

Strongholds / King Saul

In 2Cor 10:3-5, Paul used a military analogy to describe false belief systems that we all possess that oppose the will of God in our lives. He called them strongholds – **ochuroma** which is a fortified defensive military position. In the analogy, a stronghold is a defensive pseudo spiritual philosophy that stands in opposition to God's grace solutions to life in the devil's world. Strongholds are reasoning – **logismos** - false philosophical arguments or positions we vigorously defend even when we know they are false. Freud termed them **Defense Mechanism**: an unconscious distortion of reality that causes disturbing material to be kept from conscious awareness enabling us to feel comforted about the situation.

King Saul was a man that developed extreme insecurities about himself as he grew up. Although he was an extraordinary physical specimen (1Sam 9:2 – choice, the most handsome & a head taller than any other), he believed himself to be inferior to others. Even though God chose him to be king of Israel and provided grace to enable him to perform as king, he never chose to lay aside his false beliefs about himself and believe what God said about him. His refusal to believe God built a stronghold that made him vulnerable to the opinions of his peers and motivated him to disobey God to maintain praise and agreement.

Inferior view about his person and position
Inordinate need for praise and agreement
Imagine that he was justified in disobeying God

Inferior view about his person & position

1Sam 15:17 – Samuel describes Saul as “small in your own eyes”

- Saul was the biggest man in Israel and saw himself as the smallest

1Sam 9:15-21 – on whom is the desire of all Israel, is it not you and your father's house? Am I not a Benjamite, the smallest of the tribes & my family the smallest of the families of the tribe, Why then do you speak to me this way?

- Saul grew up hearing that his tribe was the least important and that his family within the tribe was the least important – socialized to think he was inferior & unimportant
- I am a nobody from a nobody family and tribe – how can I be the king of Israel?

1Sam 10:1 – Samuel anoints Saul king over Israel

- God chose and empowered Saul to be the king – he refused to change his mind about his ability to fulfill God's will

1Sam 10:17-24 – Samuel publicly announces Saul as the chosen king; vs 22 – Saul was hiding among the baggage
Saul was hiding in his own baggage

- At his coronation – Saul is hiding behind the suitcases
 1. All mankind is equally lost, condemned, depraved, deceived & helpless
 2. All believers are equally saved, in Christ, secure, empowered & anointed
 3. Saul allowed his human experience and conditioning to be more real to his heart than the truth of God's word
 4. Saul held onto his false beliefs rather than exchange them for the truth

Inordinate need for approval and agreement

1Sam 10:8 – Samuel tells Saul what is about to happen – you will go before me to Gilgal; I will come to you in 7 days to offer the sacrifice; wait until I come to show you

- Samuel gives Saul a clear command to wait until he comes to perform the sacrifice

1Sam 13 – Saul makes war against the Philistines; vs 5 – the Philistines assemble a huge army vs 6-7 – the men of Israel feel overwhelmed, hide and begin to scatter out; vs 8 – Saul waited 7 days and saw the men begin to scatter; vs 9 – Saul disobeys the Lord and makes the sacrifice; vs 10 – Samuel arrives just as he finished vs 11-12 – I saw the people scattering so I made the sacrifice

- Saul was afraid that the people would not follow him – he was inferior
- When he saw he was losing the people he took matters into his own hands
- Saul thought he had to have the praise, agreement & support of the people

1Sam 15:1-31 – vs 1-3 God orders Saul to destroy the Amalekites – the ban – kill everything; vs 7-9 – kept the best of the spoil; vs 10-31 Samuel confronts him; vs 15 **they** have brought them; **the people** spared the best to sacrifice; vs 21 the people took some of the spoil; vs 24 I feared the people & listened to their voice vs 30 please honor me before the people

- Saul's need for approval/agreement made him vulnerable to the voice of the people

Imagine that he was justified in disobeying God

In Saul's mind, maintaining the approval/agreement was necessary even if it meant disobeying God's word
1Sam 13:10 – Saul has disobeyed, comes out to greet Samuel – as if nothing was wrong

- He was either faking his greeting or thought his actions were justified because of the circumstances – the people were scattering vs 11

1Sam 15:13, 20 – blessed are you, I have carried out the command of the Lord; vs 20 I did obey the voice of the Lord.

- Saul's fear of losing the support of the people was so strong that he told himself that he must do whatever was necessary to keep their approval
- We use our pain or the fear of possible as justification for our sins – people stay in their stronghold, refuse to surrender to God & use pain as their justification
- When faced with the conflict of false security & God's demand that we give it up, we often will reject or reinterpret God's word – then people leave teachers of truth
- We use pleasure, tell ourselves that the pleasure we will receive from our sins is worth disobeying God

2 Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, **4** for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. **5** We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

Paul's mission was to tear down those false systems of spirituality that opposed God's will in the life of believers in the early church. Church leaders are indebted to do the same.