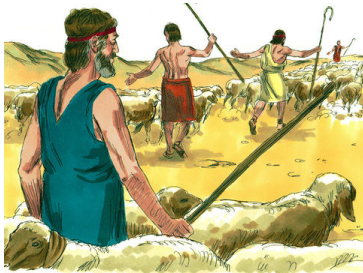
Saul seems to have been so possessed with the spirit of self-complacency that he failed to realize his own true character until Samuel uttered these fearful words about his downfall.

1 Samuel 15:14, 19-23:

14 And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?

20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.



21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is

better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the Word of the LORD, He hath also rejected thee from being king.



It is doubtful if even then Saul fully realized the nature of his sin. So subtle and self-deceiving is the spirit of self that even then all he had to feel was the fear of being humiliated before the people. So he begged the petty bauble of Samuel's public recognition and honor, and this little bit of vain glory was the solace and the comfort of his wretched soul in the hour when the sentence of death and ruin was thundering in his ears.

1 Samuel 15:30:

Then he [Saul] said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God.

What a spectacle of complacent self-deception, the snare of a religious motive,

keeping the spoil to sacrifice to the Lord! We see the fear of man, the unwillingness of this weak man to displease the people when they begged him to save the precious booty of Amalek.

But one word above all others seems to crystallize the very element of this stupendous folly. It is the word “compromise”. Saul obeyed, but with a compromise. Saul did much good, but he compromised with evil. God’s commandments are uncompromising, inexorable, and unqualified. Our obedience must be inflexible, absolute, and complete. The faintest reservation is really the very heart of disobedience. This is what got Saul, David, and Balaam into all their trouble with God.

Saul stands before us in this picture as the incarnation of self-will and, therefore, the enemy of God; nay, the rival of God upon His very Throne. Could there be any other issue?

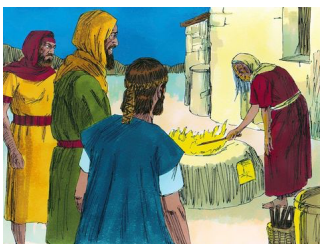
1 Samuel 15:26b: for thou hast rejected the Word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

The judgment did not come immediately, but slowly. Yet, the coil of self continued to unwind until all its hidden nature had been revealed. Saul did much work after this, much good work, fought many battles and fought them well, reigned over Israel, and established a powerful kingdom; but it was Saul’s kingdom and not God’s. All the remaining years were years of self-activity and self-vindication. For nine years he pursued David, his rival, with ferocious hate. The Spirit of God left Saul, and an evil spirit — by God’s permission — would torment Saul. It was self-incarnate with all its miserable works.



At last the culmination came. Eaten out by the canker of self, his heart became the swelling place of satan. The devil took entire possession of him, and in one dreadful hour he gave himself up to spiritualism, and was rejected of the Lord, because he had sought the counsel of necromancers whom he had formerly persecuted and banished from his kingdom.

1 Samuel 28:7-8:



7 Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.

8 And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up,

whom I shall name unto thee.

This was the last fatal step. Self had driven God from the throne in his life, and now he it gave it to satan. Thus, this next chapter of self in his life was self-destruction.

1 Samuel 28:11-12:

11 Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel.

12 And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul.

1 Samuel 28:15-20:

15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by Prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.

16 Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?

17 And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David:

18 Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.

19 Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

20 Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.



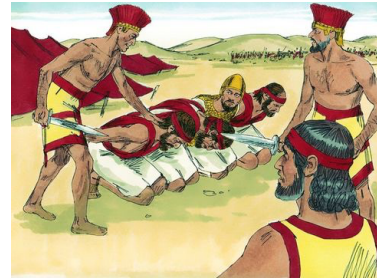
Trembling and prostrated by the fearful vision which his own presumption had brought up from the depths of Hades, Saul dashed with reckless despair into the last battle of his life. The next day the tragedy was complete — the flower of Israel's youth was lying on the slopes of Gilboa. The army of Saul was annihilated,

the Philistines were victorious on every side, and the kingdom which Saul had built up for a quarter of a century for himself was broken to pieces and scattered to the winds.

1 Chronicles 10:2-4:

2 And the Philistines followed hard after Saul, and after his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, the sons of Saul.

3 And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers.



4 Then said Saul to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

The scorpion — self — had stung others, and now at last, it stung itself to death. The revelation of human selfishness was complete, and before the

sad and fearful spectacle, we may well stand in awe, and humbly, earnestly, and fervently pray:

OH, TO BE SAVED FROM MYSELF, DEAR LORD.

OH, TO BE LOST IN THEE!

OH, THAT IT MIGHT BE NO MORE I,

BUT CHRIST WHO LIVES IN ME.

Get rid of the old man, no compromising, no more wavering.

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