

KING SAUL . . . who threw away his crown  
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(1 SAMUEL 15:23-2S)

The riches of grace are not exhausted by regeneration, and this fact is clearly set forth in Paul's letter to the Romans. Chapters 1-4 speak of God's Gospel for the sinner; chapters 5-8, of God's Gospel for the saint. Paul mentions two things. (i) Reconciliation through Christ, enabling us to enter into life; (ii) Abundance of grace, enabling us to reign in life. Citizenship and kingship are not the same.

#### The Place of Kingship

Saul had been taken from the plough to become the king of Israel, but even his best friends were beginning to question his suitability for the great position. He had been called, chosen, crowned, and, presented with unrivalled opportunities. He was God's man, and might have emancipated and exalted the nation to heights of unprecedented splendour. Alas, his increasing arrogance and stupidity led to disaster, and even the prophet Samuel was gravely concerned with the spiritual behaviour of his protegee'. Then things suddenly moved toward a climax. "Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou . . . Go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (I Sam. 15:1-3). Kingship demands great qualifications.

#### The Price of Kingship

The commission included three great clauses. (i) No cowardice. The enemies had to be engaged in battle, and ruthlessly exterminated. Their moral and spiritual decadence could be tolerated no longer. (ii) No compromise. The tempting possessions of the condemned nation had to be renounced, and the sin of Achan avoided. (iii) No condemnation. If Saul faithfully observed the commandments of the Lord, divine favour would immeasurably enrich his kingdom. If he failed, his kingship would be imperilled. The New Testament also emphasizes this truth. Union with Christ in the heavenly places means unceasing warfare against evil. Compromise on the spiritual battlefields leads to defeat; sacrificial self-denial is the price of power.

#### The Peril of Kingship

"And Saul smote the Amalekites . . . and he took Agag the king . . . alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly" (vv. 7-9). Saul spared the condemned beasts because he coveted them; and Agag was permitted to live because it pleased Saul to act benevolently. And in this way he demonstrated his unfitness for high office. "Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, what meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

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And Saul said, They have brought them . . . to sacrifice  
unto the Lord . . ." (vv. 13-21). Two things seem obvious.  
(i) He had forgotten that the Lord had already pronounced  
these offerings to be unclean. No man should offer any-  
thing but the best to God. (ii) If he offered other people's  
animals, he could retain his own. Selfishness over-  
shadowed all his service.

#### The Power of Kingship

Thus God rejected Saul from being King over Israel,  
and the deposed monarch was never so despicable as when  
he blamed his people. "I have obeyed . . . but the people  
took of the spoil" (vv. 20, 21). Therefore the privilege of  
ruling Israel was given to David, for none can occupy a  
position of supreme importance in the kingdom of God  
unless he is conformed to the divine will. The boy from  
Bethlehem satisfied the requirements of the Almighty, and  
became God's instrument of blessing to the nation. Poor  
Saul! His story teaches that if we would be enthroned in  
heavenly places (Ephes. 2:1-4) we must be crucified with  
Christ. Then self will be silent when we go forth to fight  
the battles of the Lord.

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