

Light On Our Path



*Messages by various speakers on various books
at the Streetlight Christian Church
in the 6:30 p.m. services of July 2007*

Table of Contents

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Pastor Paul Aasman

Text	Title	Speaker	Page #
1 Samuel 14:45-46	<i>Faith and Action</i>	P. Aasman	4
Hebrews 12:2	<i>Fix your eyes on Jesus</i>	G. van Popta	9
1 Samuel 15:22	<i>To obey is better than sacrifice</i>	P. Aasman	14

1 Samuel 14:45-46 “But the men said to Saul, ‘Should Jonathan die—he who has brought about this great deliverance in Israel? Never! As surely as the LORD lives, not a hair of his head will fall to the ground, for he did this today with God’s help.’ So the men rescued Jonathan, and he was not put to death. Then Saul stopped pursuing the Philistines, and they withdrew to their own land.”

Faith and Action

Reading: 1 Samuel 14:24-52

Text: 1 Samuel 14:45-46

Saul was the very first king in Israel. Do you know who was the very last one? Who was the most famous king? And what is the name of the king who reigns now on the throne of David?

Yes, Jesus Christ. He is the last king and the greatest of all. The position which Saul once held, is now his. True, he is a better king, and his glory is much greater than that of Saul, but his position is exactly the same. Like Saul, Jesus now reigns over God’s people, to protect them from all harm and to drive back the enemy.

Now, in our passage, King Saul did a number of wicked things, and in the end, a curse fell upon him. The curse came on him as it can only happen to a king. but he also experiences something that only a king can experience. And in a way that is

both terrible and wonderful, he experiences a curse. He does it as only a king can; he does it as only the great king Jesus Christ would.

We began reading at verse 24, but we need to understand that before this (in verses 15-23) Jonathan's daring strike at the Philistine outpost had brought huge confusion to them, and they were fighting themselves. Saul summoned his troops to finish off the fight, and to chase the Philistines out of Israel's territories.

Now Saul was very excited. Though he had done nothing for it, his enemy was running away. It would be very easy now to destroy the enemy. So he gathered his men together to rally the troops, to stir them to acts of valour and inspire them to fight to victory.

These are the great moments in history. Some of the greatest speeches are delivered to troops at such times. But Saul's words are heavy and unsuited. He utters a curse on his own soldiers if they should eat before evening - and then he urges them to act only for his own glory - until "*I have avenged myself on my enemies*". I'm disappointed in Saul's words. Vengeance belongs to God, not man. If you want to motivate people to act, set them before the Lord, not before man. When Jesus was rallying himself for battle against the devil on the cross, he did not point to himself as Saul did, but said, "Father, your will be done", and he sought strength from God.

Alas, Saul was not a good king, like Jesus is.

In verse 27 we read that Saul's son Jonathan did not know of the King's curse. Jonathan was busy fighting a war while Saul talks with his troops. That morning, Jonathan had already attacked and overthrown a whole outpost, single-handedly. You can appreciate, perhaps, that by this time, Jonathan was hungry. As he traveled through this land of milk and honey, he saw a bee's nest. He poked his spear into the hive and brought honey to his lips. He ate and was blessed. His eyes were brightened - you can imagine the effect of honey - how it revitalizes a tired man. Jonathan was ready to fight again, to chase the enemy and lead the charge.

But in verse 28, the blessing turns into a curse: "*Then one of the soldiers told him, 'Your father bound the army under a strict oath, saying, 'Cursed be any man who eats food today!' That is why the men are faint.'*" It was like an unexpected blow to the stomach. Jonathan was not pleased as we can read in verse 29 "*My father has made trouble for the country. See how my eyes brightened when I tasted a little of this honey.'*"

Later in verse 36, Saul was getting his troops ready for the last leg of the fight, to chase, kill and plunder. But the priest with them reminded Saul that he should first ask for the Lord's will. He did. But we read in verse 37 that God did not answer.

Saul rightly concluded that someone had eaten food before evening had come, and that was why God did not speak to him. So

he called for the Urim and Thummim that God might reveal who was had done it. The lot exposed Jonathan. Jonathan did not try to escape the curse. He was ready to die, even though he thinks that the curse was foolishly uttered.

But in verse 45 the soldiers rallied around Jonathan: *“But the men said to Saul, ‘Should Jonathan die—he who has brought about this great deliverance in Israel? Never! As surely as the LORD lives, not a hair of his head will fall to the ground, for he did this today with God’s help.’ So the men rescued Jonathan, and he was not put to death.”* Jonathan was rescued and the enemy got away (verse 46). But let’s read verse 44: *“Saul said, ‘May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if you do not die, Jonathan.’”* If the curse did not fall on Jonathan, then who did it fall on? Right, it fell on Saul.

In a strange way, Saul became very Christ-like when the curse that should have fallen on Jonathan, fell on him instead. And in the end, the curse destroyed Saul. These very enemies who on that day got away, would come back and fight against Saul. Saul would see his army overwhelmed, his own sons killed before his eyes, and, in despair, he would fall on his sword and commit suicide. Saul took the curse that was on Jonathan onto himself and he was not able to bear it.

Just as there was a curse Jonathan, there was a curse on us. We had broken God’s law, and we continue to do it every day of

our lives. Jonathan did it unwittingly, but we do it with our eyes open. We sin and know it. We cannot plead ignorance! There was a curse on us too.

But Jesus said, “May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if you do not die, my brothers and sisters.” He knew we would perish everlastingly under the curse of God, but that he could bear it. So he put himself forward: “Deal with me, ever so severely, O Father in heaven; do not let my brothers and sisters die. Let the curse that is upon them be on me. I will bear it to the cross, and endure the horrors of hell. I take away their curse to bring them life.”

You see, in the Old Testament stories of Saul and David, we read about weak and sinful kings. They do stupid things. But the beauty of God’s love in Jesus Christ shines out. We see God’s grace in ways that we otherwise would never have seen it.

Let each of us be moved to wonder and awe at the love of God in Jesus Christ. I urge every one of you here to put your trust in Jesus Christ, who gave himself for you.

July 8, 2007
Rev. George van Popta

Hebrews 12:2 “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Fix your eyes on Jesus

Reading: Hebrews 12:1-13
Text: Hebrews 12:2

The people that first received this letter were told to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus. They were in danger of looking away from the Lord Jesus. They lived in a difficult time (almost 2000 years ago). They were being attacked by unbelievers for their faith. They were getting tired and so were ready to give up on the whole church thing and Christianity thing.

And so the writer wrote a letter to encourage them not to give up but to keep their eyes fixed upon Jesus.

That's the message that comes to us today too. Sometimes we get discouraged by things that are happening in our lives. Perhaps people make fun of you because you want to follow Jesus. Because you go to church every Sunday. Or maybe the troubles come from another direction: maybe life is hard for you because you are ill; or because you have trouble where you live; or in your family. And it just doesn't get any better. Even though you love

Jesus and trust him, nothing changes: you are still sick; that guy in your lodging home still bugs you; your family still won't talk to you. And you think: what's the use? You are tempted to throw in the towel on this church and Christianity thing.

I want to say to you this evening: Keep your eyes fixed upon Jesus.

This text of scripture gives three reasons for us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. The first reason is because of who Jesus is.

a. He is eternal God (the Son of God, God the Son) who became a man. He is eternal God. Together with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, Jesus, too, is God. We cannot understand that, but it is what the Bible teaches us. Because he is God, he is called: the author and perfecter of our faith. He is the author of our faith. What does that mean? What is the author of a book?

That he is the author of your faith means that he started faith happening in you. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus? Do you love him? Do you want to serve him? Jesus put that faith in your heart. He made it begin to grow. He started that faith in your heart by letting you hear the Word of God. By bringing you to church to hear the preaching of the gospel. When you hear sermons about the Lord Jesus and go to Bible studies and catechism, the Lord Jesus is working in your heart with his Holy Spirit.

But not only is he the author of your faith. He is also the perfecter of your faith. What does that mean? What does it mean

to perfect something? To make that thing perfect; to finish it. The Lord Jesus can do that because of who he is: He is God. When will he perfect your faith? On the day he comes again. He will make you perfect in every way. If you believe in Jesus, then on the day that he comes again, he will make your faith perfect. Today you struggle. You have your doubts. But on that day the Lord Jesus will remove all doubt. We will see him with our eyes. Our faith will be perfected.

We need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus because he is God.

b. But he is God, the Son of God, who became a true man. He took our humanity, our humanness, upon himself. He entered our human existence to deliver us from sin and misery. The author underlined that by calling him by his very human name, "Jesus." By simply calling him "Jesus", he wants to tell us that, though he is God, at the same time, he is a true man. He came close to us. Near to us.

We cannot understand that—how Jesus can be both true God and true man at the same time. But it is what the Bible teaches, and so we believe it. One of his names is: Immanuel. That means: God with us. That is who he is: God who came to be with us. God who also became a man to save us from our sins.

We need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus because of who he is: God who came near to us. That's the first reason.

The second reason we need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus is because of what he has done for us.

a. He endured the cross. He died on the cross. He took our sins upon himself and carried them to the cross. On the cross he died under the anger of God against human sin. He took responsibility for our sin and set us free from the anger of God against our sin.

The verse we are looking at says: Jesus accepted the suffering of the cross because of the joy that would come from it. What joy? The salvation of many people, the salvation of all those who would believe in him. If you asked Jesus whether the suffering on the cross was worth it, he would say: "Oh yes." It was worth it because through the cross he would save all those who believe in him.

Jesus died for you. He gave himself as a sacrifice for sin. Why would you look away from him? Salvation is found in him only.

b. Also, on the cross, the Lord Jesus gave an example of how to suffer. He showed us what it is to suffer without getting angry or giving up. He gives us an example to follow. As you faithfully follow Christ, you will suffer because of it. Our society has little patience for someone who says that Christ is the only way. That he alone is the way, the life and the truth. Your love for Jesus and faith in Jesus might make things hard for you. But in

Jesus we have a great example of what it means to suffer without giving up. We too can put up with hard times and difficult situations if we follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. Keep your eye fixed on him!

3. The third reason to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus is because of where he, today, is: seated at the right hand of God the Father. After his death and burial, he arose from the dead and went up into heaven. There, at the right hand of God, he prays for us. From there he sends us the Holy Spirit to comfort, strengthen and encourage us.

When he was on earth, he died on the cross for us. Now that he is in heaven, he blesses us with his Holy Spirit. He prays for us and blesses us. He knows you. He knows what your struggles are. What you are happy about and sad about. Even though he is in heaven, he still is a true man and he knows what it is like to be you—a human being with joys and sadness, illnesses, human struggles. He knows all about it. He will strengthen you in your struggles. He will bless you through his Holy Spirit.

And from heaven he will come again. He is not going to stay there forever. He is coming again. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

And so my friends, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. Remember who he is: Almighty God who came to us. Jesus, one of us. You need to remember what he did: He died on the cross for

you to set you free from all your sins and to be an example of how to persevere in the face of suffering. You need to remember where he is: In heaven, at the right hand of God. Blessing you from heaven. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, and things will be well for you.

July 15, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

1 Samuel 15:22 “But Samuel replied: ‘Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.’”

To obey is better than sacrifice

Reading: 1 Samuel 15:1-26
Text: 1 Samuel 15:22

The book of Samuel might easily be described as the book of rejection. It is not a nice thing to be rejected. It hurts most when the people closest to you reject you. It is a painful thing to be rejected by brothers or sisters, by parents or even by children.

In this chapter, God rejected Saul as king over Israel. That is the title in the NIV over chapter 15. Why does God reject Saul? God himself explains it in verse 23: “*Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.*”

Saul had rejected God. And it wasn't just Saul - the whole people had rejected God. That is what God complained earlier to his servant Samuel when they demanded that he appoint a king over them. God said to Samuel, *"Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king."* (1 Sam 8:7)

And that grieved God to the heart. The people whom he loved had rejected him. God had chosen them in Abraham, God had nurtured them in Egypt; the Lord delivered them from slavery via Moses, and led them gently through the wilderness to the Promised Land. He gave them a land flowing with milk and honey. God dreamed with his people about a glorious future that he would give them, and God quietly planned to deliver them through a supreme act of love in his Son Jesus Christ.

God invested so much, but they had rejected him by wanting a king to rule over them, and now that very king who ruled over them was rejecting God. Let's see how.

God had given Saul a job to do. God was, after all King of kings and Lord of lords. Of all people, Saul should know that. God commanded Saul to attack and destroy the people of Amalek. It sounds terrible, doesn't it? But Amalek was the first nation to attack Israel when they came out of Egypt - they tried to destroy Israel when they were weakest. The nations must learn that there is only one God; none may despise Israel's God. He is the King of

kings. Let them fear Israel's God - for that is the beginning of wisdom.

So Saul gathered Israel's army together, he attacked and he destroyed. But he did not destroy everything. He kept some of the animals and Agag their king. Is that what God told him to do? No. God told him to destroy everything.

So why didn't Saul destroy everything? Because he was making himself first, not God. In verse 12 we read he went to a place called Carmel to set up a monument in honour of himself. He has just won a great battle against Amalek, and now he was taking the glory for himself. Is that right? No. The victory belongs to God. He blesses his people and he is to be thanked for every good thing.

What's the problem here? Is it just a little mistake? No, it is clear that the problem is deeper than that. The problem lied in his heart. He did not love God nor did he want to bow down before God. He wanted his own glory, not God's. He wanted people to praise him for his victories in battle, not God.

Obviously, then, the problem would soon come out. He would disobey God. And he did. Samuel says in verse 19 that Saul had pounced on the plunder, though God had clearly forbidden that. As Samuel pressed on Saul his sin against God, he finally admitted it, though he made excuses: *"I have sinned. I violated the*

LORD's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them.” (vs 24)

Now perhaps you can understand why God says what he does in verse 22. God delights in obedience because you need to love God to obey him. Oh, you can obey him sometimes if you don't love him, but eventually you will stop obeying him. If you don't love God, it will come out.

But if you do love him, it will show. You will always try to obey him. You will always want to praise him. That is why God says he delights in obedience. Saul had disobeyed God saying he wanted to offer the animals he had spared for a sacrifice to God. He acted as though he were disobeying God to honour God. But God hates that. We must not try to invent our own ways of worship. When we worship, we must do what God says.

Saul had rejected God. Now God was rejecting Saul.

But did God reject his people? Did he abandon his people? No, we read, *“The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbours.”*(vs. 28). God had chosen another to be king, someone who was better, and someone whose heart would be devoted to God.

Who is that person? David.

But did David honour God perfectly all the time? No, also disobeyed God at times. But the difference with David was that he

loved God with all his heart, and he wanted to honour and serve God. David was just like us, a sinful man.

But who was David's great son, who would become King over God's people? Jesus Christ. He would not only love God with all his heart, but he would obey God all his life. He would never reject God in thought or deed. And the amazing thing is that he kept on obeying God even after all the people rejected him and crucified him. And then he kept on obeying God when the Father rejected him on the cross. And as a reward God exalted him to the highest honour. He ascended into heaven and sat down at God's right hand. He is the one whom the Father loves and delights in.

You may suffer rejection in all kinds of ways in this world - even by the people who you depend on, who are close to you. But don't worry. Your closest friend is still beside you. God will never reject you if you are in Jesus Christ. He is right there beside you, supporting you, strengthening you, until he brings you into his eternal glory.

So obey God. Honour him in all your ways. Love him with all your heart.

