

LESSON 4

UNREPENTANT SAUL

(READ 1 SAMUEL 12-15)



Introduction

What would the ideal relationship between God and human beings look like?

God provides a brief glimpse in chapter 2 of Genesis, where we see relationships prior to the time that sin entered the world. After sin, the world became progressively more sinful.

Saul seemed the perfect choice to be Israel's king. He was handsome and wealthy and respected God's salvation. He even acknowledged God's salvation before Israel (1 Samuel 11:13). What's not to love about Saul? Yet, as we will see, Saul changed as arrogance replaced humbleness.

To prepare for this class, you were asked to read 1 John 1:9 and to define the word *repentance*. These two assignments have everything to do with Saul—and, on a larger scale, everything to do with you and me. When sin takes center stage, God's Spirit works through the Word to bring us to our knees in confession. Our sorrowful hearts seek God's forgiveness. Sadly, we will not see this change of heart from Saul, but later we will see it in David. Does this mean that David was any less of a sinner than Saul or you and me? Not at all. David, however, sought God's forgiveness, an action that contrasts sharply with the behavior of Saul.

The nation of Israel would taste the bitter disappointment of Saul's kingship before they tasted the sweetness of David's. Saul's kingship came to symbolize all that God had foretold (1 Samuel 8:10–18). Indeed, Israel got a king just like those of the nations around them.

Repentance

What does the word *repentance* mean to you? True repentance means genuine, heartfelt sorrow over one's sins. Sin and repentance go hand in hand. When the Holy Spirit through God's Law creates a godly sorrow within us and we turn away from sin, confession rightly follows. Then, through the Gospel, our consciences are soothed by God's grace.

As we dig deeper into today's lesson, pay close attention to Saul's attitude toward sin. Ask yourself if you see repentance in Saul's actions. Is he truly sorrowful—or not sorrowful at all? Is he remorseful or just sorry he was caught? Saul often represents our attitude toward sin—ignore it, forget it, it never really happened.

45. Do you think that our attitude toward sin changes when we realize that God has witnessed our sin and that He holds us accountable for our actions?

46. How do you feel knowing that God waits to forgive your sins?



Samuel's Farewell

Read 1 Samuel 12. Samuel used the opportunity of Israel's gathering at Gilgal to review God's faithfulness and say farewell—providing us a history lesson of God's grace.

47. Samuel reminded the Israelites of the sinfulness of their request for a king. Match the points Samuel made (left-hand column) with the appropriate Bible verse (right-hand column).
- A. God raised spiritual leaders like Moses and Aaron. _____ 1 Samuel 12:12
B. God was gracious even when Israel forgot Him. _____ 1 Samuel 12:14
C. God provided deliverance through the judges. _____ 1 Samuel 12:6
D. Despite God's Kingship, Israel wants a human king. _____ 1 Samuel 12:11
E. A human king can succeed only if the king and his subjects fear God. _____ 1 Samuel 12:9
48. Samuel's message brought repentance (12:19). What did Samuel say would happen should Israel "do wickedly" in God's sight (v. 25)?

Saul Rebuked

Read 1 Samuel 13. After a God-fearing start, Saul's reign took a turn for the worse. Some scholars believe Saul's reign was only three years old when he offered an unlawful sacrifice to God.

49. Saul formed an army (13:2) as God had told the people a king would do. Saul's son Jonathan defeated the Philistines, but when the Philistines counter-attacked, Israel cowered in fear. Who was responsible for offering sacrifices to God ?
50. What consequences followed for Saul? How did Saul respond to Samuel? Do you find repentance here? Why or why not?

Jonathan Attacks the Philistines

Read 1 Samuel 14:1–23. While Saul took religious matters into his own hands, Jonathan sought the Lord. In his writings, Samuel ably contrasts the actions of father and son. Jonathan's actions are really those his father should have taken.

51. What action did Jonathan take that indicated his reliance on God?
52. Saul decided to consult God but then changed his mind when it appeared that he already had a military advantage (14:18–20). How would you describe Saul's faith?

God Rejects Saul

Read 1 Samuel 14:24–15:35. In the heat of battle, Saul denied his men food. In the end, Saul's men sinned against God by eating meat with blood still in it (see Leviticus 17:10–11). Then Saul blamed his son for disobeying his orders not to eat.

53. What did Saul's men do to prevent him from killing his son Jonathan (14:43–45)?



54. Samuel 15:1–35 describes Saul’s further disobedience toward God. After God ordered the destruction of Agag, his people, and his possessions, Saul killed the people but spared Agag and the best of his livestock. Whom does Saul blame for not carrying out God’s orders (15:15, 20–21)? How does God reply through Samuel (15:22–23, 32–34)?

God’s Word for Today

God is patient, but He knows when someone has turned away from Him forever. Sadly, this applies to Saul. Saul was unrepentant and uncooperative and had no intention of letting God lead His people.

55. Read Matthew 12:31. What sin is unpardonable? It is possible that Saul has crossed this threshold?

56. How are we sometimes like Saul?

57. Read John 19:30. Christ said, “It is finished.” With these words, we know that God has pardoned all our sins. What comfort do you find in Christ’s declaration?

In Closing

- Think about the contrasting faiths of Saul and Jonathan.
- Research the phrase “a man after His [God’s] own heart.”
- Read **1 Samuel 16–19** to prepare for the next session.

Pray: Merciful Lord, I come to You in repentance. I know Your commands, yet I do not do them. I am self-centered like Saul. Forgive me for the sake of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.