

“The Fall of Saul”
1 Samuel 13
May 5, 2019
Faith Presbyterian Church – Evening Service
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Our text this evening is from First Samuel, chapter thirteen.

As we come to our text it is helpful to remember again what came before it.

Back in chapter ten, after first anointing Saul as king, Samuel told him some of what would happen next, and what he was to do.

One thing he told him was that eventually Saul would make his way to Gilgal. Samuel then says: “Go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do.” [10:8]

Several events intervene before Saul arrives in Gilgal ... but these words will become important again in the chapter we are considering together tonight.

Later on, in chapter ten, Samuel selected Saul as king of Israel before God, before Yahweh, by lot.

Then, in chapter eleven the Lord defeated the Ammonites through Saul, and Saul was more broadly accepted as the king in Israel.

Following that, in chapter twelve, Samuel established Saul as the king of Israel once more, in a kingdom renewal gathering, walking Israel through the ritual pattern of worship to renew the covenant and the kingdom.

In that kingdom renewal service, Samuel reminded Israel of their calling in the covenant. He said, in verses 13 through 15:

“^{12:13} And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, Yahweh has set a king over you. ¹⁴ If you will fear Yahweh and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of Yahweh, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow Yahweh your God, it will be well. ¹⁵ But if you will not obey the voice of Yahweh, but rebel against the commandment of Yahweh, then the hand of Yahweh will be against you and your king.”

So that is what has happened leading up to our text tonight. With that context in mind, let's turn together to First Samuel, chapter thirteen.

Please do listen carefully, for this is God's word for us this evening:

^{13:1} Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years over Israel, ² Saul chose three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeon of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent home, every man to his tent. ³ Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, “Let the Hebrews hear.” ⁴ And all Israel heard it said that

Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become a stench to the Philistines. And the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal.

⁵ And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. ⁶ When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble (for the people were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns, ⁷ and some Hebrews crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

⁸ He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. ⁹ So Saul said, “Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings.” And he offered the burnt offering. ¹⁰ As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. ¹¹ Samuel said, “What have you done?” And Saul said, “When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, ¹² I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of Yahweh.’ So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering.” ¹³ And Samuel said to Saul, “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of Yahweh your God, with which he commanded you. For then Yahweh would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. ¹⁴ But now your kingdom shall not continue. Yahweh has sought out a man after his own heart, and Yahweh has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what Yahweh commanded you.” ¹⁵ And Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal. The rest of the people went up after Saul to meet the army; they went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin.

And Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men. ¹⁶ And Saul and Jonathan his son and the people who were present with them stayed in Geba of Benjamin, but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. ¹⁷ And raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies. One company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual; ¹⁸ another company turned toward Beth-horon; and another company turned toward the border that looks down on the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

¹⁹ Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, “Lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears.” ²⁰ But every one of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, or his sickle,²¹ and the charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads. ²² So on the day of the battle there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan, but Saul and Jonathan his son had them. ²³ And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Let's pray ...

Lord, we gather this evening because we love your Word.
We want it to be our meditation day and night.
We know that your revelation to us
offers more wisdom than the wise of this world,
it gives us more understanding than the great thinkers of this world,
it gives us deeper understanding than the old and experienced of this world.
It holds us back from evil,
and keeps us from straying from you.
And it is sweet to us,

sweeter than honey in our mouths.
Through it we gain understanding,
and we learn to reject every false way.
Teach us now from your word, we ask.
In Jesus's name. Amen
[Based on Psalm 119:97-104]

In chapters thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen we watch the fall of King Saul. And the fall comes in three main stages – in three stages of sin.

In chapter thirteen we will see Saul sin in regard to his relationship with God. In chapter fourteen we will see him sin in regard to his relationship with the people of God. And then in chapter fifteen we will see him sin in relation to the world. And there is a natural flow to that progression, which I expect we will look at more closely as we consider chapters fourteen and fifteen. But for now, we begin with chapter thirteen and Saul's sin aimed primarily at his relationship with God.

And as we look at this text we will see that the scene progresses in four stages:

- We have the temptation.
- We have the decision made under pressure.
- We have the response to confrontation. And,
- We have the outcome.

As we have often done in these narratives in Samuel, tonight we will simply walk through the sections of the text, seeing what they tell us about Saul, and in the process seeing what instruction they have for us this evening.

So, the first section we come across is the temptation that Saul faces. The setting that creates Saul's temptation is laid out in verses one through eight.

We read in verse two that after the kingdom renewal ceremony in chapter twelve, Saul has chosen three thousand fighting men to remain – two thousand go with him and one thousand with Jonathan, while the rest of the people go home.

Then, in verse three Jonathan defeats the garrison of the Philistines at Geba, which Samuel had mentioned back in chapter ten. Saul proclaims the victory to Israel, and he calls the Israelites to gather.

But, the Philistines heard of the defeat as well, of course. And in verse five we read that they gathered thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and “troops,” the author writes, “like the sand on the seashore in multitude.” And as the narrator puts it: “The men of Israel saw that they were in trouble.” Which is a bit of an understatement, if we’re honest. And the men begin to flee. Some, we read “hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns.” Others, we read in verse seven, fled across the Jordan, out of the land.

The situation is bad. As one commentator puts it: “The dread of *Yahweh* fell on Israel the last time Saul led them to battle. This time it was terror of *the Philistines*. / Israel was supposed to be like sand on the seashore, but instead Philistia was (v. 5). Israel, meanwhile, was hiding in caves and pits (v. 6), as if buried. Some Israelites crossed over the Jordan to the region of Gilead, voluntarily going into exile and reversing the conquest.” [Leithart, 87 (emphasis added)]

A few soldiers still remain with Saul, though. But the narrator tells us that those who did remain with Saul at Gibeah, “followed him trembling.”

So, this small and fearful band has assembled with Saul, just as Samuel instructed Saul back in chapter ten verse eight. In Samuel’s direction Saul was to wait seven days, at which point Samuel would arrive and oversee the offering of burnt offerings and peace offerings, and then Samuel would give Saul prophetic guidance for the war with the Philistines. [Davis, 136]

The command that Samuel, the prophet and spokesperson for God, gave to Saul was to wait.

And so, Saul waited. And now it was the seventh day. And Samuel still has not shown. And the people are beginning to scatter.

The temptation is to disobey Samuel’s command and go ahead with the sacrifices and the planning without him.

Or put more clearly: the temptation that Saul faces is to choose his own reasoning over God’s command – his own wisdom over God’s wisdom.

As we consider this temptation … while we should not agree with the course of action Saul will take, I do think we should have some sympathy for him.

Saul’s situation is bad. The pressure is high. The moment is intense. Israel is in a bad spot. And things seem to keep getting worse. And it looks to Saul like if he does not take action, his situation will decline even further.

It’s easy to declare your loyalty to God and his word and his command in the midst of a ceremony, with others looking on approvingly, and when there is no resistance around you. It’s a lot harder when threats seem to be pressing in and it looks to you like obedience will lead to disaster.

It’s one thing when you’re gathered with other Christians to confess that you hold to the Christian doctrines and ethics that are less popular in our particular culture: the exclusive claims of Christ, the doctrine of hell, the Christian sexual ethic. While among those who agree, it is easy to confess such beliefs confidently.

But what about that moment when you are with a group of non-Christians and a non-believing friend, or neighbor, or co-worker, or family member turns to you and asks you what you believe, specifically about one of those areas where the position of the Scriptures is especially unpopular?

And your chest gets tight, and your face gets sort of hot … and all the things that could go wrong, all the things you could lose if you give an answer that they don’t like, start running through your mind. And everyone is looking at you. And you need to give an answer.

Of course, you might be nervous because it is hard to give an answer that is faithful and winsome – that tells the truth without being *unnecessarily* offensive … but there’s part of you that is tempted to misrepresent your Christian conviction … isn’t there? If not to deny it, then at least to sort of deceive them in the way you tell it.

Like with Saul, temptation takes on a greater intensity when we can see just what our faithful obedience might cost us.

Or to think of another situation, it is easy when sitting in church and hearing a sermon for us to all nod our heads when we are reminded the importance of being truthful and loving in how we talk about others.

But it's another thing when you are with a group of people – a group that we value being included in, and they begin to speak badly of and slander another individual whom you all know, or even a group of people – whether a class, or race, or political tribe. And everyone joins in. And you know you should not just refrain from joining in ... but in some way you should push back against such breakings of the ninth commandment.

But what will they think of you? Will they see you as an outsider then? As judgmental? Will they exclude you from the group ... maybe subtly at first and more overtly in the future?

Like with Saul, temptation take on a greater intensity when we can see just what our faithful obedience might cost us.

Or along a similar line, it's easy to abstractly profess a Christian's obligation to stand against financial misconduct or exploitation in various forms ... but then when you begin seeing evidence of ethical breaches or unjust practices or exploitation of the weak in an organization you're a part of ... then, as you think of what standing up to the powers that be might cost you ... it's easy to start turning a blind eye ... to rationalize why it's not something for you to get involved with ... or to tell yourself that you must be making it all up ...

Like with Saul, temptation takes on a greater intensity when we can see just what our faithful obedience might cost us.

What does that look like for you?

Where do you find yourself wavering in your confession or obedience to God's word because of fear of what it might cost you?

For Saul it was when thirty thousand Philistine chariots, six thousand Philistine horsemen, and innumerable Philistine troops had mustered themselves for battle, while most of his army had fled the country or hid themselves ... and he has been obediently waiting for Samuel for seven days and there is still no sign of him. But the command is to wait.

That is the temptation – the first stage of our text.

Next, we get to the decision made under pressure.

Verse nine: "So Saul said, 'Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings.' And he offered the burnt offering."

We've said that Saul's temptation is understandable. But that doesn't mean his decision is excusable. Far from it.

Samuel has decided in this situation to trust his own reasoning over God's clear command – to trust his wisdom over God's wisdom. He has come to a place where he can rationalize his disobedience. Where he could even, as we will see in a few verses, convince himself that this act of disobedience was not only to *his* benefit, but to *God's* benefit.

There are two things we should note about the nature of this decision: its implications were greater than Saul wanted to admit, and the threat was less pressing than Saul believed it was.

First, the implications were greater than Saul wanted to admit.

Saul's actions essentially said that when everything was fine, then God's word would do. But when things got difficult, it was time for him to take matters into his own hands. More than that, it said that there were some things more important than obedience to God. [Davis, 136]

And our actions can often say the same thing. When we deny or obscure what we believe out of fear that it might cost us, when we join in on or fail to confront sins we know we are called to stand against, we are saying that the thing we are afraid to lose is more important than our loyalty to God. It might not be what we *want* to say, but it is what we are communicating is the true order of priorities in our hearts. It is what is revealed when we fail in moments of testing like this.

So first, we see that the implications of Saul's decision were greater than he wanted to admit.

Second, the threat was less pressing than Saul believed it was.

While the pressure was real, and the situation was a difficult one, as Saul waited on that seventh day and decided to jump the gun, the "immediate threat was more felt than actual." This is for two reasons.

First, Gilgal was isolated enough that it was unlikely that the Philistines would have attacked them there. The Philistines may have been gathering, but Saul was not in danger of imminent attack. He might have felt like he couldn't wait for Samuel and longer ... but he could have. [Davis, 135]

Second, while Saul's numbers were dwindling – we see in a few verses that he is down to six-hundred men – he should have still been confident in Yahweh's ability to deliver them despite those who were scattering from him. At the kingdom renewal ceremony Saul had just heard Samuel list time and time again when God had rescued Israel against impossible odds. More than that, Saul would have been familiar with the story of Gideon and how God had used the three-hundred men there to defeat the Midianites. Saul still had twice that number. The men who were starting to leave his camp might have felt like a pressing necessity, but they weren't.

The threat was less pressing than Saul believed it was.

And again, we can have the same tendency. When in a moment like Saul's, where the social pressure is on, and we can imagine what we might lose, we can tend to exaggerate what the cost will be for our faithfulness. Not always ... but often ... what we imagine is worse than the reality. And so it was for Saul.

Saul decides to trust his own reasoning over God's command. And though he will try to rationalize his decision to himself and to others, the implications of that decision are far worse than he wants to admit, and the threats he faced were bad ... but still less than he imagined.

Nonetheless, Saul chooses his own reasoning over God's word – he chooses his wisdom over God's wisdom.

Saul makes his decision under pressure – the second stage of our text.

Third, Saul responds to confrontation.

Starting in verse ten we read: “¹⁰ As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. ¹¹ Samuel said, ‘What have you done?’ And Saul said ...”

Before we go on, it’s worth considering what Saul *might have* said. What Saul *should have* said. Because I think that how Saul responds to this confrontation has far greater implications than Saul’s initial failure.

Again, thinking back to the kingdom renewal ceremony a chapter earlier, Saul had heard Samuel recount again and again not only the past events where Yahweh had delivered his people, but the past times where Yahweh had forgiven his people when they confessed their sin and repented and called out to him for mercy. In fact, he had just seen that happen before his eyes within the kingdom renewal gathering. Yahweh had declared that Israel had sinned and deserved judgment, and Israel had confessed her sin and pleaded for mercy, and God forgave them. He forgave them and blessed them.

Saul has just been reminded that Yahweh is a God who is rich in mercy, who forgives those who own their sin and ask for his grace.

And Saul has sinned. He has disobeyed the commandment of God’s prophet. He has failed the test set for him. He has fallen short. Now is the time to own that failure, to repent, to plead for mercy, knowing that Yahweh is a God who is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

But “instead of immediately accepting responsibility and repenting of his sins, Saul offer[s] a series of excuses.” [Leithart, 88]

“‘When I saw that the people were scattering from me,’ ” Saul says, “‘and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, ¹² I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of Yahweh.’ ” So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering.” ”

Rather than repenting, Saul defends himself. And that sets the trajectory for the rest of his story.

What marks Saul’s story is not that he is tested once and fails, and God just comes down on him like a hammer, but that he fails, and then he refuses to admit it and ask for forgiveness. He blames everyone but himself. Unrepentance is the fatal sin for Saul.

And it is the key takeaway for us in his story as well.

As Christians, we too, like Saul, are reminded again and again of God’s willingness to forgive us in Christ when we fail, when we sin, when we are disloyal to him.

We hear of God’s grace in sermons, we hear it from other Christians, we sing it in our hymns, we read it in the Scriptures, we confess it every Lord’s Day, we hear the assurance of pardon after every confession, we see it in the imagery of the Table: In Christ, God forgives the sins of his people. That is the kind of God he is.

But when we sin ... how often do we start spinning out excuses, either to other people, or to ourselves, or even to God?

What should alarm us the most in our text is not primarily how we resemble Saul in his sin (though that should alarm us), but the thing that should concern us the most is how much we can resemble Saul in his unrepentance.

God loves his people so much that in Christ God the Son came and died for their sins that they might be forgiven.

If you believe that, down to your guts, then it should make you the kind of person who can own their sin and failure. Who, when confronted, will confess their sins, and ask for pardon.

Saul here is not that kind of person.

If you trust in Christ, then you should make sure that you are.

How do you need lay hold of God's grace, to step out into it, by confessing your sins to yourself, to God, and to other people?

How do you need to live out reconciliation to our gracious God more truly?

So, we see the temptation Saul faces, the decision to trust his own wisdom over God's wisdom when he is under pressure, and the response of unrepentance when he is confronted.

Finally, we have the outcome. And the outcome is the result of all that is proceeded, but it is especially the result of the last stage – it is especially the result of Saul's unrepentance.

And we see that the outcome is the loss of three things. Saul loses the promise of God, he loses the guidance of God, and he loses the power of God.

First Saul loses the promise of God. God had graciously named Saul king, and with that was implied a dynasty. And now that dynasty is lost. In verses thirteen and fourteen Samuel tells Saul that if he had remained faithful and loyal to Yahweh then Yahweh would have established his line on the throne forever. But now it will not be so. Now Saul's line will be replaced by a man whose heart is more truly committed to Yahweh. In his sin and in his unrepentance, Saul forfeits the promise of God.

And when we embrace our sin and refuse to repent we do the same. God promises many things to his people – including grace and forgiveness. And nothing we do can *earn* that grace and forgiveness ... and yet if we will not confess our sins, if we will not come with open hands and repentant hearts *for* that grace, then we will not receive it. When we cling to sin and willfully refuse to confess, we lose the benefits of God's grace.

Are there places where you need to confess your sin, to own your sin and to seek God's grace, lest you lose the benefits of the gracious covenant?

First, Saul in his sin and unrepentance forfeits the gracious promises of God.

Second, in his sin and unrepentance, Saul loses the guidance of God.

Remember back in First Samuel 10:8, one of the things Samuel was to do for Saul after Saul waited for him, was give Saul guidance from the Lord as to what to do next

But after Saul sins by choosing his own wisdom over God's, and after he fails to repent but instead defends his decision, we read in 13:15 that Samuel left Saul, and Saul then went his own way.

Samuel, the prophet who offers guidance from Yahweh, and Saul, the leader of the people, go separate ways. In his sin and unrepentance, Saul loses guidance from the Lord. Saul basically has said, and defended the position, that his reasoning is better than God's direction when things get tough. And so, his reasoning alone is exactly what he is left with. [Davis, 137]

Saul has rejected the authority of God's command, so he is stranded with nothing but his own judgment.

And we do the same thing when we trust our own wisdom over God's ... and especially when we do it persistently – when we stick to that decision rather than confessing the error.

Because once we put ourselves as judges over God's command ... nothing is really left to us but our own judgment. We are all alone in determining what is true and what is false – what is right and what is wrong. God's claims and commands come before us, and we can believe them or reject them. And once we hold onto that approach, as Saul does, then we are all alone in deciding what to do and believe.

The “freedom” of arbitrating what is right and wrong, of judging even God's commands ourselves, becomes a terrible burden – a crushing burden. It is the burden Saul bears now ... and it is the burden we bear when we persist in maintaining our own opinions over the word of God, rather than submitting our decisions to him.

Saul loses guidance from the Lord.

Finally, Saul loses the power of the Lord.

And this is not stated directly so much as it is shown to us. We have been reminded that with God's help, no force, no power is too strong. God can deliver his people from the most dire of situations. But when we walk away from God – from both his commands and his help ... then things are different.

God's spokesperson has left Saul. Saul does not repent and call him back. And then we get a good look at just how bad things are. And without God's assistance ... things are *really* bad.

What is the picture the author gives us?

Well first, there is the size of the armies. We remember from verse five that the Philistines have gathered thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen, and troops like the sand on the seashore. In verse fifteen we are told that Saul had six hundred men.

Then there is positioning. This is lost on us if we don't know the geography, but what is described in verses sixteen and seventeen is that the Philistines proceed to surround Saul and his army, creating not only a tactically difficult situation for him, but also cutting him off from any

aid or assistance from the rest of Israel. The Philistines are encamped in Michmash, but then they send groups that set themselves up in Ophrah, to the north of Saul, Beth Horon to the west of Saul, and Zeboim, to the east of Saul. As one commentator puts it: “What is emphasized is that Saul’s position is one where victory appears impossible. His small force is greatly outnumbered and completely surrounded. Philistine victory seems inevitable.” [Firth, 156]

Six hundred men surrounded by a massive army. And if that were not bad enough, verses nineteen through twenty-two describe how terribly armed Israel was. David Firth summarizes it well – he says: “Saul’s situation *seemed* militarily impossible, but now we discover there were no metalworkers in Israel because the Philistines controlled metal production and maintenance. The Philistines thus effectively disarmed Israel since all they could access in metal were farming tools for which the Philistines charged outrageous prices for sharpening [...]. The point is that when the battle came, only Saul and Jonathan had the funds to equip themselves properly for battle; all other Israelite soldiers had to manage with inferior weaponry, such as clubs and slings. Although these could be damaging, they were hardly effective against a force equipped with metal weapons.” [Firth, 156-157 (emphasis added)]

And finally, in verse twenty-three, we learn that additional Philistine troops are drawing closer to Saul. [Firth, 157]

The narrator shows us how terrible Saul’s situation is. And the point is this: Saul’s situation would be scary no matter what ... but with Yahweh to rely on there would be hope – there would be confidence, even: What is impossible with man is possible with God!

But without the assistance of God ... things appear to be utterly hopeless. And it’s hard to understand how Saul could not run after Samuel and beg him for help from the Lord.

There is a sort of insanity when we see the challenges of the world around us ... and respond by choosing our own wisdom and competence over God’s wisdom and command. The opposition to God’s people – the opposition from the unbelieving world, the opposition from the spiritual forces of darkness, the opposition from our own sinful natures – the opposition is real. And it is powerful. And often, God is our only hope to stand strong. And yet ... so often we think that striking out on our own and replacing God’s wisdom with ours is what will really save us.

So, we compromise or equivocate on the doctrines or ethics God calls us to confess. We decide God’s commands don’t *really* apply to us in this situation or that. We choose our own wisdom over God’s ... and somehow think that *that* will save us ... when the only true defense we can rely on is the power of God himself.

Saul trusts his wisdom over God’s and in doing so he loses God’s promise, God’s guidance, and God’s powerful assistance.

And our chapter ends there.

It’s not the end of the story. Even in the midst of this hopeless situation, God *will* remain faithful to his people.

But *Saul* will continue his descent. Saul will be a tragic figure. He may have started out ambiguously, but things go rapidly downhill from here.

And what was the decisive turning point? It was his failure to listen to God's word, and his failure to own his own sin and repent. That's what we have seen in this chapter.

And the fact that those two things make up the turning point for Saul should both frighten us and encourage us.

It should frighten us because those are such common failings. While not as decisively as Saul does it here, still, on a small scale we do that every day. And we think little of it. It may be brief. It may be short lived. We repent eventually. But we need to realize that when we flirt with disregarding God's word and defending our sin, we are flirting with a dangerous thing. We are playing with fire. If we let it get out of hand, we can end up like Saul.

At the same time, as we realize that the heart of Saul's turning point is his failure to listen to God's word and his failure to own his sin ... it should also encourage us, in a way. Because those things have fairly simple solutions.

Just as we saw in John 3:1-15 this morning, we are called to trust in God's word – his revelation and testimony to us – and to look to Christ's cross in repentance.

We are to place our trust again and again in God's wisdom over our own wisdom. And we are to confess our sin to God, to ourselves, and to the people around us. *Those are not easy things ... but they are simple things.*

And we need not do it alone. We can – we must – ask for God's help. Thankfully, he is more than willing to help his people believe and confess.

And so, as long as we look to God's word for guidance and confess our sins seeking forgiveness – as long as we do those things, we will keep from the path of Saul.

As long as we pursue those things, we will be men and women after God's own heart.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

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