

“Costly Consequences” (1 Samuel 13:1–22)

Pressure has a way of making fools out of people. When people feel pressure they are capable of doing strange things and succumbing to sin. You may be in a pressure cooker situation right now. Perhaps you’ve been given a deadline at work and you’re panicking. Your job is tenuous and there are some coworkers who would love your job. You’re tempted to worry and not trust God. Maybe you experience chronic physical pain and you’re considering using alcohol or prescription painkillers to numb your suffering. You’re tempted to assume that God’s strength in weakness is insufficient. Perhaps you’re a teenager who feels the urge to sleep around or party with your friends. Or maybe you feel incredible pressure from your parents to get good grades. You wonder if anyone will really love you for who you are. Maybe you feel pressure to provide for your family—to give them a better life than you had. Your mentality is that happiness can be found in wealth and possessions. I don’t know your particular pressure, but we all experience pressure. Yet, the Scriptures are clear that God wants us to obey His Word even when we’re in an intense crucible. However, *pressure is no excuse for disobedience*.

1 Samuel 13 begins a new section in 1 Samuel that carries through chapter 15. The purpose of these chapters is to document the deterioration of Saul’s reign and Yahweh’s rejection of him as Israel’s king.¹ The dominant feeling in this section is not success, but failure.² Of course, when it comes to leadership, we can frequently learn more from a leader’s failures than his or her successes. Chapter 13 divides into three scenes: 13:1–7 and 13:16–22 are pressure notes on the conflict with the Philistines. These two sections provide a narrative framework for the middle section of 13:8–15, which articulates a stunning theological verdict on Saul.³

1. Saul is threatened by the Philistines (13:1–7). The narrator begins with a chronological note: “**Saul was *thirty* years old when he began to reign, and he reigned *forty* two years over Israel**” (13:1). Please notice that the numbers “thirty” and “forty” are italicized in the NASB.⁴ This is because the Hebrew text literally reads, “Saul was one year old when he became king, and he ruled over Israel two years.” It appears that there are some numbers missing in the Hebrew manuscripts and no one knows what was there originally.⁵ Hence, the ESV and NRSV simply include ellipsis marks (. . .) allowing the reader to fill in the numbers. However, I believe the best solution is to make the most sense of the text from the words we have, rather than trying to decide what words to supply to make sense of the text. The NKJV seems to do this best: “Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose for himself three thousand *men* of Israel. . .” (13:1–2a).⁶ This verse provides a chronological note recording the date of this encounter with the Philistines in reference to Saul’s reign as king.⁷

The narrative account begins in 13:2: “**Now Saul chose for himself 3,000 men of Israel, of which 2,000 were with Saul in Michmash and in the hill country of Bethel, while 1,000 were with Jonathan⁸ at Gibeah of Benjamin. But he sent away the rest of the people, each to his tent.**” The likely reason for the relatively small number of soldiers is that Saul didn’t want to awaken suspicion among the powerful Philistines. So Saul chose to have 2,000 men with him and another 1,000 with his son Jonathan at Gibeah. It would seem that Saul didn’t want to rock the boat! Instead, he attempted to live at peace with God’s enemies and slide under the radar. When you are facing pressure from various enemies, do you seek to avoid conflict, maintain peace, and protect yourself at all costs?

Jonathan was very different from his dad. Verse 3a states that, “**Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it.**” Saul must have been absolutely disgusted with his son’s actions. Yet, Jonathan’s attack on the Philistine garrison was not a foolish or sinful act. He probably knew of Yahweh’s intention to overcome the Philistines (cf. 9:16), and he might have felt that the time to strike was now, *before* the Philistines could establish themselves in the hill country. He also showed initiative and courage, two great leadership qualities his dad lacked.

Unlike Jonathan, Saul was an opportunist who lacked courage, as 13:3b–4 reveals: **“Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land, saying, ‘Let the Hebrews’ hear.’ All Israel heard the news that Saul had smitten the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become odious to the Philistines. The people were then summoned to Saul at Gilgal.”** Saul took credit for Jonathan’s act of courage and “tooted his own horn” to rally the people. This was illegitimate. Instead, godly leaders should deflect praise to others. It is about God working through other people.

Our author continues the account in 13:5–7: **“Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, 30,000¹⁰ chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance;¹¹ and they came up and camped in Michmash, east of Beth-aven. When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait (for the people were hard-pressed), then the people hid themselves in caves, in thickets, in cliffs, in cellars, and in pits.¹² Also some of the Hebrews crossed the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead. But as for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.”** The Philistine response to the destruction of their garrison was an all-out invasion of the Israelite territories. They boasted a thoroughly modern army against the under-equipped and untrained Israelite militia. The Philistines had ten times as many chariots as Israel had men and twice as many horsemen! That was just the beginning of the Philistine force. There were more Philistines than could be counted. Thus, some Israelites were going back across the Jordan to find refuge on the east bank. This was the original A.W.O.L. (Absent Without Leave). They were scared to death!¹³ Saul was forced to retreat to Gilgal. This was the place where the Israelites had first crossed the Jordan to enter the Promised Land under Joshua. The memorial stones still stood there. But in the face of the pressure of this overwhelming enemy, the people were not remembering the Lord’s past victories. Instead, they were hiding and trembling. In the midst of your pressure-packed situation, have you ever wanted to hide and tremble? Pressure makes cowards of us all. Yet, God calls us to obedience in the midst of pressure.

2. Saul is rejected by God (13:8–15). After Saul established himself at Gilgal he awaited Samuel’s arrival as he had been instructed.¹⁴ **“Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him”** (13:8). This is a pressure-packed verse, isn’t it? Saul managed to make it through six days and most of the seventh. But when that seventh day begins to draw to an end, Saul is at his wit’s end because the people are scattering from him, and he thinks the Philistines are going to attack. I can just imagine what is going through his mind: “Where in the world is Samuel, and what is he doing? Doesn’t he know how much danger we’re in? Doesn’t he grasp the urgency of the situation and the need to act quickly? I’m going to give him thirty more minutes, and then I’m going to have to go on without him.” Before you judge Saul too harshly, ask yourself if you’re any different. What do you do when God doesn’t appear on schedule? Perhaps you’ve thought to yourself, “If God won’t do it, I’ll do it for Him.” Be honest now. Haven’t you felt as though God must adhere to your time schedule? Sure you have . . . and so have I!

Feeling extreme pressure, Saul takes matters into his own hands. Our author pens these infamous words: **“So Saul said, ‘Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.’ And he offered the burnt offering”** (13:9). On the seventh day Saul tries to rally his frightened troops, and he appears to unlawfully assume the role of priest to offer up the pre-battle burnt offering.¹⁵ It is important to note though that the text doesn’t necessarily mean that Saul offered the sacrifice *with his own hand*. The expression “he offered the burnt offering” doesn’t mean that Saul himself carried out the offering, but rather that he directed one of his priests to do the work (cf. 2 Sam 24:25). The cooperation of the priests performing this duty is assumed by the narrator.¹⁶ This conclusion is important because it’s sometimes said that Saul’s disobedience here wasn’t that he disobeyed Samuel’s call to wait, but that he offered a sacrifice. However, this is not the issue. Saul’s sin was that he disobeyed the word of Samuel—God’s prophet (cf. Deut 18:18).¹⁷ In this offense, Saul demonstrated that he didn’t have the heart to rule God’s people, as was required in Deut 17:20. Saul’s example serves as a reminder that we must be completely dedicated to the work of the Lord and obey Him with all our heart.¹⁸ *Pressure is no excuse for disobedience.*

Perhaps you're wondering: Why did Saul feel such a compulsion to offer a burnt offering? Before the armies of Israel went out to war, several preparations were necessary. The priest would come forward and address the army (Deut 20:2). A sacrifice would be offered to God (1 Sam 7:9; 13:9), and His guidance would be sought (1 Sam 14:36; 2 Sam 5:23–24). The warriors who marched into battle had to be pure and consecrated to God (Josh 3:5). Saul was apparently trying to do the “right” thing, but he did the right thing in the wrong way at the wrong time. God always wants obedience; therefore, we must do exactly what He says when He says to do it. *Pressure is no excuse for disobedience.*

Sadly, Saul didn't have the patience to wait until the last moment. Foolishly, he lapsed in faith just a few minutes before God's answer came. He started sinning and moving into great disobedience. Yet, this never needed to happen. God is not unsympathetic to our needs. He gives grace in our time of need. This is what Saul wouldn't believe. You and I must realize that God doesn't come to our rescue before we really need it. We must learn patience so that when our faith is challenged we'll believe that God will come to our help in time.¹⁹ In the midst of your pressure, will you make a decision to wait upon the Lord?

Patience is in short supply these days. We're an impatient people whether we're in the grocery store line, at the ATM, or connecting to the Internet. We scream at our computers when they take so long to start-up or suddenly slow down. We yell at our children to slow down when they are going bonkers and yell at them to speed up when they are going at a snail's pace. We are impatient when we're late for class or school or work. We even get impatient when we're trying to get to church on time. (Okay, maybe not.) We're in such a hurry these days. Yet, we must recognize that life is composed of waiting periods. Children must wait for Christmas every year. Teenagers must wait until they are old enough to drive a car. Young people must wait until they are old enough to marry. Adults must wait until they are financially stable enough to retire. The art of waiting is not learned at once. It takes patience. In what area of your life are you struggling with impatience? Will you stop and see that God's best gifts come slowly.

In 13:10 we enter into one of the most intense encounters in the Bible: **“As soon as he [Saul] finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him and to greet him.”** What do you think was going through Saul's mind at this moment? I can't be sure, but I suspect he gulped, sighed, and perspired. No doubt he was flooded with regret in that moment. He must have thought to himself: “Oh, if only I had waited a little longer . . . Had I only realized that I was being tested and that Samuel was actually coming, just in the nick of time! Despite Saul's feelings and the inevitable lump in his throat, he put on a smile and went out and greeted Samuel. **“But Samuel said, ‘What have you done?’”** (13:11a) Samuel is beside himself! He is undoubtedly disappointed because his delay was likely to test Saul's faith and obedience to his prophetic word.²⁰ Truly, *pressure is no excuse for disobedience.*

Saul drops his facade and unwittingly reveals his guilty conscience by playing the “blame game.”²¹ **“And Saul said, ‘Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, therefore I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.’ So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering”** (13:11–12).²² Saul rapidly offers five justifications: (1) “I saw that the people were scattering from me.” Who is at fault? It's the people. “I'm merely their representative and I have to go along with whatever they decide.” (2) “You did not come within the appointed days.” Samuel is also at fault. “If you weren't always late, Sam, I wouldn't be in this mess right now.” (3) “The Philistines were assembling at Michmash.” Saul also blames his circumstances. If only I wasn't in this pressure cooker. (4) “The Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal,²³ and I have not asked the favor of the Lord. If there wasn't an expectation of worship, this would've never happened.” Saul blames God Himself! (5) “I forced myself and offered the burnt offering. I just couldn't help myself.” Saul's excuses remind me of Benjamin Franklin's classic quote: “I never knew a man who was good at making excuses who was good at anything else.” How true! True leaders refuse to make excuses; instead, they accept responsibility for sin and turn from it. *Pressure is no excuse for disobedience.*

In 13:13–14 Samuel speaks some very severe words to Saul: **“You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.²⁴ But now your kingdom shall not endure.²⁵ The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.”²⁶** Why is Saul’s punishment so severe? Why did God remove Saul for such a seemingly minor sin? It seems that Saul did what he had to do.²⁷ Furthermore, both David and Solomon would later make similar sacrifices without receiving the slightest reprimand (2 Sam 24:25; 1 Kgs 3:15). So why is Saul criticized so sternly and why does he lose so much? It is critical to recognize that Saul’s sin isn’t the mere fact that he offers a sacrifice but that he disobeys God’s Word through the prophet Samuel.²⁸ Disobedience to God’s Word was the overall pattern of Saul’s life. He disregarded God’s commandments. (Note “commandment” and “commanded” [twice]). So God judged him severely.

Saul’s one act of disobedience changed the course of his life. From this point on, it was a sad, downhill journey. We must never forget that disobedience has consequences . . . and some of them may be very costly! One of the greatest consequences/tragedies of Saul’s failure was that it affected his family. Jonathan was a man of faith and integrity, and it seems that he would have been a better king than his father, perhaps as great as David turned out to be. But because of Saul’s failure, he didn’t get a chance. This is absolutely crushing! This calamity should serve to warn us that our actions affect those around us.²⁹ Our choices to disregard God’s Word not only affect us, they also affect our children and grandchildren. How terribly disturbing and frightening to think that the decision we make today can adversely affect our future legacy. Hence, we must constantly train ourselves to always think of our future legacy. I was reminded of this fact as I talked with my parents yesterday. They just returned from San Jose, CA where they threw a birthday party for my dad’s ninety–six year–old aunt. Twenty–four people attended this party and celebrated my Aunt Dorie’s life. As my dad explained the day’s events, I couldn’t help but think about my legacy. How will people remember me? Will Jesus Christ be the driving force of my life and ministry? My future begins today by thinking through how I want my life to conclude.

In lieu of Saul or Jonathan, the Lord appoints a new king (David) who is “a man after His own heart.” This English expression is frequently understood as a statement about the character qualities of David. The implication is that David is a man whose heart matches God’s heart. However, the phrase is literally, “the Lord has sought for Himself a man *according to* His own heart . . .” Furthermore, the term “heart” (*lebab*) connotes “will” or “choice” in this context and emphasizes Yahweh’s freedom in selecting a replacement for Saul rather than continuing Saul’s line. To put this all together: God’s choice of David is according to His own will and purpose.³⁰ In other words, the issue is about the place David had in God’s heart rather than about the place God had in David’s heart.³¹ Indeed, this is generally how God works. He chooses people according to His own will and purposes. As you reflect upon your own life and ministry, one of the best *daily* disciplines you could commit to is to praise God for His sovereignty. I challenge you to grab a 3x5 card or a post-it-note and write an expression of God’s sovereignty over your life and ministry. I would suggest something like this: “Lord, I acknowledge that You are a sovereign God who has chosen me to serve You despite myself. I have nothing in and of myself to offer You. My ministry goal is simply to be an expression of Your grace. May I decrease and may You increase.” Take the time to write up an affirmation of God’s sovereignty today and place it in the flyleaf of your Bible or somewhere else especially significant.

After this clash of the titans, 13:15 serves as a rather anticlimactic verse: **“Then Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men.”³²** It would seem that Samuel’s rebuke didn’t get through to Saul. There is no repentance or brokenness. He seems to just go on with his life—business as usual. Yet, our narrator provides a note that Saul’s army has been diminished from two thousand men to six hundred. Clearly, Saul is plagued with pressure, and pressure will continue to plague Saul the remainder of his life.

3. Saul is demoralized by the Philistines (13:16–22). The rest of the chapter presents another pressure packed scenario describing the position the rag-tag Israelite army faced. Our author writes: **“Now Saul and his son Jonathan and the people who were present with them were staying in Geba of Benjamin while the Philistines camped at Michmash. And the raiders came from the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual, and another company turned toward Beth-horon, and another company turned toward the border which overlooks the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness. Now no blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, ‘Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears.’ So all Israel went down to the Philistines, each to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, and his hoe. The charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to fix the hoes. So it came about on the day of battle that neither sword nor spear was found in the hands of any of the people who *were* with Saul and Jonathan, but they were found with Saul and his son Jonathan.”** Saul and the Israelites were facing incredible obstacles. They were just about surrounded. The Philistines sent out three raiding parties to control three of the roads that provided access to Michmash (13:17–18). Later, a Philistine detachment moved to Michmash (13:16). These actions not only secured their positions at Michmash, but also sealed off Saul’s camp from receiving reinforcements.³³ If this wasn’t bad enough, we learn that the weapons arsenal held by the Israelites was technologically inferior. The Philistines controlled the metal trade and charged high fees to sharpen and repair plowshares, mattocks, axes and sickles (13:20).³⁴ They refused to make iron or bronze weapons for the Israelites (13:19). Only Saul and Jonathan had swords and spears. The rest of the army had weapons made of wood or stone—arrows, slings, clubs, or stone knives. The situation appeared hopeless.

This past week I prayed for Tim Tebow several times as he prepared for his playoff game against the New England Patriots. While I was out of town, I was able to watch ESPN. (I won’t get ESPN at home because my wife would become a sports widow.) It seemed as though the only story they carried was something about Tim Tebow. Of particular interest was the fact that last month (12/2011), Tebow was the most well-known athlete on the planet. Evidently, God has granted Tebow an astounding platform because he has honored and exalted Christ. However, I recognized a number of realities this past week: (1) Tebow and the Broncos were coming off an amazing overtime victory over the Pittsburgh Steelers. Hence, it was likely that they would experience an emotional and physical letdown. (2) The Patriots’ quarterback, Tom Brady, is one of the greatest quarterbacks of all time. (He is second in NFL passing yards.) Yet, no one was talking about Brady this past week because Tebow was the focus. This must have bothered Brady (at least a bit). Consequently, I was confident Brady was going to come out with a statement game seeking to eradicate Tebow-mania. (3) Tebow was experiencing unimaginable pressure and undergoing constant scrutiny all week. This type of media attention and high expectations would distract anyone. These three obstacles led me to pray that Tim Tebow would honor the Lord in the midst of extreme pressure and likely defeat. Unfortunately, my worst fears were recognized as Brady threw for a record six touchdowns, and the Patriots’ defense swallowed up Tebow and the Broncos to the tune of 45 to 10! Fortunately though, Tebow handled the pressure and the loss well. He stayed true to the Lord Jesus and honored Him even in defeat.

Perhaps you have trouble relating to Tebow’s pressures because your pressures are different. How do you respond in hopeless, pressure-filled moments? When you are about to get a C in a particular class, do you cheat and make rationalizations? The Lord wants me to go to this Christian college or university. The end justifies the means. When you are behind in your mortgage payments, are you willing to make certain compromises in order to pull through? You justify the choices because your family’s well-being is on the line. When you are experiencing pressure to walk away from a difficult marriage, do you claim, “My situation is different! I know what God’s Word says . . . BUT . . . *Pressure is no excuse for disobedience.* God expects unwavering obedience because leadership demands absurd obedience.”³⁵ As followers of Christ may we be obedient even in the midst of extreme pressure.

Scripture References

1 Samuel 13:1–22
1 Samuel 15:11, 15:22, 28
Acts 7:46; 13:22
Romans 11:22
Deuteronomy 17:14–20
Psalm 46:1
2 Chronicles 16:9

Study Questions

1. How did Jonathan become a legendary man of faith and courage when his father, Saul, as such a poor example? How should this reality encourage those with passive and sinful fathers? Can courage be learned? If so, how? List some contemporary scenarios that require courage. How can a kingdom leader look to the Lord for courage in these situations? In what area(s) of my life do I need to cultivate courage?
2. Why is obedience to God's Word more important than worship rituals? How is obedience in adverse circumstances an expression of true worship? When have I recently obeyed the Lord in a pressure-packed situation? What were the fruits of my obedience? How can I encourage others to obey God's Word in the midst of life's trials and temptations?
3. Is there an area of my life where I have sensed spiritual decline? Am I addressing this area to avoid falling away from the Lord? In what area of my life have I struggled with patience? Why have I struggled in this particular area? How have I recently exhibited impatience? Will I pray for the grace to trust God and wait on His timetable? Read Psalm 27:14; Isaiah 40:31; and 2 Peter 1:6–8.
4. What types of excuses have I used in the past to rationalize or justify certain actions that violated one of God's commands? Are my explanations as to why I did not do God's will ever adequate? In what specific ways has the Lord exercised His discipline in my life? Why did He do so? What did I learn from His discipline? Read Hebrews 12:5–11.
5. In what specific ways should a kingdom leader be held accountable? How can the church facilitate accountability for all of its leaders? Name some of the leadership skills needed in God's kingdom today. How can I learn these skills? How can a kingdom leader remain faithful to the will of God? What specific activities must be done to ensure faithfulness?

Notes

¹ Bill T. Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*. New International Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 196. Tanner insightfully remarks: “While these chapters (13–15) reveal a rejection of Saul’s kingship, YHWH accomplishes His purposes at the same time. Saul serves to expose the nation’s foolish decision, while at the same time furthering YHWH’s purposes. We might say that Saul was being used by YHWH but was not necessarily pleasing to YHWH.” See J. Paul Tanner, “The Rejection of Saul’s Rule” (1 Sam 13:1–15:35) in “Old Test Notes Vol 2” at www.paultanner.org; accessed 6 January 2012.

² Robert P. Gordon, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*. Library of Biblical Interpretation series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 131. Smith writes: “Assessed positively, 1 Sam 13–15 are the preamble to the rest of 1 Samuel which addresses the theological issue of how it came to be that Israel’s kings trace their descent from David, not Saul.” James E. Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*. College Press, NIV Commentary (Joplin: College Press, 2000), 171.

³ Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*. Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 98.

⁴ The NASB translators viewed thirty-two years of Saul’s reign + seven-and-a-half years of Ishbosheth. This rendering has the support of Acts 13:21, which says that Saul reigned for forty years, but this might be a round number.

⁵ The Septuagint (LXX) omits the entire verse. The Latin Vulgate translates the Hebrew literally. Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 197 remarks: “Regardless of the reason for the incomplete reference to Saul’s reign in 13:1, it seems ironic that it heralds Saul’s flawed reign. The regal formula introducing Saul is as defective as the king himself!”

⁶ See also Bob Deffinbaugh, “Saul Sacrifices His Kingdom” (1 Sam 13:1–14): www.bible.org/seriespage/saul-sacrifices-his-kingdom-1-samuel-131-14; accessed 6 January 2012.

⁷ Leithart writes: “The ‘son of one year’ refers back to his ‘adoption’ into the company of the prophets of which Samuel was father. He was publicly made king at Gilgal within a year after his initial anointing, and two additional years pass between his anointing and the battle at Michmash.” Peter J. Leithart, *A Son to Me: An Exposition of 1 & 2 Samuel* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), 79. I would add that since Acts 13:21 reveals that Saul ruled over Israel forty years, the two years must refer to the period of reign up to a particular event—likely Saul’s encounter with the Philistines described in this chapter.

⁸ This is the first time that Jonathan is mentioned in 1 Samuel.

⁹ Waltke notes: “Saul calls them ‘Hebrews’ to remind them that they are subjects—second-class citizens, deprived of their own sovereign state, similar to their situation in Egypt.” Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 637.

¹⁰ Various English versions translate the number of chariots as 3,000 (e.g., NET, HCSB, NIV, NLT).

¹¹ This same simile “like the sand which is on the seashore” was also used for Gideon in Judg 7:12, and Saul’s army was twice the size as Gideon’s!

¹² This has happened before (see Judges 6:1–6).

¹³ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 98 remarks: “The conduct of the Israelites in the face of the Philistine threat is a sharp contrast to their conduct when Saul fought the Ammonites (ch. 11). In that chapter the Israelites were bold, buoyant, and filled with energy.” As Leithart, *A Son to Me*, 81 observes: “The dread of Yahweh fell on Israel the last time Saul led them to battle. This time it was terror of the Philistines.”

¹⁴ There is scholarly debate on whether 1 Sam 13:8 refers back to 10:8.

¹⁵ Saul was authorized to act as a judge and a warrior, but not as a priest. Another king, Uzziah, would later offer unauthorized sacrifice and be punished by God with a lifetime case of leprosy (2 Chron 26:16–21).

¹⁶ John Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 227; Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 177.

¹⁷ Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 198 states: “Standing beside every Israelite king was to be a prophet speaking God’s word for the situation. The degree to which the king obeyed or rejected that prophetic word was the determining factor in the Bible’s evaluation of his reign. In a sense, Yahweh remained Israel’s King, represented by his prophet, who ordered Yahweh’s anointed one.”

¹⁸ Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 227.

¹⁹ Michael Eaton, *1 Samuel*. Preaching Through The Bible (Kent: Sovereign World, 1995), 53.

²⁰ Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 638.

²¹ When David sinned, he came with confessions; when Saul sinned, he had only excuses. Saul lied to his best friend, and it cost him his crown. He does the very same thing again in 1 Sam 15:15.

²² Long persuasively argues that “I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering” (1 Sam 13:12b) should be rendered, ‘I restrained myself (i.e., pulled myself together when the temptation was to flee) and offered the burnt offering.’ According to this reading, Saul would not be admitting to a breach of conscience, as commonly assumed,

but, on the contrary, would be claiming to have acted in a self-controlled and even heroic manner.” V. Philips Long, *The Reign and Rejection of King Saul: A Case for Literary and Theological Coherence*. SBLDS 118 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 89.

²³ It is doubtful that the Philistines would’ve attacked Saul at Gilgal (13:12a) near the Jordan. Gilgal was isolated. Hence, Israel could expect to assemble there without undue fear of Philistine attack. Davis, *1 Samuel*, 107 n. 4 writes, “In 1 Samuel 12 Gilgal is the place of covenant renewal; in 1 Samuel 13 it is the place of royal failure.”

²⁴ Kaiser does an excellent job answering the question: “Would God have established Saul’s kingdom?” He offers several possible responses and then concludes that a combination of two views is possible: (1) It may well have been that God fully intended that Judah, and eventually the house of David, would rule over Israel and Judah. But it is also possible that Saul’s family would have been given the northern ten tribes of Israel after the division of the kingdom, which God in his omniscience, of course, could anticipate. That would resolve the question just as easily. (2) God had agreed to appoint Saul king in deference to the people’s deep wishes. Though the Lord had consented, this was not his directive will; he merely permitted it to happen. Eventually, what the Lord knew all along was proved true: Saul had a character flaw that precipitated his demise. Nevertheless, it is possible to describe Saul in terms of what he could have been, barring that flaw, in the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the Israelites. Walter C. Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 204.

²⁵ Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 198 writes: “It would be a mistake, however, to assume that this prophetic condemnation is a final rejection of Saul and his reign. Rather, Saul has lost the opportunity to establish an eternal dynasty. He himself will keep the throne, but it will not pass to his descendants and endure forever, as eventually will be promised to David (2 Sam. 7:15–16).”

²⁶ The word rendered “appoint” (*tsavah*) is, in fact, “command,” so that we have a double use of the word: “Yahweh has *commanded* him to be prince . . . because you have not kept what Yahweh *commanded* you.” Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 150 notes that the term *mitsvah* specifically refers to the stipulations of the Torah (cf. Exod 24:12), and it is used here to indicate that Samuel’s words spoken in his role as a prophet are to be equated with those of Moses on Mount Sinai.

²⁷ John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*. Preaching the Word series (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 233.

²⁸ Ronald F. Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), Electronic ed; Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 198; Davis, *1 Samuel*, 109; Long, *The Reign and Rejection of King Saul*, 87–93 notes that Saul fails to accept the structure of authority established for him by Yahweh and His prophet Samuel at the time of his appointment.

²⁹ Michael A. Harbin, *The Promise and the Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 222.

³⁰ See Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 134; Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 235; John Goldingay, *1 and 2 Samuel for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2010), 68. Walton writes: “From the use of the phrase in Psalm 20:4 and Jeremiah 3:15 it can be seen that it does not refer to David’s pursuit of the Lord, but to God’s choosing of David for his own reasons and according to his own will. The phrase is also used in Babylonian texts to refer to a king putting another king of his own choosing on the throne of a subjugated people. The point here is that while Saul met the criteria given by the people (their job description), David met the criteria that were important to the Lord (God’s job description).” John H. Walton & Kim E. Walton, *The Bible Story Handbook* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 158–59.

³¹ Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 199 suggests that the expression “a man after God’s own heart” also connotes something positive about David’s character over Saul’s. The new king will genuinely act in accordance with Yahweh’s wishes in a way that Saul does not.

³² Petersen writes: “Saul goes on, oblivious to Samuel’s prophetic rebuke, and continues with business as usual. Did he hear a single word of these words of Samuel, which we have just read? Listening does not seem to have been one of Saul’s strong points.” Eugene H. Peterson, *First and Second Samuel*. Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 80.

³³ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 154.

³⁴ Harbin, *The Promise and the Blessing*, 222 comments: “The reference seems to be to a lack of iron weaponry because of a Philistine monopoly on the ironworking guild. Another observation is that many of the “soldiers” were conscripts: unskilled fighters who depended primarily on numbers to win. A skilled warrior under the right circumstances could put a larger force to route.”

³⁵ Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 638.