TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Daniel Balch / Opening Prayer by: Robert Ward
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Brooks McKelroy

#480 Blessed Assurance
#611 Heavenly Sunlight

Scripture Reading by: Braylen Butler
#313 The Old Rugged Cross

Communion Devotional by: Ken Coleman
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#452 Standing on the Promises
Sermon: "An Epiphany"
Matthew 2:1-2

#934 Softly and Tenderly
#3 Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah
Closing Prayer by: James Scott

Ken Coleman's small group will meet today at
5:00 p.m. at the building

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Jan. 5, 2025

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

Three Kings

At this season of the year, we often are thinking about setting new goals. In conjunction with that, it is also wise to consider common pitfalls to avoid.

Israel reached the zenith of its power during the period of the United Kingdom, when Saul, David, and Solomon sat on the throne. These kings have many things in common. They were chosen of God to rule his people. They were all men of great ability. Each did some outstanding things during his reign. But unfortunately, they also share the fact that each of them, in own way or another, had severe failings. Let's consider them briefly in turn.

Saul
His story begins in **1 Samuel 8.** Prior to this time, God's people had been ruled by judges. But the nations around them had kings—and Israel wanted to be like them. They had actually already had a king: God. But they came to want an earthly king, and God indulged them in this desire.

There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people. **(1 Sam 9:1-2)**

Saul looked like a king; he's the fellow you would cast as King of Israel in the movie. Despite that, he was modest: when told he was to be king, Saul initially slipped away and hid in the baggage of the assembled people. **(1 Sam 10:22).** After his acclamation, Saul went out immediately and rallied the people together to defeat their enemies, the Ammonites. He was a fine, promising young man.

But we soon find that Saul did not remain as modest and self-effacing as at the beginning. Under the Law of Moses, it was unlawful for any but a priest to offer sacrifices. But Saul had all Israel gathered together to fight the Philistines, and he wanted to offer sacrifice; he waited for the priest, and the priest did not come. So, impetuously, he took the matter into his own hands and offered the sacrifice himself—an ill-advised, unlawful sacrifice. Immediately thereafter, Samuel appeared on the scene:

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. For then the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. 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." **(1 Samuel 13:13-14)**

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Debbie Lynn is at home recovering from surgery last week.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Oscar Cantu, Jennifer Stelly, Dr. Hugo Thomas, Steve Ward, Geri Cryer, Gloria McKelroy, Linda Frank, Scott Overton, Rickey Lucas

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific, Mani Pagidopali in India

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting Monday, Jan. 6th at 3:00 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, Jan.7th at 8:00 a.m.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Ken Coleman	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Danny Balch	
Don Taylor	Walden David	
Robert Ward	Gus Tristan	

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

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We see that Saul is a man who feels he can set aside God's commandments and do as he pleases; he is the center of his own world. It is only a short step to **1 Samuel 15** where we find another example of this flaw in his character. God commanded Saul to go destroy a long-standing enemy of Israel, the Amalekites, utterly—he was to bring nothing back. Instead, he decided to spare the best of their flocks and their king, Agag. He had hardly returned when Samuel went out and confronted him again with his failure.

David

After a time God allowed David to succeed Saul. We read David's story in **2 Samuel**, and many of us probably know much of it: he was a shepherd boy, courageous and full of faith, who stood alone before Goliath in triumph. David had a different kind of failing from that. of Saul. It is in **2 Samuel 11** that we read of David's mistake: he committed adultery with a woman named Bathsheba, then arranged to have her husband, Uriah, killed to cover up his sin. David's sin was lust, another of the great causes of the downfall of people.

But David—to his credit—lived his life after this to make right his wrong Nathan the prophet came and told him the touching parable of the ewe lamb in **2 Samuel 12,** and he confessed his sin. Unfortunately, though he was forgiven, he had to deal with the consequences from then on.

Solomon

When David grew old, his son, Solomon was selected to be king in the place of his father. Solomon was a young man of great ability and went on to become an extraordinarily wealthy and powerful king. Part of his greatness was due to the fact that early in his life he leaned heavily upon God. Soon after he had been called to be king, God came to him and said, *Ask what I shall give you* **(1 Kgs 3:5b)** Solomon famously asked for wisdom, that he might be a good ruler. This pleased God so much that he also granted him wealth and power.

But Solomon made his mistakes too. He brought around him a great many people who did not fear God and entered into intimate relationships with these pagans. Ultimately, they drew him away from God. The result was then as it is now: *Be not deceived: Bad company ruins good morals*. (**1 Cor 15:33**)

Conclusion

Consider the lessons of each of these kings. We admire Saul because he looks like a king—tall and handsome; yet he was a man whose self-centeredness blasted the success that his life might have had. Let us remember our own weaknesses. Let us always remember that it is only when we trust in God that we are strong.

When we look at David we see all of his wonderful virtues. But we also remember the secret sin of his life, weakness of the flesh, which blackened an otherwise beautiful record. Let us always endeavor to make sure our conduct matches our profession of faith.

Then we remember Solomon, wisest of men, skilled ruler, respected and honored in all the earth. But a man whose companionships pulled away his heart from that which was right. Choosing our companions carelessly is still destructive.

These men lived and died long ago, but their lessons continue until now. As we order our lives, let's determine to strive to avoid their failures in this new year and beyond.

Bryant Perkins