

## Waiting on the Lord

1Samuel 13:1-15

Waiting is a bit of a theme in the history of God's people.

Noah worked on a boat and waited for the flood to come.

Abraham waited for many years to have a son with his wife Sarah.

Joseph had to wait in prison.

The whole nation of Israel waited about 400 years to be rescued from slavery.

David had to wait to become king.

All the prophets waited for the word of the LORD to be fulfilled.

On account of God's word the people of Israel learned to wait for a Messiah.

As Christians we know that the Messiah came to Israel about 2000 years ago.

That is what we celebrate at Christmas, the long awaited birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

His arrival, however, does not mean that we are done waiting.

After He died and rose again He ascended into heaven with the promise that He would come again.

We who believe are waiting eagerly for that day when He shall descend and give the command and the dead in Christ will rise and every believer that remains will be transformed to be free from the corruption of sin forever.

Until that day we wait on the LORD.

Not only do we wait on the LORD for that great and glorious day, but from time to time we also find ourselves waiting on the LORD in everyday life.

Sometimes we find ourselves waiting on the LORD to give us direction for a career, for where He wants us to live, for Him to provide a spouse, or for encouragement, or to meet some other need in life.

Psalm 37:7 says, "Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him."

I think it is safe to say that waiting is something that most of us struggle with from time to time.

I think that is increasingly true in our day where we have been trained to expect things to happen right away.

[That is not how God operates generally speaking. He often puts us in places and circumstances that require patience. We can see him do that in our text for this morning **1Samuel 13:1-15**. In this text we see the first king of Israel, a man named Saul, in a situation where he is supposed to wait. His experience here has some lessons/warnings for us about waiting on the LORD. Number one is this...]

**Point #1 – Waiting on the LORD can be hard. (Verses 1-7)**

When life seems to be pressing in on us there can often be a great temptation to do something we are not supposed to do instead of waiting for God.

At the beginning of chapter 13 we find that Saul is now firmly established as king over Israel.

He has won a great victory over the Ammonite King Nahash and all the people are behind him as leader.

According to verse two he has chosen 3000 men to himself, likely men that are to be completely devoted to warfare for the protection of the nation and the king.

If war were to break out they would likely be in charge of all the men from the nation who would gather to form an army.

This all happens in accordance with what God, through Samuel, said would happen.

Now, to appreciate what happens next we also have to remember something the LORD told Samuel about Saul, and what Samuel said to Saul when he anointed him king.

The LORD told Samuel that Saul would deliver the people of Israel from the hand of the Philistines.

Samuel told Saul that he should “do whatever *his* hand finds to do, for God is with *him*.”

What he does is pick a fight with the Philistines in verses 3-4.

Jonathan does the attacking here, but notice in verse 4 the announcement throughout the land is that “Saul has attacked.”

That means that Jonathan is acting under the authority of his father.

And the effect is that the whole nation it says, “...has become a stench to the Philistines.”

What do you do when something goes bad and is stinking up your fridge? You get rid of it.

The attack here is a point of no return. Full out war has become certain and so Saul gathers the men of Israel back to Gilgal likely in numbers similar to chapter 12 which would put their army in the 300,000 range.

The Philistines also get their army together (**Verse 5**).

It may be hard for us to appreciate how scary it would be to look at a huge army like that, but the Israelites get it. (Verse 6-7).

Put yourself in Saul’s shoes for a minute. You have picked a fight with your biggest enemy with the promise that God is going to be with you and all of your guys are petrified with fear, many of them are hiding in any place they can find, and a good bit of them leave the area entirely to go to a place where they think they will be safe.

How are you feeling watching all that happen?

I'm not feeling too good that is for sure.

Now add to that, the prophet Samuel told him to wait. He wasn't supposed to do anything except wait for Samuel to get there.

I don't know about you, but that sounds hard to me.

[Over the years I have taken a few first aid courses. One of the things they talk about is what to do if someone has something substantial and sharp stuck in their body. They tell you to leave it in them. They say stabilize the object if you can do it safely but whatever you do don't try and pull it out. I have to tell you if I have something stuck in me I am going to want to pull that thing out. I don't want to wait until I get to the hospital, but that is the best thing to do.]

I can be hard to wait at times.

Waiting on test results from the doctor is brutal and so instead of waiting many of us will consult Dr. Google which often doesn't help matters.

When people wrongly accuse us of something it is never fun and we often want to do all we can right away to justify ourselves.

How often do we make judgments about situations when we have only been given one side of the story?

We jump into action when the right thing to do is wait and listen to the other side first.

I confess I have been guilty of knee jerk reactions on many occasions and I cannot think of a single circumstance were it served me well.

Now that is not to say there are never times when immediate action is required, of course there are, but there are also times when we simply must wait on the LORD and it is rarely easy to do so.

[You know according to Galatians 5:22 one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit indwelling the believer is 'patience' a word the NKJV translates as 'long suffering'. It seems to me that is in pretty short supply these days and I am convinced that one of the reasons that is so is because it is hard to wait on the LORD at times. If you are looking for easy, then don't be a Christian. If you are looking for eternal satisfaction and glorious hope then Jesus is the one to follow. Waiting on Him is hard, but totally worth it. Here is a second lesson about waiting...]

### **Point #2 – Failing to wait is failing to trust the LORD. (Verses 8-12)**

It is very easy to overestimate our own importance and power and act in ways that are more consistent with atheism than they are with Christianity.

*I think it is important for us to try a really appreciate the situation here.*

The end of verse 7 tells us that the men who were with Saul “were quaking with fear.”

It's easy for us to look down on them and think they were a bunch of babies and imagine ourselves to be much braver than they were.

Warfare, brothers and sisters, is brutal and brings with it a very strong likelihood of death.

Fear is totally understandable and I suspect most of us would be “quaking with fear” in this situation.

Now look at **verse 8** with me.

He waited seven days. Every day more of the army left and the situation got worse.

Finally, Saul’s own men (likely referring to the 3000 he had specifically chosen) started to walk away.

*It’s a no brainer to them. You have an army ‘as numerous as the sand’ versus a few thousand.*

Its impossible odds. Samuel, Saul thought, was supposed to show up already and he isn’t here which leads Saul to this in **verse 9**.

Commentators are divided on whether Saul offered the sacrifice himself or whether priests offered it as his command.

I think Saul’s statement, “bring me the burnt offering” strongly suggests he did the sacrificing, but either way the big issue here is he was supposed to wait for Samuel.

We know from previous chapters that Samuel’s word always proved to be true because it was the LORD speaking through him.

The seventh day was not over yet it is just that Samuel did not come early in the day and Saul comes to the conclusion that Samuel’s word, which was given to him by the LORD, cannot be trusted.

Ironically we read this in **verses 10-12**.

*If he had just waited a little bit longer then Samuel would have arrived, but he doesn’t. He fails to trust.*

It is telling that Saul tries to put the blame on Samuel in verse 11. He says, “You did not come at the set time.”

How often do we do that? We blame others for things that we do wrong. Why do we do that? Because we don’t want to own up to the fact that we were wrong.

Something else that Saul says here is telling. He says of the situation, “I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.”

The implication there is that he thinks it is all up to him to save the situation.

God’s way isn’t working out so it is up to me to do something here.

That is doubt driving action instead of faith.

[That happened to the people of Israel in the desert. Remember the LORD provided food called manna for them every day. He specifically commanded them to only gather enough for one day except on the sixth day they could gather enough for two days so they could rest on the Sabbath. Some of them gather way more than they should. Why? Because there is no food in the desert and they don't trust that God is going to keep His word. They think it is up to them to take action to keep themselves alive.]

It is so easy to fall into that pattern of thinking.

It usually happens when we are afraid of something.

When we perceive a threat to something we value there is a real temptation to act in ungodly ways.

The Bible says that God is the one who controls life and death, but we can very easily end up treating doctors and medicine like they have the final say over whether people live or die.

The Bible says that God is the one who installs rulers and authorities, but we can very easily put too much stock in movements and politicians to solve our problems, or fall into despair when we live under godless leaders like we do today.

Someone will say, "Wait a minute can't medicine and science be good? Isn't it a good thing to stand up for what is right in the public square?"

Absolutely, the Scriptures call us to action in many ways, but we have crossed a line when we start thinking that it is all up to us.

We have crossed a line when we start trying to justify ungodly action to achieve a goal.

No goal, no matter how noble it may be, can be used to justify ungodly actions in a biblical worldview. That is atheism not Christianity.

It is never up to us to solve a particular problem in the world, our role is to trust what God says and live like it no matter what things may look like.

[Our hope is not in our own power and wisdom, our hope is in the power and wisdom of the LORD and sometimes that means waiting on Him. It's true, waiting is often hard, but it is often in our waiting on God that we really find out how much we trust Him. What happens when we fail to trust the LORD is the final lesson of our text this morning. We see it in what Samuel says to Saul about making the offering himself instead of waiting. From what he says we learn that...]

### **Point #3 – Failing to trust the LORD leads to loss. (Verses 13-15)**

There is always some sort of consequence when we don't believe what God clearly says.

Look with me at the beginning of verse 13. "You acted foolishly," Samuel said.

That is an understatement to say the least.

It is beyond foolish to think that our plans are better than God's.

The prophet continues on... (**Verse 13b-15**).

Up until this point Saul had been doing very well.

He displayed humility when he was first told about being king.

He showed leadership and bravery in battle.

He showed wisdom and kindness by refusing to take revenge on those who questioned his kingship.

If he had just kept it up. Kept trusting in the LORD than his throne would have endured.

*That doesn't happen.*

Instead of trusting God and keeping His command, in a moment of doubt he takes matters into his own hands and now the kingdom will pass to someone else.

On top of that there is a bitter irony that we see at the end of verse 15.

The whole reason Saul did what he did was to keep the army from running away and after he is done talking with Samuel he counts up his guys and there is only 600 men left.

He loses the kingdom because he did something to accomplish a goal he did not achieve.

That is sad to say the least, but that is what happens when we fail to trust the LORD it leads to loss.

[That happened to the Israelites when they were about to cross over into the Promised Land. Remember Moses sent some spies into the land and they came back and said the land is great just like God said, but the people there are too strong so let's go back to Egypt instead. They don't get to go back to Egypt, the LORD makes them wander in the desert 40 years until everyone who refused to trust God was dead.]

It is no different today.

When people disregard God's rules for marriage and family they suffer the consequences.

When people hold onto to bitterness and resentment instead of trusting what the Bible says about forgiveness it is always to their detriment and often causes pain to people around them.

When we refuse to trust God for our daily needs we can be overcome by worry and fear.

Of course there are many ways in which we can fail to trust God, but the worst of all is when a person is confronted with the fact that like all human beings who have ever lived they have broken God's laws and are justly under His wrath.

When they hear the good news that God the Son took on humanity, came into the world, lived in perfect obedience

to God the Father, and willingly died in our place to make us right with God.

That He conquered the grave and gives eternal life to all who believe in Him.

When we fail to trust Him with that the loss is the worst of all because we suffer eternal loss in hell.

*Trusting the LORD is really the heart of this text.*

One of the ways in which God examines whether or not we truly trust Him is by putting us in situations where we need to wait.

Those times are often hard, they are often filled with temptation to do something we are not supposed to do or to act in an ungodly way.

In those times the LORD calls us to wait and trust.

If we do, instead of suffering loss, we will gain.

Yes we may struggle in the short term, but it is only temporary because the LORD will always prove Himself trustworthy and true.

May God give us all the wisdom to know when to wait on Him and the patience to do it well.