

1 Samuel 26:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

Analysis

Saul's confession contains the most transparent self-assessment of his reign: 'I have sinned... I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.' The Hebrew 'sakhal' (played the fool) indicates senseless, irrational behavior, while 'shagah' (erred) suggests wandering from the path. Yet despite this clarity of self-knowledge, Saul's pattern will reveal that conviction without repentance produces only momentary remorse. His promise 'I will no more do thee harm' will prove hollow, demonstrating the difference between emotional response and genuine change.

Historical Context

This is one of several occasions where Saul acknowledged David's righteousness after being confronted with evidence of David's mercy. The pattern of confession followed by resumed persecution reveals the depth of Saul's spiritual bondage and the inadequacy of mere emotional response to sin.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What is the difference between momentary conviction and genuine repentance?
2. How do you evaluate whether confession will lead to lasting change?

Interlinear Text

Then said	Saul	I have sinned	return	my son	David	H3588	H3808
H559	H7586	H2398	H7725	H1121	H1732		
אַבָּע	לֹבֶן	עַד	לֹבֶן	תְּמִתָּה	רָאשָׁה	הַזְּבָדָה	כִּי
for I will no more do thee harm	H7489	H0	H5750	H8478	H834	was precious	H3365
because my soul	in thine eyes	this day					
H5315	H5869	H3117	H2088	H2009			
הַסְּפָעָה	לְתִי	תְּאַשֵּׁגָה	הַרְבָּה	מִאָדָם			
behold I have played the fool	and have erred	exceedingly			H3966		
H5528	H7686	H7235					

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 15:24 (Sin): And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

1 Samuel 24:17 (References David): And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

Exodus 9:27 (Sin): And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.

Matthew 27:4 (Sin): Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.

1 Samuel 15:30 (Sin): Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God.

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