

1 Samuel Chapter 13 v 1 - 15

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[0 : 00] Our Don'tinchy Oh The light of creation's grand design In the lives of those who prove this faithfulness Oh, I think that those who serve I think our fathers grow together With the power of its promise in their hearts Of the holy saints who build by God's own land A place where peace and justice reign We will stand as children of the promise

We will fix our eyes on him our souls reborn Till the race is finished and the work is done To all my faith and all my sight I think that God is so dear In the long, long, long, silent, good and fear With the power to break the chains of sin and death With the power of the spirit to the lost To give the captives and to preach to this

We will fix our eyes on him our souls reborn Till the race is finished and the work is done We will fix our eyes on him our souls reborn Till the race is finished and the work is done We will fix our eyes on him our souls reborn And the hope by faith and all my sight We will fix our eyes on him our souls reborn We will fix our eyes on him our souls reborn And the hope by faith and all my sight I think this mountain shall renew But the power of the just one shall prevail Though we know in Christ all things are possible We will fix our eyes on him so or my sight And the hope by faith and all my sight

We will fix our eyes on him our souls reborn Till the race is finished and the work is done Then hope by faith and all my sight We will stand as children of promise, we will fix our eyes on him, our souls reward, till our grace is finished and the world is done.

We will pray, faith and love aside. We will pray, faith and love aside.

[4 : 04] John's going to bring the notices for us. Thank you, John. John's going to bring the notices for us.

And the way the Lord dealt with him and how he ministered to God's people through his lifetime. And as you know, the situation is that the people have asked for a king and the king has been chosen, Saul.

And God was displeased with the people wanting a king because God is the king of his people. He's the one who cares for them, provides them, protects them. And sadly, we're going to see as we read from chapter 13, the beginning of the descent in one sense of this king, this human king who has been replacing the Lord God as king.

So 1 Samuel 13, beginning at verse 1, reading through to verse 15. Saul was 30 years old when he became king and he reigned over Israel for 42 years.

Saul chose 3,000 men from Israel. 2,000 were with him at Michmash and in the hill country of Bethel. And 1,000 were with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin.

[5 : 41] The rest of the men he sent back to their homes. Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost at Gibeah. And the Philistines heard about it. Then Saul had the trumpet blown throughout the land and said, let the Hebrews hear.

So all Israel heard the news. Saul has attacked the Philistine outpost. And now Israel has become obnoxious to the Philistines. The people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal.

The Philistines assembled to fight Israel with 3,000 chariots, 6,000 charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Michmash, east of Beth-oven.

When the Israelites saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard-pressed, they hid in caves and thickets among the rocks and in pits and cisterns. Some Hebrews even crossed Jordan to land of Gad and Gilead.

Saul remained at Gilgal. And all the troops with him were quaking with fear. He waited for seven days, the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal.

[6 : 49] And Saul's men began to scatter. So he said, bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings. And Saul offered up the burnt offering. Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived.

And Saul went out to greet him. What have you done? asked Samuel. Saul replied, when I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, I thought, now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the Lord's favor.

So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering. You have done a foolish thing, Samuel said. You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you. If you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time.

But now your kingdom will not endure. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command.

Then Samuel left Gilgal and went up to Gibeah in Benjamin. Saul counted the men who were with him. They numbered about 600. If the Sunday school and the children and the crash would like to go out to their activities now, please.

[8 : 10] It would be helpful if you were to have a Bible open to 1 Samuel 13, to that passage we read, 1 Samuel 13, 1 to 15, where we saw the events in the life of Saul, but particularly how Samuel responds to them, and what we learn from these things together.

Many of you will have heard of George Muller, the founder of Muller's Homes, the orphanages that started in Bristol. Well, one event that took place some years ago, obviously some years ago when he was first setting up his orphanage.

It was breakfast time, and all the children were sat at long tables for their breakfast. In front of them were an empty dish and an empty mug.

There wasn't a crumb of food in the building, and worse than that, there wasn't any money in the bank. George Muller prayed, Dear Father, we thank you for what you are going to give us all.

Amen. All the children said, Amen. Immediately there was a knock at the door. George opened the door, and there stood the local baker. Mr Muller, he said, I couldn't sleep last night.

[9 : 34] Somehow I felt I had, somehow I felt you had no bread for breakfast, so I got up at two o'clock in the morning and baked fresh bread. Here it is. Muller thanked him, and gave praise to God.

Soon after, a second knock came to the door. It was the milkman. His milk cart had broken down in front of the orphanage, and he needed to empty it before he could fix it. So he'd like to give all the children the milk off his cart.

What would you and I have done that morning before breakfast if we knew that we had nothing to set before the children? I think we'd have more than likely gone into a state of panic long before breakfast time.

We'd have probably spent most of the night doing all that we could to find food for the children, calling on friends, calling around at shops, doing everything possible, worrying ourselves sick with fear, exhausting ourselves with anxiety.

That's how we probably would have responded. Saul seems to have responded in a similar way to the circumstances of his situation.

[10 : 40] We find him in verses 7 and 8 with the men. They're quaking with fear. We find him nervously waiting for Samuel to come.

Samuel had promised him that he would come. Back in chapter 10 and verse 8, Samuel promised him, He told him, Go down to Gilgal, and I will surely come to you to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, but you must wait seven days until I come to you and tell you what you are to do.

Samuel promised. But he is anxious. He's run out of patience waiting for Samuel to come. So eventually he breaks under the pressure, the pressure and the concern.

The matter he takes into his own hands and he tells Samuel later, I did what I felt compelled to do. And he offers a sacrifice to God. But this is a very serious mistake.

A very serious failing on his part. And it brings down on Saul terrible consequences, which Samuel tells him later, If you had done this, if you'd kept the command, you would have had your kingdom established forever and ever, but now your kingdom will not endure.

[11 : 52] We know ultimately that Saul only reigned for a certain while. He didn't pass on his throne to his son or to anyone of his family.

But here is what we think of, really, as a very ordinary thing. Impatience. Impatience. Paul, sorry, Samuel says to Saul, your impatience is a foolish thing and an act of disobedience.

Verse 13. You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you. That seems rather severe, doesn't it? That seems severe of God to punish Saul by saying that he will not stay king, that his reign and his rule through his family will not continue.

Can't we sympathize with Saul? Haven't all of us at some time got into a flap when we're faced with circumstances beyond our control, we're faced with pressure, and we do something which we later regret.

Don't we get anxious in certain circumstances and situations? Get into a panic and act, following our feelings rather than our faith? Attempting to solve our problems using our own wisdom?

[13 : 13] Trying to find the answer to work it out ourselves? Finding that saying all too true, fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

But of course, that's the way we live. That's the way of our generation. That's the way we're built, aren't we? Particularly today, we're always in a hurry. We're always looking to speed things up.

When we want to cook our meals, we'll bang them in the microwave. And they'll cook our food really quickly. And so we think, well, perhaps we can microwave God's word.

Perhaps we can fast forward our prayers and get them answered more quickly than we want or than we need. Warren Weersbe makes this observation, this Christian writer.

He says, the ability to calm your soul and to wait before God is one of the most difficult things in the Christian life. Our old nature is restless.

[14 : 12] The world around us is frantically in a hurry. But a restless heart usually leads to a reckless life. Yes, we can imagine what it must have been like for Saul waiting those seven days.

They say a week is a long time in politics. But it's a long time when you're surrounded by hostile enemies who are baying for your blood. It's a long time when most of the soldiers that you were trusting in had hidden themselves in caves, thickets, rocks, pits, and cisterns.

During those days, one to five, probably Saul is okay. He knows Samuel has said he'll be there in day seven. And so he's thinking, well, it's only day five. Yes, he'll be there in seven days.

But by day six, he's probably worn his fingernails down. He's probably made a trench in the ground where he's been walking up and down, pacing backwards and forwards. And so the morning of day seven, Samuel isn't there straight away.

He's full of thoughts as to what could have happened to him. Well, Samuel's really old now, so perhaps he's just forgotten to turn up. Or perhaps he's fallen sick.

[15 : 23] Or perhaps he's even died. So faced with the pressure he's under, he makes this decision. There's hardly a more important time in his life than this moment in time.

What he has to do is crucial. The future of his reign as king, the future of the nation, whether they be overcome and destroyed, it all lays on his shoulders.

His troops, as I've said, have not given him much encouragement. In fact, verse seven, those who hadn't run away and hid, who were with him, were quaking with fear. Perhaps they were also saying, what are we going to do, Saul?

What are we going to do? And then we're told that when seven days had come, the men began to leave him. And so he panics. And he offers to God the burnt offering that Samuel should offer.

He doesn't wait and trust. But even if we take into account our understanding of the situation, our own empathy with it, recognizing our own failures in testing times, the judgment that Samuel passes from God is appropriate.

[16 : 34] It's appropriate. You've done a foolish thing. You've disobeyed God. The blessing that God has given you is taken away. You see, what Saul's impatience reveals is a total lack of faith in the Lord, his God.

Which leads directly to disobedience of God's clear command. If we do not have faith, then we cannot obey. We cannot follow one in whom we have not trust.

Now, Saul had no reason to doubt God. He had no reason to think that God was going to let him down or fail him, or Samuel as well. Because again and again, God had proved his faithfulness. Earlier in chapter 11, we read of the battle that he was engaged with.

When he rescues the city of Jabesh. God delivered him. Brought him a great victory. He's been a king now of God's people for a long time.

We're told at the start that he reigned for 42 years. So there's been quite a gap in one sense between his being king. But now, he's losing his faith.

[17 : 42] He's certainly been king probably for 20 or more years because he's got a son, Jonathan, who's old enough to lead an attack against a Philistine army. When he took the position as king, when God called him to king and he accepted that position, he agreed to full acceptance before God.

He agreed that he would follow the Lord and his word. He agreed also to the consequences of disobedience to God. Look there in chapter 12. Samuel had said to him and to the people, verse 14, if you fear the Lord and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the Lord your God, good.

But if you do not obey the Lord, if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you. Later on in verse 25 as well, yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will perish.

He accepted that. He knew what the terms were of the agreement. He knew what he needed to do to trust God. And what happens here in chapter 13 of 1 Samuel is a revelation of Saul's heart.

It shows us what his true heart was like. It's the beginning of a slippery slope where again and again he acts in faithlessness to God, bringing upon Samuel great sadness and sorrow but ultimately ending with Saul taking his own life later on in this book.

[19 : 12] So we can't underestimate the importance of trusting God. We can't underestimate the importance of not falling in to this sin of impatience with God. And that's something that we all do.

But it's something that we must avoid. It's so serious, it's so important that we trust and that we wait upon God. See, Saul ultimately did this, verse 12, he says, I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.

What lay behind that? What lay behind this being driven by his feelings, driven by his fears, driven by his emotions, which led to such terrible consequences, terrible sadness.

Well, he fell into that sin, that sin which is common to all people, that sin of living by sight rather than by faith. It's a principle, it's a truth that goes all the way through the Bible that we live by faith, not by sight.

Every Christian, every believer, everyone who has faith in the living God lives by faith, not by sight. And that's exactly what happened here to Saul.

[20 : 31] He replaced faith with sight. He looked at certain things. And the difference between living by faith and living by sight is twofold. First of all, living by sight sees only the physical and not the spiritual.

Living by sight just sees the here and now, sees what we can touch and feel. It doesn't see the spiritual reality of the living God. It doesn't see what God is doing. Notice that there in verse 11.

What have you done, asked Samuel? Saul replied, when I saw. There are three things that he saw, three things that moved him from faith to fear and from obedience to disobedience, from trusting to impatience.

Saul saw the situation around about him and he thought, that's hopeless, helpless. There's nothing to be done. I must do it all.

It now falls upon my shoulders. I must take action. He saw only with the human eye. He didn't see with the eye of faith. When I saw, what did he see?

[21 : 39] When I saw that the men were scattering, the soldiers around about him who had come with him to join in the battle, were now afraid and leaving him. What did he see?

He saw that his dependence was upon his soldiers, was upon the troops, not upon God. What else did he see? He saw that you, Samuel, did not come at the set time.

Well, he saw Samuel not being there. Again, dependence upon him, reliance upon a man, impatience, and what else did he see?

He saw that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash and I thought. He saw all these things, but he did not see God.

He did not see God's faithfulness. He did not see God's grace. He did not see God's goodness. He did not see God's love. All he saw was the situation around about him.

[22 : 38] All he saw were the problems. All he saw were the things going wrong and he thought that he must do something about it. So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.

I must do this to earn God's favour. You see where his fault was. Not only that, he saw things around about him as being more real than the living God.

But he also had a wrong view of God himself. He saw God falsely. He saw God as a God who must be kept happy by religious action.

A God who must be appeased by good deeds. A God whose favour must be earned by my life, my religion. I haven't sought the favour of the Lord, he says.

Sounds very honourable, doesn't it? Sounds very spiritual. Sounds very religious. Sounds God dependent, but it isn't. It's not a true faith which trusts in the grace of God, the free grace of God.

[23 : 47] Not a faith that trusts in what God has done for us in the Lord Jesus Christ, but a faith in what I can do for God. I can earn his favour. If I live a good life, if I give to charity, if I don't hurt anybody, if I go to church or say my prayers, or if I'm baptised, or if I do religious things, whatever I do, these things can earn me a place in heaven, earn me God's favour, but they can't.

None of them can. None of them ever could do. None of them will do. We're not saved by religion. We're not saved by good deeds. We're not saved because we're good people.

We're saved because we're sinners who trust in the grace and the love of God, who recognise that Jesus has paid the price. Jesus has done for us what we can never do for ourselves.

How can we undo and pay off the debt of sin that our lives have accrued by our own selfishness and greed and pride, by our own thoughtless living, by our own rebellion of God's?

How can we think that somehow we can get rid of it, make ourselves right with God by the few things that we do, giving away some money, doing some religious deeds, saying our prayers, going to church, and all those things are equal.

[25 : 02] It's only because God in his loving kindness paid the debt for us, only because he took our sins and placed them on his son at the cross, that they're taken away forever, and that we can be forgiven and right with God.

He's done it, not us. And that makes faith, doesn't it? That demands faith. We've got to trust that our sins have been taken by Jesus. We've got to stop trusting in ourselves.

That's exactly what Saul is doing. He's trusting in himself. He's trusting that he can make this offering to God. He's trusting that somehow he can earn God's favour. So he sees the situations wrongly.

He doesn't see God, and when he does see God, he sees him wrongly as well. See, when we live by faith and not by sight, it means that our lives are not governed by our crises, running from one problem to another problem to another problem, so that we're seeking all the time to put out the fires.

when we live by faith, we're governed by the Lord Jesus Christ. He's in control. He's the king. He knows all about our needs. He knows all the things that worry us.

[26 : 11] He knows about all the concerns that we have. He promises to take care of us. The apostle Paul himself was originally given the name Saul, as you remember, after this king.

But he came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and because of that he was able to say of himself, in Galatians chapter 2, the life I now live in the body, this life, this physical life, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Love of Christ for us assures us that we can trust him, assures us that we can depend upon him, assures that whatever is going on around about us, we are his people, his children, his care.

So living by sight sees only the circumstances, our lives are ruled by fear. Living by faith sees the God who loves us, and our lives are ruled by grace.

But secondly, there's something else that living by sight does. Living by sight sees only the immediate and not the end. Sees only the immediate and not the end.

[27 : 37] Living by sight is blinkered sight. It's tunnel vision. It sees just the here and now. It's got no vision for the future, no hope for the future. It sees just that this world is all there is.

All we've got to hope for, all we've got to live for, all we can expect of good is in this world. You see, living by faith means that we believe and trust that everything is dependent upon him.

Living by sight means we look at God and we judge God by our present circumstances. If I'm in trouble at this moment, then we begin to doubt God's goodness. When things go wrong, we blame God for them.

If we go through a time of sorrow, then God doesn't love me or care for me. If I'm ill, then God has forgotten me. Don't we find ourselves bombarded by those doubts when things are hard in our lives, when things seem to go wrong in our lives, when we lose, when we struggle, when we suffer?

There is that thought, where are you, God? You've left me. You don't care for me anymore. But that's living by sight. That's just seeing the immediate.

[29 : 01] It's having our lives governed again by the immediate. This is exactly what Saul's problem is, isn't it? Here is a man who was compelled by what he saw to do the things he did.

He had a life that was ruled by his feelings. Many people live that way. It's going to be a good day today because I feel good when I wake up in the morning.

It's going to be a miserable day because I feel bad. I feel that God is near me. I feel that God isn't near me. I feel that life is happy.

I feel that life is unhappy. We're like yo-yos. And this and this again, sadly, the circumstances of the people around about us without the Lord Jesus Christ. Their lives are up and down, sad and happy, praising God and saying it's wonderful, moaning and complaining another time, all dependent upon the immediate circumstance, all dependent on what's going on around about us.

That's so very different when we live by faith rather than sight. When we trust in God, we are able to see that he is a God not just of now but of the future.

[30 : 12] He's the God of today and tomorrow. In the Psalms, the psalmist puts this expression of faith in God in a wonderful way.

He speaks about waiting on the Lord. Waiting on the Lord. That's what Samuel was looking for in the life of Saul, that he would wait on the Lord, but it wasn't there.

He was impatient, unwilling to wait on the Lord. Waiting on the Lord doesn't mean just sitting down and twiddling our thumbs waiting for God to do something. It's an active act of faith. It's actively trusting God.

It's actively praying and looking to God. It's actively saying, Lord, I know that you've got a purpose in this for good and I will continue to follow you and live for you day by day until you bring about what is your purpose.

When we live by sight, our own resources, strength, patience, wisdom, all run out. They all run dry, just like souls did.

[31 : 10] He got to the end of himself. There was nothing left he could do to keep the men from running away, nothing he could do to win the battle. He ran out of human resources and so he turns to even more human resources, his own works.

We need, dear friends, to be kept full of God. He's the one who supplies for us what we need. He's the one who provides for us what we need. Here's Isaiah chapter 40, this wonderful promise of God.

We know it so well, how often we forget it. Listen, God gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Isaiah 40. Even youths grow tired and weary and young men stumble and fall.

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint. That's the difference.

Those who hope in the Lord. They know that they haven't got the resources, the strength, the power. That's the best place to start, isn't it?

[32 : 16] When we're faced with a circumstance, a situation where we're impatient to see things change, we're impatient of things to get better, we're impatient to see things turn around, whether it be the conversion of a loved one, whether it be the restoration of something, whether it be the restoration of our health or our strength, whether it be our finance problems sorting out, or whatever it may be, we're impatient because these things are important to us.

We feel as if we just can't cope, we feel as if we just cannot manage, then here we are, we're brought back to this, are we living by faith or by sight? Are we trusting the Lord that he will bring it about?

Trusting and waiting upon him that he will give us the strength to press on day by day by day, even though we feel utterly helpless. The trouble was this, though he'd got to the end of himself and he felt utterly helpless, he thought he could sort it out himself.

He thought he could do something to push God's hand to make it better, and he got it disastrously wrong. Someone has said this, it may be difficult to wait on the Lord, but it's worse to wish that you had.

See, God's timing is always perfect. We want it today, but God may say next week, next year, next month. God's timing is always perfect.

[33 : 44] He promises it again and again through the scriptures. In Habakkuk chapter 2, we're told this, though God linger, wait for him. He will certainly come and will not delay.

What we think is a delay, what we think is taking ages and ages and ages for God to answer our prayer is not the case at all. God is working behind the scenes. God is bringing about his plan and purpose for his own good will and ours.

God is always there in the nick of time, at the right time. Remember when Abraham was called to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mount Moriah, and he takes him up there and he makes the altar and he lays out the wood and he ties up his son and he raises the knife.

It's then that God steps in. It's then that God says, stop, I know that you trust me. Remember Mary and Martha at the tomb of their brother Lazarus.

They thought that Jesus was too late to help Lazarus in John 11. When Martha ran out and welcomed Jesus, she said, Lord, if you'd only been here, my brother would not have died.

[34 : 53] Four days he'd been in the tomb. You've left it too late. But even then she had faith, but I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask. We may think it's too late.

The boat has left the dock. The time has passed. It's never too late. Not with faith in God. Too late for them to be saved.

No, it's never too late until death comes. Too late for this situation to be turned around for God's glory. No, it's never too late. The Lord was never caught off guard.

He's never taken surprise by the things that take us surprise. Even when we fail, even when we get it wrong, even when we find ourselves in a mess of our own making, he never, ever is caught out.

His purposes he will always fulfill for his people. Notice as he says to Saul through Samuel, now your kingdom will not endure. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him as ruler of his people.

[35 : 55] God knew that Saul would fail. He knew that he would get it wrong. He knew that he would let him down. But it didn't mean that God's plans or purposes would fail or fall. will. That's what we need to see, dear friends, in every circumstance, in every situation we face, every problem, that we have one who is so wonderfully great.

In 1 John chapter 4, the writer says this, you dear children are from God and have overcome because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

The one who is in you, the living God, he's the one who keeps us. He's the one who can preserve us. He's the one who can enable us to trust, to obey, to walk, to follow, to find.

Wear your eyes fixed. Remember those words of Hebrews 12, fix your eyes on Jesus, the author. And the perfecter of our faith.

Well, let's pray together, shall we? Lord, our God, we find the world rushing by, we find ourselves caught up in its whirlwind, caught up in its tsunami as it pushes through life and one week goes to next and one month, one year.

[37 : 41] We thank you, Lord, our God, that you are not ever in a hurry because to be in a hurry means to be out of control. To be in a hurry means that we're unable to keep up with things.

But, Lord, you have everything in your hand, including our lives, oh Lord. Lord, they're not a mystery to you. You know each and every one of us here. You know the things that concern us.

You know the things that we are impatient to see change and transformed. You know, Lord, how our worries and anxieties drive us at times so that we are led by our feelings and ruled by them rather than by the faith and trust that comes from leaning on you.

Lord, we ask that you would increase our faith, that you would help us when the things of life and this world seem to be glaring in our eyes and pressing in upon us.

Help us again, Lord, give us that faith that waits, that rests, that trusts, that depends, that perseveres. Not a faith that sits round, Lord, doing nothing but that faith that carries on being faithful, carries on trusting, carries on living, carries on obeying, carries on praying and seeking you until in your good time, in your good way, Lord, you bring about what is your good will.

[38 : 59] We thank you again, oh Lord, that you know every one of us and we come to you again and ask you to forgive us, us for our lack of faith and our unbelief and our doubt. Thank you, Lord, that there's nothing we can do to earn your forgiveness or favour.

You've provided it all in the Lord Jesus. Thank you so much for him, that he was obedient unto death, even death on the cross. And by his obedience, oh Lord, we have been saved.

Lord, help us then as we commit these things to you now, as we continue in this day and in the coming week ahead, to walk by faith and not by sight. Amen.