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### SAUL: MORAL FAILURE

International Unitarian Sunday School  
Lesson, September 11th, 1938

GOLDEN TEXT: "To obey is better than sacrifice." 1 Samuel 15:22.  
LESSON PASSAGE: 1 Samuel 10: 21-25; 15:20-23; 31:3-6.

Thrice blest is he to whom is given  
The instinct that can tell  
The good in the field when He  
Is most invisible.  
—Frederick William Faber

Benjamin's Tribe, 21.

Benjamin was the youngest of Jacob's twelve sons and his tribe was one of the smaller, weaker tribes, yet it was the tribe of Benjamin that gave to Israel her first king, Saul, and to the Christian Church, her great apostle, Saul, afterwards known as Paul. Genius does not depend upon size or prestige. Small nations have been powerful factors in world affairs, witness Palestine, Greece, Scotland and Belgium. Humble rural homes have furnished many of the leaders in North America. Often urban life fails to reproduce itself and only by being replenished from farms and villages do cities maintain their energy and life. It may be that Saul had an inferiority complex because he was a member of the lesser tribe of Benjamin. He was not seeking honor for himself. When they sought him to make him king he could not be found. Yet he was the choice of the nation and his hour of opportunity had come. Society does well by public education and by providing scholarships for pupils displaying marked ability, to give genius a chance, freed from the handicaps of poverty and with adequate facilities for research. One of the most rewarding forms of social service is that of aiding boys and girls to get an education.

Saul's Early Graces, 22-23.

Saul's fine physique was an asset to him. He towered over others and even in a physical sense his fellow countrymen had to look up to him. They thought that a young man with his size and strength would make a good military leader. They received him with popular acclaim, shouting "God save the king," a prayer that has since been re-echoed innumerable times. Samuel gave his benediction to the new king and accorded the sanction of his great religious leader as well as the authority of a popular vote. To all appearances his reign as first king of Israel was off to a good start. Well begun may be half done, but the last half may decide whether the story will be one of triumph or disaster. In days of prosperity there was a sudden vogue for appointing very young executives in high positions. Frequently these appointments failed to justify themselves. The young men had arrived too soon and did not continue to prepare themselves for carrying heavy responsibilities. It takes bedrock character to stand the temptations and strains of high position. Saul really had little training for his work and the office itself was without formal precedent.

Saul and Samuel, 20-23.

There were certain difficulties inherent in Saul's position as king. He had to maintain the traditions of the judges and establish precedents as king. His work was many sided. He was the military leader, he dispensed justice and he was expected to provide religious inspiration. Meanwhile, his predecessor, Samuel, who had resigned as judge to make way for Saul as king, was very active. He listened to the criticisms which were made of Saul and he may have sought to make decisions for the young king. Samuel was virtually a prophet telling Saul what to do. When Saul refused to carry out Samuel's orders, there was trouble and in the end Samuel announced that Saul would lose his throne. It is always trying when youth and age are linked together with divided authority. Many a young minister has felt deprived of freedom by the presence of a pastor emeritus. Or a company president may have his hands somewhat tied by his predecessor being appointed as Chairman of the Board of Directors. It is usually taken for granted that all the fault was on Saul's part, but reading between the lines, a case may be made out for Saul. At least Samuel failed to make Saul the worthy king that Saul honestly sought to be at first.

Glories in Death, 3-6.

In adjusting field glasses very often only a slight turn is necessary to change a blur into better than normal vision. Quite frequently good people make a mistake of their lives not by any glaring fault but by lack of a small adjustment that would have changed their whole attitude to life. Saul was a great man in spite of his failures. He commanded the loyal support of his followers right to the last. His death after defeat in battle with resoluteness and courage. If Samuel had counselled frankly with Saul, understanding the difficulties of kingship and putting his experience and ability at the command of Saul, the disaster might have been averted. One mistake may sometimes spoil a life. A motor car driver turned for a second to place his hat in the back seat, but during that second when his eye was off the road, the car took to the ditch and the driver was killed. Even so in our daily behaviour, one wrong word or one wrong deed may cause consequences that seem to us to be out of all proportion to the error.

Our Silent Thoughts

Throughout the study of this lesson many people will be thinking of a recent incident in British history about which the good taste of the Empire has decreed a voluntary silence. As the months go by there is a mantle of charity spread over the abdication. If blame there is to be, society must take its portion of the blame. Post-war politics made kingship difficult and post-war morals made leadership still more difficult. Throughout a long period of training normal liberty was denied and the making of de-

isions was not an individual responsibility. The white light of modern journalistic, camera and radio publicity left no privacy, and the demands of office left little opportunity for solitude. With so many failing to carry the smaller public responsibilities laid upon them with any degree of efficiency, who shall raise the finger of scorn at one for whom a position not of his seeking had become too heavy a burden to be longer borne. A wiser policy will be to treasure memories of the gallantry of youth, the heroism of war days, the manly athletics, the sympathy with the neglected poor, and to judge not that we be not judged.

Questions For Discussion

1. Was Samuel a help or a hindrance to Saul?
2. Should the position always seek the man?
3. Was Saul's punishment too severe?
4. What were the root causes of Saul's failure?
5. What may we do to help our leaders?

WATCH FOR THE FALLS

The best way to avoid falls, states a bulletin issued this week by the Industrial Accident Prevention Association, is to form the habit of looking out for the things that cause falls. Here are some of the causes to watch out for, especially when you are carrying something:

- Grease, oil or water on floors or steps.
- Loose or fixed objects on floors or stairs.
- Loose material that is apt to shift under foot.
- Uneven floors or floors in poor condition.
- Worn or broken treads on stairs or steps.
- Stairs with irregular or curving treads.
- Ladders with defective rungs, rails or steps.
- All make-shift supports — boxes, barrels, chairs, tables.
- Unguarded floor openings, and loose covers over floor openings.
- Loose planks in scaffolds or porches.
- Blind corners and dark places.
- Walking without looking carefully ahead.
- Shoes with turned-over heels or loose soles.
- Heels catching in cuffs of long trousers.
- High heels catching in skirts or overcoats on stairs.
- Leaning too far out of windows.
- Beware of just putting accident's down to "carelessness," warns the I. A. P. A. bulletin. That attitude doesn't help the accident just passed and cannot prevent another occurring. What is there to do about it? Find the Preventable Cause. Experience is a hard task-master, so why not try prevention?

## The SNAPSHOT GUILD

PATTERN PICTURES



Long shadows, with the sun as a ready-made spotlight—and the potted flower is twice as interesting. Don't overlook the pattern in the floor grooves.

PATTERNS make fascinating pictures, and they are all around you—shadow patterns, ornamental ironwork, window grilles, railings, wheels, stacks of lumber, piles of drain tile—even groups of people in a formal arrangement.

Include a definite pattern in your pictures, and they will have an unusual, "different" quality.

When you go to the beach look for patterns in sand ripples and the shadows cast by beach grass. Climb a high bank or diving tower, and shoot down on your crowd when they are sunning themselves in a circle or formal arrangement like the spokes of a wheel which gives pattern interest to the picture.

Take pictures of scenes through things, such as ornamental ironwork. The outlines form patterns which make the scenes more interesting. Picture a tennis player through the net or racket—or let him hold the racket so that the sun casts an interesting criss-cross shadow pattern on his face.

Out in the country, try picturing scenes through wheels of farm equipment—for instance, "frame" a landscape through the tall wheel of a hay rake. The spokes and rim of the wheel give pattern interest. In town, picture shadow patterns on a brick sidewalk or street. The shadows give one kind of pattern interest, and the pattern of the paving adds another.

When a new house is going up—before the roof and weatherboarding are put on—there are pattern chances in the framing and roof timbers. Get inside, point the camera upward, and picture workmen on the roof. Look for pictures, too, in the steelwork of bridges and trestles, and in the criss-cross patterns of wires and cross-beams at the top of telephone poles.

It's fun to hunt patterns, and they add new interest to your pictures. Keep your eye open for them, and snap any that look good.

197 John van Guilder.

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