

## Not by Might nor by Power, but by My Spirit – Part 5

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In this series of articles, we are exploring how the Holy Spirit works with prophets and individuals. We have considered how prophets can make mistakes either through willful disobedience (like Jonah) or allowing their sinful natures to overcome their spiritual natures (like Balaam). We have also learned disobeying God can have severe consequences, even death (which the younger prophet experienced after the older prophet lied to him). Fortunately, the Lord is gracious and slow to anger, and His love for us knows no bounds. (Psalm 103:8) God wants no one to perish (2 Peter 3:9); but His patience has limits. If a person consistently rebels and rejects the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will leave and demons will have free reign.

After the Children of Israel occupied Canaan and Joshua died, the Lord raised men and women as judges to lead Israel. The prophet Samuel was one of Israel's final judges (1 Samuel 7:15-17) and the reach of the Philistines were subdued during his administration. (1 Samuel 7:13) When Samuel was near the end of his life, he appointed his two sons to be successors. This was a serious mistake because they were ungodly, totally unlike their father. The elders of Israel could see Israel's future was in jeopardy. So they went to Samuel and said **"Give us a King to lead us."** (1 Samuel 8:6) During the time of the judges, Israel was a theocracy with God as Israel's king. However, the elders did not want to continue a system of governance where various judges ruled, they wanted a king (1 Samuel 8:7,19) so Israel's government would be similar to neighboring nations. The elders rejected God, but He graciously accepted their request. Little did they know their request for a king would have grim, long-term consequences for the nation.

Shortly after, God told Samuel he had chosen a thirty-year old man to be Israel's first king. Events leading up to Saul's anointing indicate the selection process should have been a faith-building experience for the new king. (1 Samuel 9 & 10) Saul belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest of the twelve tribes. He was handsome and a head taller than anyone else in Israel. One day, his father Kish, sent him to perform a menial task of searching for some donkeys that had strayed. While searching, Saul's servant recommended a nearby "seer" might help find the donkeys. When they inquired of Samuel, the seer assured Saul the donkeys had been found. Later, Samuel told Saul that God had chosen him as Israel's king and privately anointed him. Then, Samuel gave Saul very specific instructions and foretold some upcoming events: Saul would meet two men on the road who would tell him the donkeys had been found; he would meet three men with goats, bread, and wine; the Holy Spirit would come upon him outside Gibeah enabling him to prophesy; finally, Samuel predicted Saul would be changed, through the power of the Holy Spirit, into a leader of men. (1 Samuel 10:6) These events occurred exactly as Samuel described; and when people who formerly knew Saul saw him prophesying, they were astonished, asking if he was also a prophet! (1 Samuel 10:11)

Later, Samuel summoned Israel to Mizpah so the Lord could show the nation His choice of king. The process to reveal Saul as "the Lord's chosen" began by casting the lot, narrowing

the possibilities – first by tribe, then clan, and then family. (1 Samuel 10:20) This process left no room for speculation. Israel knew it was the same process used to condemn Achan of stealing. (Joshua 7:14) Saul had a commanding appearance, but was naturally shy and hid among the travelers' baggage. He was reluctant to accept the position of king. True, God had changed his heart, but Saul, like Samson, was only a leader of men for as long as the Holy Spirit dwelled within him. After Saul was found, Samuel presented him to the crowd, **“Samuel said to all the people, ‘Do you see the man the Lord has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people.’ Then the people shouted, ‘Long live the king!’ ”** (1 Samuel 10:24) However, some detractors at the meeting disputed his qualifications to be king.

The Lord gave Holy Spirit power to Saul and helped Saul get started as king. Saul defeated the Ammonites and his victory silenced the claims of his antagonists. (1 Samuel 11:6) Saul knew the victory was from the Lord and he gave the Lord credit saying, **“for this day the Lord has rescued Israel.”** (1 Samuel 11:13) After Israel defeated the Ammonites, Samuel called the people to Gilgal to reaffirm the Lord had chosen Saul as king. Samuel also used this event to give King Saul and everyone present a dire warning: **“If you fear the Lord and serve and obey Him and do not rebel against His commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the Lord your God – good! But if you do not obey the Lord, and if you rebel against His commands, His hand will be against you, as it was against your fathers.”** (1 Samuel 12:14,15)

To admonish Israel's evil in demanding a king, Samuel said God would send thunder and rain that same day. There was so much thunder and rain that the gathering feared for their lives. Some of the elders realized they had made a mistake in demanding a king (an earthly king cannot command rain to fall), but Samuel encouraged them to serve the Lord faithfully: **“Be sure to fear the Lord and serve Him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things He has done for you. Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will be swept away.”** (1 Samuel 12:24,25)

You may think God chose Saul because he was a great person and the Holy Spirit enabled him to prophesy because he was a righteous man. You may also think the Holy Spirit changed Saul from a bashful man into a leader of men because he recognized his dependence on God. Unfortunately, this was not the case. The story of King Saul is one of the saddest in the Bible. Saul was a person whom the Holy Spirit could have blessed immeasurably, but instead, he rejected a Spirit-filled life and allowed his sinful nature to take control.

Saul was impatient and this defect of character showed up early in his administration. One day, his son Jonathan attacked a Philistine outpost at Gibeah and in retaliation, many Philistines gathered, **“as numerous as the sand on the seashore,”** to fight Israel. Saul assembled Israel at Gilgal to repel the Philistines, but the size of the horde struck fear in every Israelite as well as its king. (1 Samuel 13) Previously, while they were at Gibeah, Samuel had told Saul to wait seven days at Gilgal so he could arrive and offer a burnt offering to the Lord before going into battle. (1 Samuel 10:8) Meanwhile, during those seven days Saul's army began to melt and scatter out of fear. Seeing his strength disappear and fearing defeat and humiliation, King Saul made an “executive decision.” He offered a burnt offering before the Lord, directly violating Samuel's instruction and God's command that only priests from the tribe of Levi were

appointed to present sacrifices to the Lord. (Leviticus 1:7) On a few occasions and to fulfill His plans, God did select non-Levites such as Gideon, Elijah, and Samuel to offer sacrifices. Samuel was from the tribe of Ephraim. He was not a priest descended from the tribe of Levi, but he was dedicated to God at birth and God chose him to serve as the judge and priest in Israel after Eli's death. Samuel was a forerunner of Jesus who would later appear from the tribe of Judah, but Jesus would serve as man's High Priest in Heaven's temple. (Hebrews 8:1-7)

Saul's impatience prevented his sons from succeeding him. (1 Samuel 13:13,14) The Lord's punishment may seem extreme unless you understand two things. First, Saul violated a fundamental statute God established from the time of Moses separating church from the state. Moses was appointed as a judge, Aaron was appointed as a priest. Judges and later, kings, were appointed to take care of matters pertaining to government. Priests took care of matters pertaining to God. God did this because the sinful nature is selfish, self-seeking, and predatory. When the authority of church and state is invested in one person having a sinful nature, the result always becomes an oppressive church/state because the ruler has absolute authority (meaning, there is no appeal). Saul violated the separation of church and state and it cost his offspring their claim to succeed as king. Saul reigned as king for forty-two years. Second, Saul lost his faith in God when he saw the great horde of Philistines. He focused on what was visible instead of Holy Spirit power which is invisible. Rather than wait for Samuel and depend on the Lord for victory, Saul did what seemed best from human perspective. The problem is God's ways and our ways are not the same! God was prepared to give Saul and the Israelites a resounding victory over their enemies. Israel prevailed, but not gloriously or as completely as the Lord wanted.

During his reign, even though Saul had military victories, the Bible reveals more about his foolish choices. During the battle at Gibeah, Saul asked Ahijah, the priest in charge of the Ark of the Covenant, to bring the Ark to the battle. Bible translators do not agree whether Saul requested the Ark or the linen ephod (the priestly robe containing the urim and thummim to answer questions and reveal God's will). I favor the idea Saul wanted the Ark, the very presence of God, on the battlefield because Israel's army knew of these instructions: **“Hear, O Israel, today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not be terrified or give way to panic before them. For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.”** (Deuteronomy 20:3-4)

Saul's son, Jonathan, along with his armor-bearer, did not wait for Saul to start the battle. The Holy Spirit moved Jonathan and his armor-bearer to initiate a skirmish which disrupted the Philistine army. When Saul saw the Philistines in a panic, he told the priest, Ahijah, to withdraw his hand (1 Samuel 14:19) so he could immediately battle the Philistines in their weakened state. Despite the fact Saul had asked for the assistance of the priest, he did not wait to see what the Lord would have him do. Saul anticipated the possibility of victory and this was more important than building a “trust and obey” relationship with God.

Most people who know anything about King Saul have heard about the event which caused the Lord to permanently turn His back on Saul for the remainder of his reign. One day, Samuel gave Saul a specific message from the Lord, **“Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally**

**destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.”** (1 Samuel 15:3)

This command has tormented Christians for centuries and because of it, many Christians think the God of the Old Testament is different from the God of the New Testament. How could a God of love command the death of innocent children and infants? In fact, how could a God of love drown all of the human race, including children and infants, in Noah's flood?

The answer is quite simple if you understand the [Full Cup Principle](#). The principle works this way: When a group of people become so wicked that extended grace has no redemptive effect, God destroys that group of people because He loves the oncoming generation just as much as He loves the present generation. By destroying a group of rebellious people, the land is set free of their evil and seductive influence. This means oncoming generations are not contaminated by the sins of the previous generation. Additionally, the destruction of children and infants does not mean they are lost. In fact, it is just the opposite. *All* who die as children and infants will be saved at the Second Coming! God's saving grace covers them because He does not assign guilt to minors. (For more information on this topic, refer to *The Wake Up Report!*, "[Will Children be Saved or Lost?](#)")

Saul knew what the Lord wanted, but chose to do otherwise. When confronted by Samuel, Saul defended his disobedience saying his men had saved the best of the animals for a burnt offering to the Lord. Later, he said he was afraid of his soldiers because they wanted to keep the best of the animals. I suspect Saul did not kill Agag the Amalekite king because Saul had a mean streak within him and wanted to parade Agag before Israel before torturing him to death in retaliation for his military conquests against Israel. Samuel told Saul, **“You have rejected the word of the Lord [spoken to me by the Holy Spirit], and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel!”** (1 Samuel 15:26, insertion mine) After this event, the Lord had nothing more to do with the king whom He had chosen!

Saul's life is recorded for our benefit. Saul experienced the power and presence of God in his life, but he did not totally surrender to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was able to influence and impress Saul at various places and times in his life, but the moments passed and Saul forgot them. If Saul ever experienced the miracle of being born again, he abandoned it. Saul did not seek a “trust and obey” relationship with the Lord each day; consequently, when tested, Saul was not able to resist temptations. Finally, after years of endeavor to win him over, Saul committed the unpardonable sin and the Holy Spirit left him. The Bible simply says, **“Now the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul.”** (1 Samuel 16:14)

In closing, there are three points I hope you will consider: First, God chose a defective man to be the first king of Israel. To help him overcome his defects and be the king Israel needed, God sent Samuel to help him. Second, God occasionally gave Holy Spirit power to this defective man. Saul prophesied and he was changed from a bashful man into a leader. The Lord also gave him compelling victories over his enemies, but Saul gained no victory over himself. Saul did not surrender each day to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Saul committed the unpardonable sin by allowing his sinful nature to have control. Paul wrote, **“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. . . . the sinful**

**mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.**" (Romans 8:5-8) Finally, what does it mean to have a relationship with God? Jesus said **"True worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks."** (John 4:23) Saul did not develop a relationship with God because he shut out the Spirit and rejected almost every truth the Holy Spirit tried to show him. Saul's life was ruled by his flesh. Next month, we will examine Saul's descent into demonic torment.