

How to Respond Properly in Times of Distress

1 Samuel 13:1-14

Introduction:

1. Have you ever heard the expression, “He’s getting too big for his own britches?”
2. This expression aptly describes King Saul. He had now been king of Israel for two years. He had won some mighty victories and had exhibited a meek and humble spirit.
3. But, here in chapter 13, begins the unraveling of a mighty man. He begins to tumble down the mountain of sin and disobedience.
4. His humble spirit vanishes as this chapter opens with Saul tooting his own horn (vs. 1-4), taking the credit for his son’s victory over the Philistines. Pride is always a sure sign that we are about to fall. Proverbs 16:18
5. Saul was feeling mighty good about himself and gathered the people of Israel together to Gilgal, but the Philistines decided they would take some air out of King Saul’s balloon. vs. 5
6. Notice verse 6, *“When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait...”*
 - This word “*strait*” literally means “to cramp.” Have you ever gotten a muscle cramp in your leg and no matter how you twist and turn it, it doesn’t help. This is the kind of situation that Israel was in. They were in a strait! They were in distress!!
 - Webster’s defines “*strait*” as “distress; need.” Have you ever been in a strait?
7. Notice how the people responded while in this strait. It sure wasn’t in faith.
 - Some of the people tried to hide from their problem. vs. 6
 - Others tried to run from their problem. vs. 7a
 - Others looked and turned to a man (Saul) in fear. vs. 7b
8. Every one of these responses was motivated by **fear**, not by **faith**.
9. But, let’s notice how Saul responded. After all, he was the king and leader of Israel.
10. Saul waited for the prophet and priest, Samuel, for seven days (as they had agreed in vs. 8). But when Samuel did not show up, with great impatience, Saul called for the burnt and peace offerings and offered them himself.
 - Was this the right or wrong action to take? It was dead wrong! Saul had taken privileges that he had no right to take. Samuel was the priest and prophet, and he alone was spiritually qualified to sacrifice these offerings.
11. Saul found himself in a strait (in a time of distress), and during this time made some very unwise decisions. You and I will also find ourselves in times of distress. Christians go through the same problems that non-believers go through (marriage problems, financial problems, loss of job, death of a loved one, etc.).
12. Every believer must respond properly in times of distress. But how do we do this? Let’s take the negative example of Saul and turn it into some positive principles for us to live by.

First, refuse to blame others. vs. 11

1. During the time of distress, Saul made some very bad choices. Then when he was confronted by Samuel, Saul attempted to shift the blame to everybody else. vs. 11
 - Saul blamed the people of Israel, Samuel, and the Philistines for **his** bad choices.
2. There are times when we find ourselves in distress, and it is really no fault of our own. Life itself can simply throw you some curve balls. But there are many times when we simply make bad decisions that are against God's Word.
3. This is where the words "responsibility" and "accountability" come into the picture. Every person is responsible and accountable for his or her own actions. Matthew 12:36; Romans 14:12
4. God is a God of accountability. Every person that has lived on this earth will one day be held personally accountable for his or her own actions and choices.
5. God cannot allow us to justify our wrong actions by blaming others. He would not be a God worthy of our worship and praise if He did. Parents, we would be wise to practice this same principle with our children. Never allow them to blame the teacher, parents, pastor, youth leader, or their peers for their own disobedient choices and decisions.
6. If we are to respond properly during times of distress, we must refuse to blame others and accept accountability for our own actions.

Second, refuse to rely on human reasoning. vs. 12

1. After looking at all the outward circumstances of verse 11, Saul said, "*Therefore said I...*" Notice the human reasoning of King Saul in verse 12.
 - It seemed to make sense. It seemed to be a logical decision. But what seemed like a rational decision, Samuel called foolish. vs. 13
2. When you are in distress, one of the worst things you can do is to try to reason your way out of it. You will always make a bigger mess out of the situation. Proverbs 3:5-6
3. As believers, we must seek God and His Word. We must seek to walk in His wisdom, having no confidence in our fleshly ability to make decisions.
4. God has given us principles and guidelines in His Word whereby we can make wise decisions, but many times we ignore God's principles because we want **our** way. Saul was very self-willed. Instead of truly seeking God, he made a decision in his flesh.
5. What a lesson we learn here from Saul. When we are in distress, one of the worst mistakes we can make is to make rash decisions and go off half-cocked in the confidence of our own fleshly reasoning.
6. There have been many times in my life when I almost made some very ill-advised decisions during times of distress. But, when I took the time to pray, seek God, meditate on His Word, or even seek biblical counsel, I made decisions that honored God.

Third, remain faithful in the little things. vs. 13-14

1. A person may say, “So, Saul offered a sacrifice instead of waiting on Samuel. What's the big deal? What's the harm?”
2. Here was the problem. If Saul could not be trusted in the little things, like waiting on Samuel, how could God trust him with bigger things? Samuel recognized this. vs. 13-14
3. When in times of distress, it is so easy to lose sight of the little things. We quit coming to church faithfully, we stop reading our Bible, our prayer life wanes, we are in a financial distress so we quit giving, etc.
4. When you are in a time of distress, this is when you must stay faithful in the little things. Don't let them go. Luke 16:10
5. God is looking for a person who is after God's own heart (vs. 14). To be after God's heart simply means that what is important to God is important to us. What **God** says is what matters to us. It's not about **our** desires and thoughts; it is about God's heart.
 - This was an area that was a real struggle for Saul; but let's be honest, it is a struggle for a lot of us.
6. Jesus Christ did a real big thing when He died on the cross for us and rose from the dead three days later. But let's face it, had He not been faithful to the Father in the little things leading up to the cross, then His death would not have mattered or counted for anything.
7. Do you know why Jesus was faithful during the ultimate time of distress on the cross? Do you know why His death was sufficient to pay for our sins? Because He was faithful in the little things. John 4:34, 6:38, 8:29

In Conclusion:

1. Saul found himself in a strait. In modern day language we would say, “I'm in a jam.” Saul blew it. He went to pieces and made very bad decisions during his time of distress.
2. But from Saul's negative example, we have learned three vital principles that will help us to respond properly when in distress.
 - Refuse to blame others.
 - Refuse to rely on human reasoning.
 - Remain faithful in the little things.
3. 2 Corinthians 1:8-10 is a great verse to end this message with.