

Prayer List

Gene
Veda
Wallace
Sheila
Ophelia

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 10:00 a.m.
Assembly 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Elders:

Brad Behrens - bradbehrens@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Michael Odom - MichaelOdom@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Ernie Sprinkel - preacher@pinolechurchofchrist.com

This Week's Question:

What two New Testament epistles speak of the righteousness of Rahab?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Seraiah - 2 Kings 25:18

Published by the church of Christ which meets at 755 Pinole Valley Road, Pinole, CA 94564, Phone (510) 724-1994, (Mailing address: church of Christ, P.O. Box 453, Pinole, CA 94564)

Pinole Tidings

www.pinolechurchofchrist.com

Vol. 15, No. 13 - January 12, 2013

King Saul: Letting Faith Slip Away

Tony Mauck

Most people prefer stories with happy endings. The account of King Saul's reign is not one of those stories. If you are familiar with the Biblical account regarding him, you are not likely to hold Saul in high esteem. As the narrative concludes, King Saul and three sons die an ignominious death on Mount Gilboa, all because of King Saul's faithlessness and wrongdoing. In a tragedy that should not have been, the righteous Jonathan, loyal friend of David, is one of the slain sons. Admittedly, I have no more fondness for King Saul than I do for the wicked King Ahab.

The story of Israel's first monarch should not be lost on us, however. King Saul's spiritual demise forever stands as a warning. What happened to him can happen to any of us. King Saul was not an outright loser and spiritual reject from the very beginning. Prior to becoming king, God "changed his heart" and the Spirit of God came upon him. He even prophesied (1 Samuel 10:9, 10). The son of Kish ascended to power with a firm faith and a notable humility about him. When selected by lot to be king, this choice, handsome, towering giant of a man is hiding among the baggage, apparently overwhelmed by the whole thing (10:22).

As the first battle against Israel's enemies unfolds, Saul stands alongside Samuel, the faithful prophet and judge serving as counselor and friend to the newly appointed king (11:7). Israel defeats the Ammonites in battle and King Saul declares, "... for today the Lord has accomplished deliverance in Israel (11:13). Samuel and Saul then renew the kingdom together at Gilgal (11:14, 15). Shortly thereafter, the mighty army of the Philistines comes calling.

Trouble in paradise! The army is terrified and begins to disperse from him. With his fighting forces dwindling and Samuel's arrival at Gilgal delayed, Saul takes matters into his own hands. Instead of waiting faithfully, patiently, and encouraging his army's faith in God to deliver them, Saul "forces himself" to offer the sacrifices (13:11, 12). This step of disobedience would begin a downward spiral from which King Saul would not recover.

In the next chapter, Saul is too hurried to consult the Lord before battle (14:19). A foolish vow nearly costs Jonathan his life but the people intervene (14:45). Saul's next major blunder led to God's complete rejection of his kingship and a parting of the ways with Samuel (15:35). His errors only multiply. Saul lacks courage to accept the challenge of Goliath. Envious of David's fame, Saul is consumed with repeated attempts to murder him. Ultimately, Saul becomes so alienated from God that he stoops to his spiritual lowest. Since the Lord no longer answers him, he consults a spirit medium for guidance.

Over time, Saul's godly and faithful mind gave way to a self-dominated one. Saul did not just wake up one day and decide to reject God. He never reached the point that he ceased believing in God's existence. He never declared God unworthy of worship. He simply stopped listening to God. He no longer gave careful attention to obedience. He started improvising. He began trusting in himself rather than God. His life moved gradually and steadily away from God and His will. Over a period of weeks and years, Saul just let his faith slip away.

The same thing still happens to people today. The occupations, lifestyles and sins are different, but one who started so well in faith can walk that same course away from God and His will that King Saul did. It can begin almost imperceptibly at first. The devil is the master of subtlety. The Scriptures are neglected. No time seems available for prayer. Little good is done for others. A failing interest in spiritual things ensues. Though an empty pursuit, a preoccupation with recreation and entertainment takes its place. A this-world focus dominates. Assemblies become rituals to be endured. Worship services are skipped for far inferior activities. Faith begins slipping away. Unfortunately, some do not even recognize what is happening. Tragically, many never recover.

Imagine how shocking it must have been when the church at Ephesus received the Revelation letter, "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love" (Revelation 2:4). Sardis likewise is traumatized at the news, "... you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead" (Revelation 3:1). Laodicea is completely dumbfounded, "So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:16). They are clueless as to how far they had drifted from the Lord (Revelation 3:17).

The cause of Saul's waning faith and spiritual failure is largely the same as those who fall away from the Lord today. Wisdom goes unheeded, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life" (Proverbs 4:23). Ever so gradually, hardening occurs "by the deceitfulness of sin." The Hebrew writer offers a three-fold prescription: (1) "take care," (2) "encourage one another," and (3) "hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end" (Hebrews 3:13-15). Be sure to take your medicine and then enjoy a very happy ending.