

1 Samuel: Saul's Foolish Oath

1 Samuel 14:24-52

When we allow our self-regard to consume us, becoming controlling and putting ourselves at the center, we put ourselves in opposition to what God is doing in the world ([James 4:6](#), ESV). Mid-way through 1 Samuel 14, we see that Saul is doing just this; he needs control and the approval of men so badly that he becomes an obstacle to what God is doing by making a foolish oath.

Application

1. What do I need so much that it steals my freedom to do whatever God may ask of me? What is an example of how this need has stolen your freedom to follow God in some way?
2. How might this thing you named in the first question impact those you are in leadership over? How have you seen strands of this already negatively influence your leadership?
3. What can it practically look like in your life to put full confidence and trust in God instead of grasping at control over what you think you need? What does it look like to repent?
4. Read [Matthew 11:30](#) and [Isaiah 42:3](#). What does this show about the kind of King that Jesus is? Apply his kingship to an area of your life where you are weak—what does it mean for you that he fans an ember of weakness and that his yoke is easy?

Key Points

- Saul is not free to do what God asks of him because he so badly needs control and the approval of men rather than God. Therefore, he becomes an obstacle to the full deliverance God could bring.
- Saul's leadership is oppressive because he is preoccupied with himself.
- Saul wrongly uses religion to leverage control over the people through manipulation.
- When you allow your self-regard, pride, control, and fear put you at the center of your world, you put yourself in opposition to what God is doing. God put nourishment in the path of the Israelites to provide strength, but Saul's controlling oath cut them off from God's provision.
- When you are controlling or obsessive over something, you have to stop and ask yourself why you need that thing so much. When you do this in leadership over others, the small acts of control lead to a loss of leadership equity over time and potentially leads them towards temptation.
- What we want is often not a bad thing, but the way we go about it is driven by our own self-reliance, pride, and control rather than by confidence and trust in God.
- When you are guided by a need to control, you reframe reality in such a way that justifies yourself and your position.
- As Saul continues down the road of control, he doubles down on his rashness and refuses to humble himself and admit wrong. His need for approval won't allow him to look weak and be wrong and instead he is unrepentant and unrelenting.
- God is delivering the people and the people are being oppressed by the king at the same time.
- A bad king should push us to the good King—Jesus.
- Jesus is the *only* King who brings full deliverance without any oppression ([Matthew 11:30](#), [Isaiah 42:3](#)).
- We are free to be wrong, to stop proving ourselves, and to stop controlling because the real King Jesus has already dealt with this for us.

Other Scripture References

[Matthew 11:30](#)

[Isaiah 42:3](#)

[James 4:6](#)