

I have always been fascinated by deep-sea diving.

I have zero interest in actually participating.

My interest is purely theoretical.

The deeper you go under water, the more the water begins to weigh on you.

It begins to affect light.

At 9 meters, you can no longer see the color red.

Yellow goes away at 23 meters.

After 30, all you can see is blue and green.

Diving deep increases your blood pressure.

Your blood gets denser, which forces the heart to work harder.

The amount of nitrogen in your blood increases.

Which, if it gets too much can cause you to feel drunk and confused and is the cause of most deep-sea diving deaths.

The deeper you go, the more the pressure increases and the more dangerous it becomes.

We feel a similar kind of spiritual pressure.

We feel this pressure from the world.

We feel this pressure from within ourselves and the temptations we face.

We feel the pressure from our circumstances.

We feel is when things get difficult and hard.

This morning we are going to see Saul experience this pressure.

Turn with me to 1 Samuel 13:1-14.

I. We are pressured to disobey God's commands (v. 1-9).

Every day, we feel the pressure to disobey what God commands us.

Verse 1, **"Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years over Israel,"**

We just need to see that Saul has not been the king very long.

Problems are already beginning to mount.

There are already challenges to his rule and it is not going great.

He experienced an incredible victory over the Ammonites in chapter 11.

But now he is still at war.

And things are not going as well this time around.

Verse 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 Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent home, every man to his tent."**

Saul gathers up an army.

It seems big at first.

There are over three thousand men here.

This is way less than last time..

In chapter 11, when Saul gathered an army there were 330,000 men.

Now there are far less.

Everyone else seems to have gone home.

They are too frightened to come and fight.

Maybe they do not respect Saul as king.

We don't know the reasons.

But God is not rounding up the people this time.

So, the pressure is building.

Saul is starting to sweat.

Notice that it does not mention that Jonathan is Saul's son yet.

It will not do that until next week.

But I just want you to put that away and remember for next week.

Verse 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, "Let the Hebrews hear."**

Jonathan has this great moment.

He goes to fight and defeats some Philistines.

Even though he only has 1,000 men, he wins the battle.

It seems that Jonathan does what Saul failed to do in chapter 10.

Next week we will see him have even more faith.

But here already he is shown to trust God.

But the pressure continues to grow.

Because the Philistines get word of this defeat.

And they are not pleased.
They are going to respond.
But for now Saul responds.
He blows the trumpet.
He tells all of Israel about the victory.
He wants them to hear so that they come.
He sounded the trumpet in chapter 11 and hundreds of thousands came.
Every single tribe and village sent men.
So the expectation is this will happen again.

Verse 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."**

Everyone hears the call.
They are invited to come to the battle.
Israel also hears that the Philistines are angry.
They are so bothered by the stench that they will do something.

There are lots of diapers in my house still.
When some of them become a stench, they get dealt with.
Israel has become a stench.
A Philistine response is imminent.
There is a massive battle that is going to come.
The people are invited to Gilgal to prepare.
The same place they came to renew the kingdom and make Saul king.
The same place God has defeated their enemies before.
The same place God has worked wonders.

Verse 5, **"And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and troops like sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven."**

But we hear the Philistines respond.
They muster and gather up their armies to prepare for battle.

And they come en masse.
Thirty thousand chariots.
Six thousand cavalry.
And more infantry than can be counted.
This is far more than Israel gathered previously.
They have a massive advantage in numbers.
And they have a massive advantage in their military.
They have cavalry and chariots, while Israel has none.
You cannot normally hope to win a battle when the enemy has this kind of advantage.
For those of us who may struggle to understand this.
I want you to picture trying to defeat thirty thousand tanks and six thousand helicopters with three thousand men who only have pistols.
It is virtually impossible.

And you see their army is described with some similar language.
They number more than the sands on the shore.
That was the promise God made to Abraham.
But here we see the Philistines blessed, not Israel.
This would have tempted them even more.
Because it looks like God is blessing the enemy with the promises they are supposed to have.

We have felt that way, haven't we?
We see other people who are wicked blessed while we struggle.
We see irresponsible people having more kids while our womb is closed.
We see sinners have excess while we struggle to make ends meet.

Verse 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 cisterns,"**

Israel feels this way.
So they run.
They ignore the trumpet call.

They feel the pressure and they crack.
They run to hide in caves and tombs instead of fight.
They are assuming that God cannot protect them.
They do not believe God is worth fighting for.

There is also some irony here.
They wanted a king for this exact scenario.
But now the first time a problem comes after the king has been established, they ignore him and it does not seem to be enough.

Verse 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."**

Some of the people do come to Saul.
But it is not many.
And all the people who are there are trembling in fear.
They are shaking in their boots.
They do not believe and are not confident.
They are cracking under the pressure.

Verse 8, **"He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him."**

Here is where the most pressure comes from.
Saul is watching all of this unfold.
He sees the Philistine army get bigger and bigger.
He sees his own army shrinking.
Not only are people not coming.
The people who are there are running away.

And Saul has been told to wait seven days for Samuel.
And then after those days Samuel will make sacrifices to God to bless them for the battle.
But things get worse.

Because Samuel has not shown up.
And he is late.
Saul is under incredible pressure to take matters into his own hands.

This is not just a time of sitting around.
This is not meant to be a seven-day campout.
Yes, they are to wait for Samuel.
But I don't think Samuel expects all to spend those seven days twiddling their thumbs.
Instead, these are meant to be seven days of worship.
Seven days of intentional, religious activity.
Yes, they aren't supposed to make the burnt or peace offerings.
But there's a whole lot more towards God that they could and should be engaged him.

They should be praying for seven days.
Can you imagine seven days spent in song and prayer and lament?
I think if Saul, would've been more intentional with his worship in the seven days he may have responded the right way at the end.

Verse 9, **"So Saul said, 'Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings.' And he offered the burnt offering."**

And so Saul cracks.
He fails under pressure.
He calls for the offerings to God.
And he offers them himself.
This is not something that he should do.
He knows he is not supposed to do it.
But things are so difficult that he does it anyway.
He gives into the temptation.

We face the same pressure.
We feel this pressure from everything around us.

There are moments and times when it feels like everything is screaming at us to disobey God.

To turn aside from what God teaches.

To give us and just do this or that.

We especially feel this when we have to wait.

When everything is pushing us away from God and God seems to still make us wait.

We were hoping and depending and waiting on the Lord and still it seems that it's taking too long.

What I think can help us in this moment of pressure is to use the waiting.

We are gonna have to wait for God.

In fact, most of the time we probably have to wait for God.

And as we wait, pressure will come.

I think instead of just feeling sorry for ourselves or feeling how hard it is.

We should spend the time waiting, worshipping the Lord.

If Saul had done that he might've made a different choice.

And if we spend our waiting abiding in Jesus and he abides in us.

Then we can withstand the pressure.

Only being with God can do this.

II. We are pressured to justify our disobedience (v. 10-12).

We also feel the pressure to justify ourselves.

We make excuses for why this was OK.

Our natural response when caught is rarely to repent and apologize.

We don't immediately come clean.

Instead, there's this impulse, this pressure to come up with excuses.

Verse 10, **"As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him."**

The moment that Saul gives in is when Samuel comes.

Saul was in the middle of doing what he is not supposed to do.

He is the king. He is not the prophet.

It is improper and wrong for him to offer the sacrifice in this moment.

But the main problem is that he is disobedient.

He was told to wait and does not.

And he has been caught red-handed.

Samuel appears when Saul has finished the burnt offering and is in the middle of offering the peace offering.

He is caught like a child with his hand in the cookie jar with crumbs already over his shirt and his mouth is full.

This reminds me of Peter denying Christ and the rooster crows the third time and Christ looks at him.

Adam and Eve eat the fruit, realize they are naked.

As as they are making clothes to hide their nakedness, they hear God walking in the cool of the day.

What will Saul do?

Verse 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,"**

Notice that Samuel asks a question.

I don't wanna skip over this.

Because it is the invitation to repentance.

Saul is being invited to respond to the right way.

It is similar to God in the garden saying where are you?

Samuel knows exactly what is Saul is doing.

But he asks the question.

Cause I think we should always give people the opportunity to repent.

We give them a chance to do the right thing to come clean.

He immediately justifies himself.

He says that everyone was running away.

The army was disbanding.

There would not be anyone left to fight or left to lead.

And he blames Samuel.
Notice so quickly that happens.
He says it's the people's fault.
They're all running away.
And it's actually your fault because you said you would be here and you weren't.
You were late.
Because you didn't do what you said, I felt like I had to do this.
It's one of the ways we often try to justify yourself as we blame our circumstances and then we blame other people.

He starts with saying I don't know if you know Samuel, but there's a lot of Philistines.
There's way more Philistine than we've ever seen before.
And they're coming.
He mentions this massive army that's nearby.

Verse 12, **"I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD.' so I forced myself and offered the burnt offering."**

And so as they're coming, I thought wow we can't fight because we haven't prayed to God yet.
Since we haven't saw his favor, we have not made the sacrifices.
We have to make them cause this battle is coming.

You see how he is already shifting it?
It's excusing it not as well. I did something that's wrong. It's actually what I did was good.
I did it because I'm trying to honor God.

And then he minimizes his own responsibility.
He minimizes his own choice.
And he says that he forced himself to do it.
He's saying I didn't want to do this, but I had to.

I really try not to Samuel.
But it had to be done.

We do the same thing, don't we?
We learned this very young.
Just spend some time with the children in the back and you'll see how
quick they come up with excuses.
There is always a reason why they did exactly what you told him not to do.
Or why they punched somebody or jumped off of the wall.
Is it is a part of our sinful nature.
From the very beginning, we feel this Paul to defend our behavior.
Even when we know that we are wrong.
Even when we know that we are caught red-handed.
Even though we know our excuses are foolish and empty, and no one's
gonna believe them anyway.
We still make them.
We still try to defend ourselves.

I know God said love our enemies, but these ones are terrible and ruining
the country.
I know God said to care for the poor, but they brought it on themselves.
I know God said to only let what comes out of our mouth be pure, but I
was really fed up and they had it coming.
I know God said not to gossip, but I had to tell someone.
I know God said not use pornography, but its been so long and I needed
to.
I know God said not to get drunk, but I'm only a little drunk and not too
often.

But if the gospel is true,
Then we don't have to defend our sin.
We do not have to defend ourselves when we fail.
We don't have to be overwhelmed with the condemnation and shame.
Instead, we can boldly go before the throne and say yes, I have sinned.

We can see that we gave into the pressure when we shouldn't have.
We can say that we did what was wrong. We shouldn't have done it and we regret it and we are ashamed that we did it.
We can do it without blaming other people or coming up with excuses or justifying ourselves.

If you wanna know the main difference between Saul and David as we'll see it unfold.
A lot of it is right here, that's how they respond when they're caught in sin. David will confess his sin while Saul will deny it.

If you were a follower of Jesus.
If you profess to believe that Jesus Christ dying on the cross for your sins and was raised to bring new life.
If you believe that he is our only hope in life and death.
Then you have nothing to fear by admitting that you're still a listener and you failed again.

And in fact to deny that you have to deny the gospel.
Because when we justify ourselves.
When we make up excuses.
We're saying, the gospel isn't true and we're really not that bad.
Or worse telling God that he didn't say that.
We cannot give into this pressure.
We have to be honest when we sin and come clean.
Do not make the mistake Saul does.

III. Giving in to the world's pressure forfeits God's blessings (v. 13-14).

This is the tragedy of Saul's story.
He loses the blessing.
He forfeits it.
And I do not think it is just because he sins.
Because David sins a lot.
David sins more and worse than Saul in some cases.

But Saul does not repent.
And unrepentant sin always leads to worse consequences.

Verse 13, **"And Samuel said to Saul, 'You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.'"**

Samuel gives Saul the consequence.
He first rebukes his sin.
He calls it foolish.
It was not wise.
It was not justified.
It was not okay under the unique circumstances.
It was foolish and it was wrong.

It was against the commands of God.
No one but the priests or prophets can make the sacrifice.
The king is not allowed.
Saul should not have done it.
It was against God's laws.

And Samuel repeats it twice.
Because it was very clear what God commanded.

But here we get the consequence.
If Saul would have passed this test, then God would have blessed him.
He would have had a kingdom over Israel forever.
He could have been the king.
His dynasty could have reigned forever.
But he failed.
He gave into the pressure.

Verse 14, **"But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded**

him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

We see it more here.

Saul's kingdom is going to end.

And he will live to see it end.

He will die knowing that his line is over.

Knowing that his name will pass.

And God is going to choose another man.

God will pick a different king.

Again, we see the king will be a prince.

Because the king is just a steward.

These are God's people not Saul's.

And God will take them from him.

Because he has not kept God's Word.

He has not been obedient.

And disobedience brings consequences.

Also, we have this phrase most of you know "A man after his own heart."

This actually has two meanings.

The first is that God wants someone who will obey with all his heart.

Not who will half obey God.

He does not want someone who makes sacrifices because they say they care about God, but they do not truly.

He wants a king who will be faithful with his whole heart.

But it also means that God wants a king He chooses.

The people wanted a king like the nations.

And that is who God gave them.

In many ways, God let the people pick Saul.

They got the most rich, tallest, and handsome man in the country.

They got a who looked and acted like the other nations.

But God wants a King that He will choose.

And this will be a king who is not the same.

But the heart of this is that Saul misses out on God's blessing.
And when we disobey.
When we give into the pressure of the world we also miss it.
We don't forfeit kingdoms.
But we do lose something.

One of the things we lose is the opportunity to grow.
Trials and tribulations.
Refusing to give into the pressure of the world makes us more like Christ.
It sanctifies us.
But when we give in, we miss out on the blessing the trial was bringing.
We also quench the Holy Spirit.
He hinder His work in our lives.

We miss out on the presence of God.
We do not get to experience God as much when we sin.
And there are plenty of other things.

When we forsake the gathering of God's people, we miss out on community.
When we do not confess our sins, we miss the blessing of freedom.
When we give into the pressure of business and do not meditate on God's Word, we miss out on the blessing of being filled.

And there are real and tangible blessings that come from Christ.
And there are eternal rewards that are promised to us.
We do not know exactly what they are or how they work.
But our obedience here, especially in moments of crisis, brings eternal rewards.
And when we fail, we miss out on those.

That should encourage us to obey.
That should make us not want to fail.

But there is good news.

Our eternal destiny does not depend on our faithfulness, but on the faithfulness of Christ.

Even if we forfeit and miss out on blessings here, we do not have to miss this one.

There is nothing we can do to lose our salvation.

No matter how much we fail or disobey.

Jesus' death on the cross pays the price for all of our sins.

It wipes out all of our debts.

It makes us new and born again.

And because it is, we should want to obey this gracious God.

We sin and fail, but then we get up again.

We continue to follow Jesus no matter how much pressure there is around us.

No matter how hard it is and no matter the cost.

Because the beauty and reward of following Christ is greater than anything the world has to offer.

We are pressured to disobey God's commands.

We are pressured to justify our disobedience.

Giving into pressure forfeits God's blessings.

But God's grace is new every morning.

And Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

And with Him we can endure.