

引言 INTRODUCTION

It has been quite a while since I graduated from the seminary in 2007. I always admire the President of the institution. Dr. Bryan Chapell is a man of wisdom and grace. I can still remember the first sentence he made at my commencement ceremony: “No more exam. But there will be tests.” Typical students have to go through many exams in their life. But the true tests will come when they enter the society. Their bosses evaluate them based on what they know and what they can do. But the most difficult test in life is on the judgment about what kind of person you are. Your skills may get you to a certain level. But your character will determine how long you will stay there. Saul had the outward appearance of a king from other nations. But would he pass the test given by God? Some time had passed after Samuel made his farewell speech. He encouraged his people that God would continue to bless them and their king if they would follow Him. Would Saul listen? A test for Saul’s faithfulness had arrived. The nation was facing another challenge from the Philistines. As we shall see, the conflict was not only about fighting off those enemies. The true test for Saul was to overcome the battle from within. He had to choose between relying on himself or relying on God. We encounter the same struggle on a daily basis. Trusting the Lord should not be just a slogan. Obedience to God must be demonstrated by our actions. If we determine to submit to God in our mind, then we will naturally walk in His ways as well.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 欺壓 Outdo

We will focus on three words as we navigate through this passage. The first word is outdo. The Israelites were outdone by the Philistines. Those enemies lived in the coastal area by the Mediterranean Sea. They came from the west to lay siege to Israel. The Israelites were outdone for two reasons. First, they were outnumbered. Verse 2 tells us the size of Saul’s army: **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.** Three thousand soldiers were all that Saul had. Saul took two thousand men and his son Jonathan had the rest. The passage says Jonathan’s troop had an initial victory over the Philistines. Saul seized the momentum and summoned more men to join him. Meanwhile, the enemies were ready to fight. Look at verse 5: **And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven.** The Israelites were outnumbered by a 10 to 1 ratio. Besides being outnumbered, they were also outpowered by their adversary. The verse says the Philistines had chariots. That gave them much advantage in mobility. Verse 19 also adds: **Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, “Lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears.”** The Philistines were highly civilized people. They knew how to extract iron from ores and make tools from it. The text continues to say that the Israelites had to go to the Philistines and pay them to sharpen their farming tools. They had monopoly over the basic

livelihood of the Israelites. That reminds me of the business model of Apple back in the old days. People could only buy from Apple if they needed a cable or a headphone because no one else made those accessories. And just like that, the Israelites were under a constant oppression from their enemies. How did they react when seeing a large number of enemies coming? Verses 6-7 describe: **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 in cisterns, 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.** They either took cover or took off! Some of them even crossed the Jordan river and went eastward. Everyone was afraid. They knew there were no way they could win from a human standpoint. Fear is a natural reaction to a crisis. Fear is not a sin. It helps us stay alert to an imminent danger. How we react to fear shows our relationship with God. Here is the first spiritual lesson we can draw from the story: **Feeling of bottom-out reveals our bottom-line.** What and who do you rely on when you are outdone by your problems? It happens when all the money in your bank account, and all the experts you can find are of no use. Any Christian can say they love God when they are in smooth-sailing. We do not really feel that we need God when we have wealth and health. God allows us to face hardship so that we know we need God. He promises to listen to us when we call on Him. But our prayer list should not be an order form. Prayer is a recognition that God is our Lord and we are His children. We admit that we can do nothing apart from Him. That takes us to the second spiritual lesson: **If we surrender ourselves to the Lord, then we will not surrender to our problems.** We admit our helplessness through prayer. We recommit ourselves to the Lord. We firmly believe that if God does not come to our rescue, then we have nowhere to go. Therefore, do not hide ourselves from problems. We must hide under God's wings and seek protection from Him.

2. 越權 Overdo

Saul and his army were outdone by the Philistines. Saul tried desperately to get his people out of trouble. In doing so, he overdid his duties. We pick up the story in verse 8-10: **8 He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. 9 So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering. 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 Philistines were closing in. The Israelite soldiers were afraid. Many of them ran away. Samuel did not show up as he promised. Therefore, Saul took matters into his own hands and presented the burnt offering. He overdid his role. According to God's Law, only the priests could administer the ritual. The urgent situation made him impatient. People tend to follow their instinct rather than wait on the Lord when they are in a hurry. Sarah committed the same mistake. God promised her and Abraham a son. Nothing happened after trying for ten years. Therefore, Sarah gave her maidservant Hagar to Abraham as a second wife. Sarah tried to help God speed up His promise. It turned out to be a disaster. Hagar's son Ishmael became the ancestor of the Arabs. They are perpetual adversaries of Israel. We can deduce another spiritual lesson from here: **Trusting God includes trusting in His timing and His plan.** We should always follow God and not jump ahead of Him. But Saul did not want to wait anymore. Samuel arrived right after Saul had completed the burnt offering. He wasted no time in rebuking Saul. The king justified his action because his troop was scattering, the enemies were approaching and Samuel was late. Then he adds in 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.” Saul felt compelled to present the offerings. Saul wanted to ask God for advice. He did not necessarily have to sacrifice an animal. He could have led the soldiers in a prayer. Perhaps Saul wanted to rallied his troop through the ritual. Hopefully, they were now energized to fight a holy war. From this, we can derive another spiritual lesson: **God sees our motives more important than our motions.** We should seek to please God rather than pleasing ourselves or others. You come to the church not to meet the expectation of your family members or your spiritual leaders. God knows whether your heart comes with your physical body. Your offering and your participation in ministries are not to exchange favor from God. Everything must be done out of love for God. Samuel points out Saul’s core problem in the next verse: **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...”** Saul did not have any power. He only derived authority from God. By overdoing his duty, Saul looked like a boss who did whatever he wanted. The world sees results more important than the process. It does not care how people gain riches and success. It will be foolish not to cut corners. Therefore, businesses push products into the market before all the problems are fixed. As a result, customers suffer from hidden side-effects of medicines, new cars break down without warning or bridges collapse under severe weather. Non-believers may think that obeying God is dumb. Why attend church when you can work overtime or go fishing? Why stay honest when others exaggerate their accomplishments and cheat on their income tax returns? The question is whether we want the world’s best or God’s best. God’s way may not be the quickest way. Following Biblical principles does not guarantee the earthly treasure many people are chasing after. But it is the only way to receive God’s approval and His blessing.

3. 革職 Undo

Saul’s ruling would not last long because he disobeyed God. Eventually, God would undo Saul’s throne. Samuel continues his reproach to Saul in the second half of verse 13: **13 “... For then the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. 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.”** God had intended to bless Saul’s leadership only if he would follow God’s commands. He was not only a ruler of his people. He was also a representative of God. Saul was fired because of his mistake. We may think that God was being too harsh on Saul. One strike and he was out. God is actually much more gracious than we can imagine. If God holds us accountable for our sins, then none of us will exist. God shows us mercy when we fall and He waits for us to repent. No one should take His grace for granted. God had decided to undo Saul’s seat and find another person to replace him. This candidate was a man after God’s own heart. He willingly chose to obey God. We shall know soon that David was the person. He was superior to Saul in that he had a humble and teachable spirit. Here is another spiritual lesson we should learn: **God sees our obedience more important than performance.** God wants our hearts. He gives us capabilities to serve Him when we rely on Him. But of course, no human king is perfect. Later on, David’s successor Solomon disobeyed God. Solomon went after the false gods that his many foreign wives brought to Israel. History repeats itself. Solomon’s role was subsequently undone. God disciplined Solomon and allowed Israel to be split into two kingdoms. God gave the northern kingdom to a man named Jeroboam. He said to Jeroboam in 1 Kings 11:38 – **“And if you will listen to all that I command you, and will walk in my ways, and do what is right in my**

eyes by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.” God’s expectation remained unchanged even when He knew that Jeroboam would become a wicked king later. God gave Jeroboam a choice whether or not to obey Him. In theory, the north and south kingdoms could co-exist if the kings of both countries followed God. Eventually, God allowed Israel and Judah to lose to foreign forces because their kings departed from the faith. Do you see the pattern here? God’s people rebelled against Him. In His mercy, God raised up leaders to direct the country. The kings and their citizens could prosper if they walked in God’s way. The choice was theirs. Bible history is part of the human history. Authority to rule any kingdom and nation comes from God. He puts people in a leadership position to fulfill His purpose, but He can also undo their seats. Proverbs 21:1 says: **The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.** If we fear God, then we should have no fear toward any earthly leader. God is still in full control in our current world. We grieve over the mess in our society. Morality declines, violence is rampant and food and gas prices are at all-time high. Besides, there are constant threats from foreign nations. Everyone suffers to a certain degree. We should not lose sight of the fact that God is still sovereign. He is the Lord of Romans 8:28 – God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love Him. That brings up another spiritual lesson: **God can make beautiful things out of human ugliness.** We can have peace in our hearts no matter how bad our world may become. Our hope is in God rather than in any human leader. We just had an election. We shall see how this country may change in the next few years. Regardless, God gives us an obligation to pray for our leaders so that they will fear God. Godly leaders will be good leader. God wants people, both the rulers and the citizens to follow Him. We can only be blessed if we do so.

結論 CONCLUSION

Obedience to God must be demonstrated by our actions. In our attitudes and in our conducts, we should abide by His Word. God was looking for a man after His own heart. Saul failed. In fact, none of the future kings could meet God’s perfect requirements. There is only one King who lives up to God’s standard. It is His only Son Jesus Christ. He says in John 6:38: **“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”** Jesus’ mission was about the Father’s agenda. Jesus prayed in Luke 22:42 with great agony when He was about to be arrested: **“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”** Jesus wanted to bypass the cross if there was another way to accomplish salvation work. He knew there would be pain, shame and death. At the end, Jesus submitted to the Father’s will. He set up a perfect example of obedience for us. Choosing to walk with the Lord may not be easy. We want to pick the path with the least resistance. We prefer safety, comfort and certainty. But God is looking for people who are after His own heart even today.

引言 INTRODUCTION

從 2007 年我在神學院畢業到現在已經有一段時間了。我一直很仰慕神學院的院長。柴培爾 (Bryan Chapell) 牧師是一位有智慧和恩典的人。我還記得他在我的畢業典禮上說的第一句話：「你們不再會有考試。但是會碰到考驗。」學生在求學的階段會經歷許多考試，但真正的考驗是在他們踏進社會時才會來到。老闆會根據他們的知識和技能評估他們。但人生最艱難的考驗是評估一個人的品格。你的才幹可能會讓你達到一定的職位，但是你的品格將決定你會留在那個位置多久。掃羅有外邦君王的外表。但他能通過神的考驗嗎？撒母耳發表告別演說後，過了一段時間。他鼓勵人民要聽從神，這樣神便會繼續祝福他們和他們的王。掃羅願意聽從嗎？掃羅對神的忠誠的考驗終於來到。國家再次面臨來自非利士人的威脅。我們將會看到，掃羅不僅要擊退敵人。掃羅真正的考驗是裡面的爭戰。他必須在依靠自己和依靠神之間做出選擇。我們每天都會遇到同樣的爭戰。信靠主不應該只是一個口號。順從神必須通過我們的行動來證明。如果我們決定要在心裡順服神，那麼我們自然也會選擇神的路。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 欺壓 Outdo

我們會從三個用詞來看這段經文。第一個字是欺壓。以色列人被非利士人欺壓。那些敵人住在地中海沿岸地區。他們從西面來圍困以色列。以色列人並欺壓有兩個原因。首先，他們是以寡敵眾。第 2 節告訴我們掃羅軍隊的規模：就從以色列中揀選了三千人；二千跟隨掃羅在密抹和伯特利山，一千跟隨約拿單在便雅憫的基比亞；其餘的人掃羅都打發各回各家去了。掃羅只有三千名士兵。掃羅帶領其中的兩千人，其餘的人跟隨他的兒子約拿單。經文說約拿單的部隊初步取得勝利。掃羅趁著這個機會，召集更多的人加入。與此同時，敵人也準備開始作戰。請看第 5 節：非利士人聚集，要與以色列人爭戰，有車三萬輛，馬兵六千，步兵像海邊的沙那樣多，就上來在伯·亞文東邊的密抹安營。以色列人的士兵只有敵人的十份之一。除了人數不足之外，他們的裝備也不齊全。經文說非利士人有戰車。這使他們在行動上大有優勢。第 19 節還補充說：那時，以色列全地沒有一個鐵匠；因為非利士人說，恐怕希伯來人製造刀槍。非利士人有高度的文明。他們知道如何提煉鐵並用它製造工具。經文繼續說，以色列人需要去非利士人那裡付費磨他們的農具。非利士人就這樣控制了以色列人的生

活。這讓我想起了過去蘋果企業的生意模式。人們只能從蘋果那裡買到電線或耳機，因為沒有其他人生產那些配件。就這樣，以色列人不斷受到敵人的欺壓。看到敵人來攻擊，以色列人如何回應？第 6-7 節描述：**6 以色列百姓見自己危急窘迫，就藏在山洞、叢林、石穴、隱密處，和坑中。7 有些希伯來人過了約旦河，逃到迦得和基列地。掃羅還是在吉甲，百姓都戰戰兢兢地跟隨他。他們不是躲起來，就是逃命！他們有些人甚至越過約旦河向東走。每個人都害怕。他們知道，從人的角度來看，他們是不可能贏的。恐懼是面對危機的自然反應。恐懼不是罪。它可以幫助我們對危險保持警惕。我們對恐懼的反應顯示出我們與神的關係。這是我們可以從這個故事中學到的第一個屬靈教訓：無能為力的感覺顯示出我們依靠的對象。當你被問題勝過時，你會倚靠什麼並且倚靠誰？當你銀行戶頭的錢和你能找到的專家都沒有用時，你就會有這份感覺。任何基督徒在一帆風順時都會說他們愛神。當我們擁有財富和健康時，我們並不真的覺得需要神。神允許我們面對困難，使我們明白自己真的需要神。當我們呼求神的時候，祂應許會聆聽我們。但我們的禱告內容不應該是訂單。禱告是承認神是我們的主，我們是祂的孩子。我們承認，離了祂，我們什麼都不能做。這就帶出第二個屬靈的教訓：如果我們降服於主，我們便不會降服於我們的問題。我們藉著禱告承認我們的無助。我們重新將自己交託給主。我們堅信，如果神不來幫助我們，那麼我們便絕望了。因此，不要隱藏問題。我們乃是應該躲藏在神的翅膀之下，尋求祂的保護。**

2. 越權 Overdo

掃羅和他的軍隊被非利士人欺壓。掃羅想盡辦法希望人民脫離困境。但是在過程中，他越權了。我們繼續看第 8-10 節：**8 掃羅照着撒母耳所定的日期等了七日。撒母耳還沒有來到吉甲，百姓也離開掃羅散去了。9 掃羅說：「把燔祭和平安祭帶到我這裏來。」掃羅就獻上燔祭。10 剛獻完燔祭，撒母耳就到了。掃羅出去迎接他，要問他好。**非利士人正在逼近。以色列士兵害怕，他們當中有多人逃跑了。撒母耳沒有按照他說的時間出現。因此，掃羅親自動手，獻上了燔祭。他越權了。根據神的律法，只有祭司才能獻祭。緊急的情況使他很不耐煩。人們在匆忙的時候傾向於跟隨自己的直覺，而不是等候主。撒拉犯了同樣的錯誤。神應許她和亞伯拉罕生一個兒子。經過十年的嘗試，沒有任何動靜。因此，撒拉將她的使女夏甲給了亞伯拉罕做小老婆。撒拉試圖幫助神加快祂的應許，結果是一場災難。夏甲的兒子以實瑪利成為阿拉伯人的祖先。他們是以色列的世仇。我們可以從這裡導出另一個屬靈教訓：**相信神必須包括相信祂的時間和計劃。**我們應該跟隨神的腳步，而不是走在祂的前面。但掃羅不想再等了。掃羅獻完燔祭後，撒母耳正好出現，他毫不猶豫地責備掃羅。王為他的行為辯護，因為他的部隊分散，敵人逼近，而撒母耳也遲到。然後他在第 12 節中

補充說：「所以我心裏說：恐怕我沒有禱告耶和華。非利士人下到吉甲攻擊我，我就勉強獻上燔祭。」掃羅覺得有義務獻上祭物。掃羅想要尋求神的指示。但是他不一定要獻祭，他可以帶領士兵禱告。也許掃羅想通過儀式鼓起士氣，希望大家準備好去打一場聖戰。由此，我們可以得到另一個屬靈教訓：**神看我們的動機比我們的行動更重要。**我們應該取悅神，而不是取悅自己或別人。你來聚會不是為了滿足家人或屬靈領袖的期望。神知道你的心是否跟著你的人一起來。你的奉獻和參與事奉不是為了交換神的祝福。一切都必須出於對神的愛。撒母耳在下一節中指出掃羅的核心問題：撒母耳對掃羅說：「你做了糊塗事了，沒有遵守耶和華－你神所吩咐你的命令。...」掃羅沒有任何權柄，他只是從神那裡獲得權柄。由於掃羅越權，他看起來像一個為所欲為的老闆。世界認為結果比過程更重要。人們不在乎如何獲得財富和成功。不偷工減料是愚蠢的事。因此，企業在解決所有問題之前就將產品推出市場。結果，人們承受藥物隱藏的副作用，新車在沒有警告的情況下拋錨或橋樑在惡劣天氣下倒塌。非信徒可能認為順服神是笨事。當你可以加班或釣魚時，為什麼去教會聚會？當其他人誇大自己的成就或是在報稅時不誠實，為什麼你還保持老實？問題是我們想要得到世界看為最好的東西還是神看為最好的東西。神的方式可能不是最快的方式。遵循聖經的原則並不能保證世人所追求的財富。但那是獲得神認可和祝福的唯一途徑。

3. 革職 Undo

掃羅沒有順服神，因此他的王位不會維持長久。最終，掃羅會被神革職。撒母耳在第 13 節的後半段繼續責備掃羅：**13「...若遵守，耶和華必在以色列中堅立你的王位，直到永遠。14 現在你的王位必不長久。耶和華已經尋着一個合他心意的人，立他作百姓的君，因為你沒有遵守耶和華所吩咐你的。」**神本來要祝福掃羅的統治，條件是掃羅必須遵從神的命令。他不只是人民的統治者，他也是神的代表。掃羅因為他的錯誤被革職了。我們可能會認為神對掃羅太嚴厲了。他犯錯一次就被踢出局了。神實際上比我們想像的更有恩典。如果神要追究我們的罪，那麼我們就不可能繼續存在。當我們跌倒時，神會憐憫我們，等待我們悔改。任何人都不能把神的恩典看為是理所當然的。神決定革除掃羅的職位，另找一個人代替他。他是一個合神心意的人，他甘願選擇順服神。我們很快就會知道那個人就是大衛。他比掃羅優勝，因為他有謙卑和受教的心。這是我們應該學習的另一個屬靈教訓：**神看我們的順服比表現更重要。**神想要得著我們的心。當我們倚靠祂之時，祂會賜下服事祂的能力。但當然，沒有一個王是完美的。後來，大衛的繼承人所羅門違背神。所羅門追隨他許多外國妻子帶到以色列的假神。於是歷史重演，所羅門被革職。神管教了所羅門，讓以色列分裂為兩個國家。神將北國賜給一個名叫耶羅波安的人。神在列王紀上 11:38

中對耶羅波安說：「你若聽從我一切所吩咐你的，遵行我的道，行我眼中看為正的事，謹守我的律例誡命，像我僕人大衛所行的，我就與你同在，為你立堅固的家，像我為大衛所立的一樣，將以色列人賜給你。」雖然神知道耶羅波安以後會成為一個邪惡的君王，祂的期望仍然沒有改變。神讓耶羅波安選擇是否順服神。理論上，如果南北國的王都跟隨神，兩個國家可以共存。結果，神讓以色列和猶大都被外邦人打敗，因為他們的王離開了信仰。你能否從這裡看到一個模式？神的子民背叛了祂。因著神的憐憫，祂興起領袖來帶領國家。如果王和子民都走在神的心意中，他們就會繁榮昌盛。這是他們要做的決定。聖經歷史是人類歷史的一部分。統治任何帝國和國家的權柄都來自神。祂把人放在領導的位置以實現祂的計劃，但祂也可以革除領袖的職位。箴言 21:1 說：王的心在耶和華手中，好像隴溝的水隨意流轉。如果我們敬畏神，那麼我們就不需要害怕任何地上的領袖。神在我們的世界中仍然掌權。我們為社會的混亂感到難過。道德下降、暴力氾濫、食物和汽油越來越貴。此外，來自外國的威脅不斷升級。每個人都在受苦。我們不要忘記神仍然擁有一切的主權。祂是羅馬書 8:28 的主：神使萬事都互相效力，叫愛祂的人得益處。這就引出了另一個屬靈教訓：神可以從人的醜陋中創造出美麗的事物。不論我們的世界變得怎麼糟糕，我們心中都有平安。我們的盼望在於神，而不是任何地上的領袖。我們剛剛結束了選舉。我們拭目以待，看看這個國家在未來幾年會有什麼變化。無論如何，神給我們義務為領袖禱告，期望他們敬畏神。敬虔的領袖會是好的領袖。神希望無論是統治者還是被統治的人都跟隨祂。只有這樣做，我們才能得到祝福。

結論 CONCLUSION

順從神必須通過我們的行動來證明。在我們的態度和行為上，我們都應該遵守神的話語。神在尋找合祂心意的人。掃羅失敗了。事實上，未來的君王都無法滿足神完美的要求。只有一位君王符合神的標準，就是祂的兒子耶穌基督。耶穌在約翰福音 6:38 說：「因為我從天上降下來，不是要按自己的意思行，乃是要按那差我來者的意思行。」耶穌的使命是關乎天父的旨意。在路加福音 22:42 中，耶穌在即將被捕時痛苦地禱告：「父啊！你若願意，就把這杯撤去；然而，不要成就我的意思，只要成就你的意思。」如果有其他方法可以完成救恩工作，耶穌寧願不上十字架。祂知道會有痛苦、羞辱和死亡。最終，耶穌順服了天父的旨意。祂為我們樹立了順服的完美榜樣。選擇與主同行可能並不容易。我們都想選擇最輕鬆的路。我們更喜歡安全、舒適和確定性。但就算在今天，神也在尋找合祂心意的人。