

Short Cut to Oblivion

By Paris Reidhead*

Will you turn please to I Samuel, Chapter thirteen. We shall use this Scripture as the foundation for our Message this morning. The Theme that I have presented to you is, "Short Cut to Oblivion." I believe that this particular portion of Scripture is important to us in the light of the fact that we have just had eight days of Bible and Missionary Convention in which God has spoken.

On October 2, at 10 o'clock, Rev. Arthur Mathews addressed us from Luke the 13th and the 14th Chapters, in which he contrasted the two houses: The house of the Pharisees which was left unto them desolate. The Pharisees, as I reminded you so many times, had so much to commend them. They were orthodox. They were evangelistic. They were missionary. They were premillennial. They were devout, fasting, tithing, praying, all these things. And yet our Lord said to them, "Your house is left unto you desolate." But He said, "There is yet room in My house," contrasting His house with theirs. And from that time on we began to see the Lord unfolded the Word, the nature of what He is doing, and the purpose that He has for the Church, and the individual plan for your life, and the relationship that He wants to have for you. And it was one message from Sunday morning on October 2 through Sunday night on October 9. God spoke. I have been in many conferences for many years, but never have I had the experience that I had here during these days of hearing one continuous message, given by the Spirit of God.

Now, light brings responsibility. Light brings responsibility, and this church, and this people, and this Pastor, will never be the same again. We either will accept the light that God has given, and accept the failures to appropriate truths, the truths that (have made ours), we will accept everything that God has shown us and act honestly and fairly in the light of it and move on with the Lord, and know His blessing. Or we, too, will take a short cut to oblivion, because God is not going to give to us the Message that He has, and truths that He has with such patience, where it is repeated, built line upon line, presented from every possible aspect, and then let us go blissfully and happily on in our own way.

I suppose it all came to focus when, in my mind, what the Lord was saying when Major Thomas, one afternoon, spoke to us about the Philistines' handling of the Ark, and David's handling of the Ark. You may recall the story. I simply site it as the foundation of what I will say. The Philistines had captured the Ark, put it in the Temple of Dagon, and Dagon was in trouble, because day after day when they came in they found that the statue of Dagon was on the floor, a wrist broken, a leg broken, a neck broken, head rolling off, altar fallen down. And day after day it was the same, though it was well guarded. And finally they began to say, "Perhaps it is that we have in this temple the Ark of the God of the Israelites." And then they were smitten with illness and sickness, and they said, "This is too much. We may have to do something about it." The priests got together and said, "Well now we want to find out whether or not this is the God of Israel, or whether it is just a circumstance. So this is what we will do. We make a cart of new wood, and we will take two milk cows, tie their young in the stalls, harness the cows to the Ark, put the Ark on the cart, and if the Ark is taken by the cows in a straight line to Bethshemesh then we will know that it is the God of Israel." In other words, if the milk cows forget their young, and act contrary to nature, then we will know that God is in this thing. Three hundred sixty degree, no one to guide the cattle, put them out on the road, and see what will happen. And you know what happened. The Ark was put on the cart; the cattle went straight to Bethshemesh. And when David came down he discovered that he was king, that the place of activity was Jerusalem, and the Ark was not there.

And this represented, so said Major Thomas, the Church today — doing the work of God without the presence of God, doing the work of God without the power of God. David came down and said, "Well how did the Ark get here from the Philistines?" They said, "They put it on a new cart." He said, "Now that is the answer. We will make us a cart. We will put the Ark on it." But remember, David was of Israel, and David had the Law. And David had a right to expect to know — God had a right to expect to have David do things the way he had been commanded to do them. And you recall how the man Uzza put his hand out to touch the tottering Ark, and he dropped dead. And it says, And David was angered with the Lord. And he went back to Jerusalem, put the Ark in the house, and he said, "Now look. The Philistines got away with it, and we did not. What is the matter?" And he went back to the Word.

Beloved, this is the thing that God is going to do with us. He is going to drive us back to the Word to find out how God wants to do His Work. And then it was discovered that God never intended the Ark to be carried on a cart. The pagans had no reason to think differently, but you see what the Church of Jesus Christ has done in the 20th Century is try to use Madison Avenue methods and organizational techniques to do the work of God — Philistine methods to carry the Ark of the Lord. And God has put death on it. He has put death on it. And it is time now the people of God were to recognize that God is going to do things in His own way, or everything that is touched will have in it Death. Then he discovered, did David as he read, that the Ark was to be carried by two poles put through the rings, speaking of the Cross of Jesus Christ when He would fulfill all that was in the Ark, two pieces of wood, went to the Cross, and there He Himself died. And the Ark was to be carried on the shoulders of the children of Kohath who were forbidden to have carts when they were distributed by Moses, and that was to be a young man 30 and upwards but not yet fifty. And you know, this was what was said of our Lord Jesus, the rulers of Israel said, “Why He is not yet fifty,” and we know He was thirty years and upward.

And so, because everything that is to be done is to be done to the glory of Jesus Christ, it was to be done God’s way. And the Ark then - David went down, having seen that in the methods of the world there was death, he went down, took the children of Kohath, and they carried the Ark up to Jerusalem with God’s blessing.

Now I say this made a tremendous impression upon me because it is substantially what I have been seeking to say. We are now at the stage of bankruptcy, in trying to do things after the world’s methods, and there is only one place we can possibly go, and that is back to the Book, back to Biblical Christianity, back to the standards God has set, the principles He has established. And I feel today that we are going to see not only the short cut to oblivion; if we are determined to take it there is no use to waste our time, we might as well get it over with. But if we are desirous of pleasing God then here is a pitfall to be avoided and a path to be eschewed; and the manner in which we are to serve is clearly set forth by contrast.

Now Saul was called of God for an exalted purpose. You know, it was unexpected. He never anticipated it, never expected it. In the 9th Chapter, and the 21st verse we find Saul saying this, “Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore then speakest thou so to me?” (I Sam. 9:21) Let me ask you as I look into your face, and think of your backgrounds. How many of you come from families from the 400? How many of you come from wealthy families? How many of you come from places of great importance in the world? How many of you can look back and say, “Certainly when God chose me, he chose a likely one to serve Him.” I do not believe there are many gathered here on 8th Avenue and 44th Street this morning that would say, “We are the children of God by virtue of what we presented to God when we came as sinners.” I think perhaps we would stand with Saul and say, “We are the less and the least of all the saints. Nothing that could commend us to God, nothing we could offer. Nothing the world would see in us.” And this was Saul, unexpectedly called of God, and that for an exalted ministry. So were you. You remember when God discovered you, unveiled your heart with all of its sin and its uncleanness? Remember? Remember when God brought you to the foot of the Cross, the less, the off scouring of all things with nothing to offer but your great need, your guilt, your uncleanness. Do you remember? Do you remember when you, like the publican of old, beat your breast and said, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Bankrupt, broken, hopeless, helpless. One of the smallest of the tribes, and the least of the families in that small tribe. And God saved you, and He saved me. All of His own Grace.

But then something else happened. Saul was not only called unexpectedly, but he was equipped adequately. For in the 10th chapter we find that Samuel not only called him for a task, but he also took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him and said, “Is it not because the Lord has appointed thee to be captain over His inheritance. Samuel anointed him, and God endued him;” in the 10th verse of the 10th Chapter we read, “And when they came thither to the hill, behold a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.” (I Sam. 10:1; 10:10)

And when God called you with your guilt and uncleanness to the foot of the Cross, and discovered to you your heart, did He not also open to you the revelation of the Cross, and showed you the Lord Jesus Christ dying in your place and stead, whose Blood was for your cleansing and the washing of your sin and your guilt. And then did you not hear Him say, “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me.” (Acts 1:8) Of course you did, for He says this to all whom He calls. And He has chosen us and saved us, and called us, not according to our works, but according to His purpose in Grace. He did not expect us to do it in the energy that we inherited from Benjamin, and from Kish. For He said, “After that the Holy Ghost is come upon us. Ye shall receive power, and

ye shall be witnesses.” (Acts 1:8) You too were called for an exalted purpose of being a witness to Jesus Christ, revealing Him, and magnifying Him, and glorifying Him. Endued by the power of God was Saul.

And then there is something else that I like to see in Saul’s life in the 26th verse of the 10th Chapter. You read, “And Saul also went home to Gibeah: and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched.” (I Sam. 10:26) Do you remember when you found a Church? Do you remember? Do you remember how sweet those lovely people looked when they sang,

What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the Blood of Jesus.

What can make me whole again?

Nothing but the Blood of Jesus.¹

But in the years since then, have you become critical, and censorious to the very people to whom you once came saying, Oh these are my people, for they have been broken as I have been broken, and crushed as I have been crushed, and hopeless as I have been hopeless, and saved as I have been saved. And they were a people whose hearts the Lord had touched, that joined them in you, and you with them. Saul was called, not only to go alone but to go with others whose hearts the Lord had touched. He was called for an exalted purpose, and so were you — to show forth the Glory of the risen Christ, to be a sample of His saving Grace, that the fruit of the Spirit could be seen in you, and those who met you would want to know Christ because they saw you. This is your heritage. Called from death. Lifted from the dunghill. Taken from the place of shame and disgrace and uncleanness, -rags, broken bankrupt-to be washed in the Blood of God’s dear Son, and robed in His Righteousness and placed in His family as a Son, and call Almighty God, Father. And then to be given the glorious privilege of being filled with the fullness of God, and then joined to men whose hearts the Lord had touched, that you could serve Him. For He said, we are to be kings and priests unto God, not to reign over God’s heritage, but to exercise the victory of our risen Sovereign the Lord Jesus Christ and reveal Him.

Saul’s reign began in victory. Saul’s walk began in victory. So did yours. If I understand you, and know you, there was a time when the Lord Jesus Christ was sweeter to you than today. Is that right? Let me put it in simpler words. My dear, if there ever was a time when you loved God more than you do this morning, ever was a time you had a greater burden for the lost than you have this morning, if there ever was a time when you had a greater hunger for God than you have this morning, if there ever was a time when you had a greater hatred of sin than you have this morning, do you know what has happened? You have backslidden. It may have been subtle. It may have been quiet. It may not have been an open revolt. But if once your love for the Lord was here, and now it is there, if once your hunger for holiness was here and now it is there, if once your burden for the lost was here but today it is there, you have backslidden. You began in victory. Remember how sensitive you were when first you were saved? Remember how you could now look at anything unclean? Could not talk about anything frivolous and useless? Remember how your heart yearned after the lost, and in your first love. That was Saul. Saul’s ministry began in victory. You see here in 11th Chapter this record of Saul, How that the Ammonites came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead. And Nahash the Ammonite answered them (When the people of God said, “We are going to make a covenant with you and we will serve you”) and Nahash the Ammonite said, “This is the covenant I will make with you, I will thrust out all your right eyes, and everyone in Jabesh-gilead is going to be without an eye to prove that Nahash of the Ammonites is their ruler. And the elders of Jabesh said unto him. Give us seven days’ respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel; and then, if there be no man to save us you can put our eyes out.” (I Sam. 11:1-3)

Here was the Church, threatened. For this was the Church in the Wilderness. This was God’s people. God’s witness, not the Church in the sense we know it. But here were the people that God had for a witness that were being overwhelmed by the enemy, being destroyed by him, having their eyes blinded, and their effectualness taken away, and Saul looked out and he saw

¹ “Nothing But The Blood” By Robert Lowry, 1876.

it and was grieved over the state of his people. Remember how grieved you became. Do you remember when the time came and you saw someone in sin how your heart was melted, and you cried out to God with weeping that they might come to know the Lord? Remember when you saw someone unsaved, some loved one or friend, how that the tears could not be staunched? Do you remember when you saw someone being tempted, how angry you were with the devil and how you hated everything that would soil the children of God? Do you remember? Saul was grieved. And Saul was angry when he saw what was happening to the people of God. This was your experience too.

And then we find that Saul was guided by the Lord in doing the right thing in the face of the enemy. Saul hewed the oxen and sent them out through all of Israel, and he said, "This is what I am going to do to the oxen of Israel if you do not come and stand with me." And the Spirit of God came upon Saul, and Saul was able to lead the people on. Do you remember when you were an encouragement to God's people because of your hatred for sin and your love for holiness, and your faith and confidence was in the risen Christ, and to those whose faith might be failing and in their weakness would be faltering, they could look to you and say, He loves God. He knows God. We will go on with him. Remember that? When you were an encouragement and strengthened the weaker brethren. And when the enemy did not terrorize and did not send you in flight, but you were able to say, No. My Lord has conquered. And we stand on the grounds of the risen Christ on the victory of Calvary. And we are in nothing terrified by our adversaries. "For greater is He that is with us than He that is with them." Remember? Remember how your heart yearned to see the Lord Jesus glorified, how you longed to see Him exalted, and how your heart was insatiable with its desire? Remember? Remember how it was back then? How long ago has it been? Or has the memory faded and grown dim? Or is it that way today? You know it can be. Is it that way today? And then we find that Saul stood on the grounds of the fact that he had nothing, and God had everything, and he could do nothing and God could do everything. And how that the Ammonites were defeated. And then someone came to Saul and said, "Listen, the rest of Israel did not come and stand with us. Let us go in to their coasts and destroy them." And Saul said, "No. No. We are not going to use the Victory of God to divide the people of God. And we are not going to wrap our rags around us and say, 'We are better than they and more holier than thou, and in self-righteousness put ourselves apart from them.'" God wanted this victory to unite His people, and not to divide them. And Saul used the blessing of God to unite the people of God. And when God answered prayer for you you did not take this prayer as a club to bruise those who might not have stood with you or understand it, but you became an encouragement as Saul became.

Perhaps this was the story of your life. But then you see. Saul did something else. One blessing made him a little confident, self-confident. And if I am not mistaken, there came a time when in the lives of many of us we became a little bit confident. We took things for granted. Like Israel in the wilderness, instead of enjoying the Word, reading it, eating it day by day in all the victory of Christ and all the provisions of His Grace, I think perhaps there came a time in your experience when you said, "My soul loatheth this light bread. It tastes like oil in my mouth." (Num. 21:5) And you became just a little bit disinterested in the study of the Word, and became a little bit concerned about the things around you. And time with the Lord lost its sweetness, and the sweet hour of prayer was not an hour any longer. It was not sweet any longer. And it was not long until it was perfunctory, and formal, and you remembered, "Well I am all right. Because back there God defeated the Ammonites through me, and I had this victory, and I had that." And you look back to what the Lord had done, and rested in the success of yesterday, and warmed yourself by the ashes of the fire that long since burned out, and felt for the crumbs of a loaf that had long since been exhausted. Is that what happened? That is what happened to Saul you know. And it did not take long. One year, that is all.

And then Saul said, "Well you know I think I need another victory. This was pretty good. And I felt mighty happy when the Ammonites were on the run. And here are the Philistines." So to create an incident, Saul sent away most of the soldiers. And he took 600, and Jonathan took a company, and they went out and ambushed the Philistines so as to create a public incident so as to start a war. Wars can be started you know, if you engineer them right. And what Saul wanted now was an occasion to show what he had learned and what a good king he was, and what he could do. In other words, he became confident in himself, and failed to realize that the victory had come because he was little in his own eyes, and everything depended upon the Lord. And he thought he could do something. And so then he called Israel to him and when they looked out and saw the Philistines with 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and foot soldiers like the sands of the sea, they trembled and fled to the caves. And Saul said, "Now wait just a moment. I not only am a valiant king and a wise leader, but I know God." And so he took

the offering, the burnt offering and the peace offering, and he sacrificed it. And he sinned against God. He did a good thing in the wrong way. He took things in his own hands and he put confidence in the flesh, and he felt that he was something and that he could do it. And God was allowing him to be tested, as He is allowing you to be tested, and allowed me to be tested. And oh, how often like Saul we have failed in the test.

The question, however, is this. What have you done about the failure? This was where Saul lost out. For when Samuel came he met him with a plausible excuse and an argument saying, "You did not come at the appointed time. It is your fault." And the people were trembling, and they needed someone to entreat God for them. And so he says, I forced myself to do what I know I should not have done. And do you know something, my dear, every time anyone ever sins it always seems reasonable. Did you know that? Every sin that is ever committed seems reasonable at the time it is done, and the men who killed Jesus Christ thought they did God a service. And I submit to you that from his natural reasoning, Saul thought that he was doing what was right, and he took things in his own hand, and followed his own reasoning, rather than governed by revelation. And the consequence of this was that Saul sinned a presumptuous sin. Did you know that Israel has absolutely no place for the pardon of presumptuous sins? You look back. You read the Old Testament. You will find that every other kind of sin has its offering, but there is no offering for presumptuous sins.

Does that mean that there is no offering for your sin? I say that not. I am simply saying that when God speaks and God makes known His mind and God makes known His will, then sin gains the character of presumption. When God speaks as He has spoken to us in the past eight days, or during the Convention, when God lets His mind be known and His will be clear, and repeats it and emphasizes it, and discloses it, and illustrates it, and brings it to us, and we looking into the mirror seeing what manner of men we are go away and straightway forget what we have seen and give ourselves to what the attitudes of the past and the actions of the past without regard for what God has said, it borders on presumptuous sin. It borders on presumptuous sin.

For God has said, in these days, in such a way that what He wants to do wants to be wholly of Him. The messages of Dr. Tozer² as they were given with such stirring, moving power to all of our hearts, calling us back, away from the trust in the world, and away from the trust in carnal means, and away from all the superficial and the shallow, and the shoddy, and the cheap, back to the place where God can be God in the midst of His people, and use His own means to glorify His own Name. You cannot hear what we have heard, forget it, and ever be the same, lest like Saul we should presumptuously go into the Temple to do that which God has forbidden.

And Saul came and stood before Samuel, and he justified it. How did he justify it? Expediency and opportunism. The people were there. And what would the people think? There was a need, and for the need's sake we had to do things which God had not commanded, and had not instructed us, and do things which violated ... No beloved. And he says, "Thou hast wrought foolishly. For the kingdom could have been established under you Saul. But because of presumptuous sins it shall be taken from you and given to someone, given to another, given to a man after His own heart."

I want to ask you this morning. The blessing of God is going to be given only to people that are after God's own heart. The world is filled with Sauls that have begun well, and then have resorted to their own means, their own techniques, their own procedures, and have taken a short cut into oblivion. And God has said, No more. No more. I could call the names of men who yesterday were household words, but because of presumptuous sins have just taken a short cut to oblivion.

There is only one person God will use. And I speak to myself as well as to you. And that is the man after God's own heart, whose only concern is to please God, -Whose only goal is the glory of God, and whose method is the way of God, and only power is the Spirit of God. God is looking for a people like Gideon of old that will put not his trust in numbers, nor in his arms or in his strength, nor in his skill, but are willing to be fools for Christ's sake and simply obey, and take the little lamp in which is the candle and let it be broken before the Lord. He is looking for people after His own heart. Are you one of them?

² Aiden Wilson Tozer (1897-1963) Pastor and Author. Christian and Missionary Alliance

And you see Saul going on from a presumptuous religious sin, to a deliberate disobedience. God said, "Slay Amalekite and he spared him." And my friend one sin always leads to friendship with the world, and the sparing of Amalekite, and the keeping of the cattle and the sheep. It will always do it.

And then the next thing you see him resorting to one demonical counselors, and finally you see him with murderous intent seeking to take David's life, and finally you follow - for after years from the time God had finished with him, for He finished with him here, you see him take his sword and fallen it, happy to die, because he had lived most of his life in spiritual oblivion. And God had chosen a man after His own heart.

Ah, are you after God's own heart? If you are, you love God's Word. If you are, you are willing to deal with everything God shows you about yourself. If you are, you are willing to ruthlessly censor your own attitudes and actions. If you are, you are going to be harder on yourself than you will be on anybody else because you will want to please God, and stand before Him as a vessel cleansed, purged, and meet for the Master's use, with no confidence in yourself. You are going to have such a burden for the people of God, and particularly such a burden for the lost that know not God that you are going to consider no personal expenditure of time or effort too great, no investment of your money too great, no investment of your life and your agony too great. You are going to hold yourself expendable for God if you are a man after God's own heart.

With the Apostle Paul who was a man after God's own heart, you are going to say, I would I could be accursed for my brethren, my kinsmen's sake, according to the flesh...When you are after God's own heart. When you are after God's own heart, with Paul you are going to say, I am the least of all saints. In me and my flesh is no good thing. The things I counted gain to me I count lost to Christ. When you are after God's own heart. Then you are going to say, "It is not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit as the Lord has said." You are going to say, "I can do nothing. For the Lord Jesus was above all, supremely above all, a Man after God's own heart," and He said, "I can do nothing of myself. I only speak as I receive commandment of My Father The Father that dwelleth in Me. He doeth the works." (John 14:10)

What is it going to mean to you, dear friend, to be a man after God's own heart? God's heart purpose for you is that you might be a vehicle for Him. That you might take your place crucified with Christ, and present your body to Him, that in His resurrection Glory by the Holy Ghost, the Lord Jesus could live His life out through you. And when you are a man after God's own heart, your only concern is going to be that they see no man save Jesus only.

What is the short cut to oblivion? To make your name something, to do to be seen, to presume upon God, to make your own rules, to make success in your own eyes the goal and reason for being, and God will say, "Away. Finished. Over."

What is it when you are a man after God's own heart? To simply come to the end of yourself to see the end of the Lord, that the Lord Jesus can live through you His own life. Are you a man after God's own heart, or are you like Saul, a man or a woman whose purpose is to use God to your own ends to please yourself. What is it? May God make it clear that He is going to give His Kingdom, and He is going to give His people, and He is going to give His ministry to those that are after God's own heart.

Let us pray. Father, to whom much is given from them much is required. To have heard all that we have heard in these this eight days past, to have felt all that we have felt, and then like Saul to precede to do what we want to do because we have decided that we wanted to do it, and then to rationalize it and defend it, and justify it, we see so clearly from Thy Word is to bring wrath upon us. For him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not to him it is sin. And Thou art seeking to bring us to the end of ourselves, seeking to bring us to that place of utter dependence upon Thee, like our Lord Jesus who said, As the Father sent Me so send I you, seeking to bring us to the place where we too say, I can do nothing of Myself, the Father that dwelleth in Me, He must do the work. I cannot speak of myself. I cannot work of Myself. I cannot walk of Myself. I am nothing, nothing but a shell. Nothing but a channel. Nothing but just a vehicle for the risen Christ. Oh this is what Thou art asking of us. And such a people that come to the end of themselves to see the end of Thy Grace, Thou canst bless, for Thou art the same as Thou hast ever been. But Thou wilt take the precious from the vile, and separate Lord to Thyself a people who are after Thine own heart. We have but one goal only, and that is the Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and one purpose only, and that is to obey Thee in everything. To that end bind us together as a people of Thine own heart. For Jesus sake. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Morning, October 16, 1960 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.