

## SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

**I SAM. 13:5** And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which *is* on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven.

**6. When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits.**

7. And some *of* the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

**8. And he 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 earnest 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.

**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.**

# Saul's Disobedience Under Pressure

Lesson Text: I Samuel 13:5-14

Related Scriptures: Numbers 18:1-7; II Chronicles 26:16-21;  
Psalm 50:7-15; Acts 13:21-23

TIME: 1041 B.C.

PLACE: Michmash; Gilgal

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—“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” (I Samuel 13:13).

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## *Lesson Exposition*

### **SAUL AND THE PEOPLE FEAR DEFEAT—I Sam. 13:5-7**

**The Philistines gather (I Sam. 13:5).** During the first two years of his reign (cf. I Sam. 13:1), King Saul seemed to be going in the right direction. That, however, was going to change. Recognizing the Philistine threat, Saul gathered a small army, and his son Jonathan led a successful raid on a Philistine outpost. In response, the Philistines amassed a significant military force to launch a counterattack on Israel. The Philistines had a huge advantage against the Israelites.

**The people distressed (I Sam. 13:6-7).** Seeing they were vastly outnumbered, the Israelites hid themselves from the advancing Philistines. While Saul had proved himself a worthy military leader against the Ammonites, the Philistine threat was more formidable. Consequently, “the people followed him trembling” (13:7). With each passing day, both Saul and his men probably became more anxious, wondering when Samuel was going to arrive. The longer the delay, the greater the likelihood that more of his men would slip away before the battle began.

### **SAUL GIVES IN TO FEAR—I Sam. 13:8-12**

**A scattering of soldiers (I Sam. 13:8).** To his credit, Saul realized he needed the Lord’s help to defeat the Philistines. Since Samuel was Israel’s spiritual leader, he was supposed to officiate over the sacrifices that were made prior to battle. Samuel, however, had not arrived. Saul had become impatient during the seven days of waiting. Not only was Saul impatient, but so were his soldiers. Since they were starting to scatter, Saul decided to take matters into his own hands.

**A sacrifice offered (I Sam. 13:9-10).** Saul, tired of waiting for Samuel to arrive, commanded that the proper offerings be brought to him; he then offered them to the Lord. Just after Saul completed offering the sacrifice, Samuel arrived. Presumably Saul had no qualms about what he had just done, as he went out to greet Samuel.

**Samuel’s rebuke (I Sam. 13:11-12).** Shocked because of Saul’s actions, Samuel asked, “What hast thou done?” Since only priests were ordained by God to offer sacrifices, Saul had presumptuously assumed a role that was not his. Saul certainly knew

better; this was not a sin of ignorance. Saul excused himself and attempted to justify what he had done. He explained to Samuel that he was afraid the Philistines would attack soon. Recognizing that they needed God's blessing, Saul declared that he had "forced" himself to assume the role of priest and offer the sacrifice (I Sam. 13:12). This, he wrongly assumed, was the right thing to do under the circumstances. Instead, it was blatant disobedience to both the revealed will of God in Scripture and Samuel's explicit instructions.

### **SAUL'S FOOLISH DECISION—I Sam. 13:13-14**

In response to Saul's stated reasons for presuming to offer the sacrifice, Samuel bluntly answered, "Thou hast done foolishly" (vs. 13).

To disobey God is always a foolish decision, as there is no excuse for such disobedience. Indeed, the disobedience was not in what was offered but in how it was offered, as priests alone were ordained for this mediatorial role (Lev. 17:1-7).

We know that God saw the actions of Saul as a serious breach of His Word because of the immediate judgment Samuel pronounced upon the king. Had Saul revered the Lord through obedience, his kingdom would have been established in perpetuity.

Although Saul had been king only for a brief time, he would be replaced by "a man after [God's] own heart" (I Sam. 13:14), usually understood to mean a man who would put God first. The man who would replace Saul was David

In spite of Saul's disobedience, Israel was victorious over the Philistines, but King Saul continued to make foolish decisions. Because of a distorted view of grace, some have concluded that obedience is of no consequence (cf. Rom. 6:1-2). To be sure, our obedience does not earn God's favor; but God's grace instructs us to live in a manner that reflects a regenerate heart (Titus 2:11-12). Christ was obedient to the Father's will (John 6:38), as we also should be. Do you obey God as Jesus did, or are you more like King Saul?

—John Alva Owston

## **QUESTIONS**

1. Why did the Philistines attack Israel this time?
2. How formidable was the Philistine army?
3. What did many Israelites do when the Philistine army advanced?
4. How long was Saul to wait for Samuel?
5. What did Saul's impatience lead him to do?
6. What excuses did Saul offer for his actions?
7. How did Samuel respond to Saul's disobedience?
8. What would the Lord have done had Saul been obedient?
9. What kind of man was God looking for? What does this mean?
10. How important is obedience in the Christian life? Why do some believers disobey God?

—John J Alva Owston.

## **PRACTICAL POINTS**

1. When we forget that the Lord is with us, our battle against enemy forces
2. will fail (I Sam. 13:5-7).
3. We should wait patiently on the Lord, even if it seems He will never come (vs. 8).
4. Our plans should never replace obeying God's Word (vss. 9-11).
5. No amount of sacrifices can take the place of obedience to God's Word (vs. 12).
6. When we step outside of what God has shown that He requires of us, He will be displeased with us (vs. 13).
7. When we disobey God's Word, we will not be blessed to carry out His will (vs. 14).

—Wardell Miller

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. What happens when we focus our attention on the problems we face instead of on God (I Sam. 13:5-7)?
2. How is it possible that partial obedience to God's Word is the same as total disobedience (vss. 8-9)?
3. Why must we wait on God's timing and not get ahead of it (vss. 10-11)?
4. In what ways can God's people stray beyond what He has called them To do (vs. 12)?
5. What are some typical excuses for disobedience to God's Word? Are there any that He accepts (vs. 13)?
6. What are some ways believers today presume on God's will (vs. 14)?
7. How can God's periods of delay test our patience?

—Wardell Miller

## *Golden Text Illuminated*

**"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" (I Samuel 13:13).**

If we are honest, our initial reaction to Samuel's denunciation is that it seems overly harsh. Saul's offering in supplication of the Lord's help in the coming battle against the Philistines was inappropriate; he had been instructed to wait for Samuel. But what other choice did he have?

That was precisely how Saul excused his action to Samuel, and therein lies a main problem with his actions and attitudes: he sought to justify himself rather than admit his sin and seek forgiveness. It was not just the inappropriate act that sealed his doom but his response to being confronted with his sin. Because Saul persisted in self-justification, resentment and bitterness were planted like poisonous weeds in his heart.

From this point on in Saul's career, the weeds grew larger with each succeeding spiritual test he encountered until circumventing the Lord's commands became his automatic mode of response to every critical situation he faced.

We are reminded of the admonition in Hebrews 10:31: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." But the writer also reassured his Christian readers, saying, "Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation" (6:9).

—John Lody.