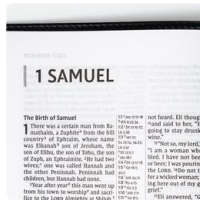


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1 Samuel 13 - 14



1 Samuel - Steve Gregg

In this segment, Steve Gregg discusses the continuation of the story of Saul in 1 Samuel 13-14. The situation worsens as Saul models the behavior of kings in other nations and his army melts away. Saul waits for Samuel to offer sacrifices to God, but when Samuel doesn't arrive after seven days, Saul takes matters into his own hands and offers the sacrifices himself, leading to rebuke from Samuel. Meanwhile, Jonathan takes bold action and leads a successful attack against the Philistines.

Transcript

We're turning now to 1 Samuel chapter 13, continuing the story of Saul. Up to this point, Saul has been mostly viewed in a positive light. He has been chosen by the prophet of God or by God himself to be the king.

He's been reticent about it. He's not spoken about it to his family. When it came time for him to be coronated, he was shy and was hiding.

God had to reveal to the people where to find him. So, he really has been rather meek and unassuming. So, he's kind of endearing in a way to us.

Unfortunately, though, he makes some bad choices with reference to actual obedience to God, which get him into trouble with God. And then his situation gets worse and worse, and he becomes worse and worse. And he's not even in chapter 12, Samuel gave his parting address, basically bowing out now that there was a new king.

Saul was officially installed, and Samuel, who had been guiding the country as their judge and a prophet, was now saying, okay, I'm not going to stop praying for you, but I'm going to be, you know, kind of going into semi-retirement, and you now have this king. Now, the king was not the king. He was nonetheless required to obey God.

Even though God had never really wanted them to have a king, once they got a king, they had a choice. They could be a theocracy under a secondary monarch. That is, they're still governed by God, but through a king, an earthly king.

But that would mean the earthly king has to be getting his orders from God. Or else, they could have an earthly king who didn't obey God, which means they'd be a nation in rebellion against God, just like the pagans. So, it's very important that we have a king who's not for Saul to be completely obedient to God.

For him to act on his own volition is simply to act like other kings did. And once you become a king, you might begin to model your behavior after other kings of other nations. And that is apparently how Saul began to think.

After all, he was in a role that had no precedent. There had never been a king over God's people before. So one might naturally, if thrust into that position, not know intuitively how to operate.

Although he should know that he has to obey God. And that's the one thing he was held responsible for, which he failed to do. If he became a monarch of a nation, he might just think, well, what does a monarch do? And the only models he would have would be the monarchs of the pagan nations, which obviously was not the model he was to follow.

And therefore, while one could understand his confusion, he still acted inexcusably, as we shall see in chapter 13. Saul reigned, it says, one year. And when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose himself 3,000 men of Israel.

2,000 were with Saul in Mishmash, in the mountains of Bethel, and 1,000 were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent away, every man to his tent. Now he'd had a big group of people, what, 300,000 or something had gathered against the Ammonites, and he had conquered them.

And now he didn't retain such a large army as that. One might think a king would like to do so, because that's pretty powerful, but you have to pay for them too. And so they didn't really have that kind of a budget.

So he kept and retained a standing army of 3,000 men, of which he kept two-thirds of them under his direct command, and a third of them were put under the command of his son, who we hear of for the first time here, Jonathan. Jonathan obviously becomes an important character in the story later, but until this point, we didn't know that Saul had a son. And the fact that he had a son old enough to command 1,000 troops means that Saul himself couldn't have been much younger than 40, and may have been older than 40 when he became king.

And he actually reigned for 40 years, according to two sources. The Old Testament doesn't tell us the length that Saul's reign. But Josephus said that he reigned for 40 years.

Now Josephus, of course, is not an inspired author. And he may have had the same sources Paul had for his information, because Paul said the same thing. In Acts chapter

13 and verse 21, Paul is preaching, and he says in Acts 13 to 21, Afterward they asked for a king.

So God gave them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for 40 years. So the length of Saul's reign, according to Paul and Josephus, was 40 years, although we don't have that information in the Old Testament. One reason we don't have it in the Old Testament is because probably of the corruption of verse 1 of 1 Samuel chapter 13.

Scholars tell us that there are two years here. Of course, we read Saul reigned one year, and when he reigned, two years over Israel, etc. There has been corruption of both of those numbers, and the first one has fallen out of the text entirely.

In other words, in the Hebrew text, there is no number there. Apparently the new King James supplied the number 1 for some reason, because the second number was taken to be 2. But literally in the Hebrew it says, Saul reigned blank year. And so it doesn't really say.

That means, of course, the text which originally had the number has somehow been corrupted. Some copyist miscopied it, or maybe someone was working with an older manuscript that had the number, but a moth had eaten a hole through that point, and there is no number there, so they just left it blank. Or it smeared, or the parchment had molded and became illegible.

And so we have, in our present manuscript condition, no number there. It's very possible that the original number there was 40. That is, that Saul reigned 40 years.

That would agree with Josephus and with Paul in the New Testament. Now we might say, well, the fact that Paul said it means it's true. Well, not necessarily.

Just because it records that Paul said something doesn't mean that he was inspired when he said it. Not every time Paul opened his mouth was he inspired. Not even every time that his words are recorded were they inspired.

For example, we read of him and his friends having a disagreement about whether he should go to Jerusalem or not. And there's some argument to be made that Paul was mistaken in choosing to go there when it says certain men through the Spirit told him not to go. So Paul might have been right or he might have been wrong in telling us that Paul said a certain thing.

It's not saying that he was necessarily right. It's just telling us what he said. And although we'd like to think that every time Paul preached he almost came under the influence of the Spirit like a prophet of God and speaks oracles, that he didn't claim that for himself and the Bible doesn't claim it for him.

But I would still trust him if he gives a number that he had good reason to believe that it

was the correct number. And he and Josephus both felt that Saul reigned for 40 years and may have done so because they had earlier copies of the Old Testament than we have. Copies that still had the correct number here.

1 Samuel 13, 1. So I'm going to suggest that it originally said Saul reigned 40 years. That's a summary of his reign. And then it begins to talk about something that happened in the second year of his reign.

When he had reigned two years over Israel he selected 3,000 choice men to be his standing army or bodyguard. Jonathan here is given charge over 1,000 of them. So Jonathan must have been a mature man.

Well, I should say probably a young man but still mature enough to be given serious adult responsibilities. So Saul could not have been very young at this point. As I said, if Jonathan was even in his late teens then Saul would almost certainly have to be pushing 40 at the youngest.

And so if he was almost 40 when he began to reign and he reigned for 40 years then we would assume that he must have been close to 80 when he died. But we get ahead of ourselves. So here we have this army divided between Saul and Jonathan and the rest of the people he sent away, every man to his tent.

Verse 3, And Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba. And the Philistines heard of it. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land saying, Let the Hebrews hear.

Now all Israel heard it said that Saul had attacked a garrison of the Philistines and that Israel had also become an abomination to the Philistines and the people were called together to Saul at Gilgal. Now apparently Jonathan acted on his own. We shall see other stories about Jonathan that suggest he was a man who took initiative.

Like at a later point he and his armor bearer alone just decided to attack a garrison of the Philistines. He was a man who was antsy for battle and zealous for the cause of Israel. And he had a thousand men with him and so they attacked a garrison of the Philistines at Geba.

This was apparently a surprise to Saul. We don't read that Saul authorized it or else if Saul was into it he probably would have conducted the attack. He had 2,000 men.

So this is something where Jonathan as at other times seemed to act on his own. But once he had attacked the garrison of the Philistines of course the other Philistines heard of it and said, Oh these Israelites want to make war. And the news got around that Saul had attacked the Philistines which wasn't quite correct but he was the king so he was responsible and so now he was thrust into war a war that he had not initiated.

But all the people came to him. Then the Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen and people as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude. And they came up and encamped in Michmash or Michmash probably to the east of Beth-Avon.

And the men of Israel saw that they were in danger for the people were distressed. Then the people hid in caves and thickets in rocks and holes and pits. So the Israelites were greatly outnumbered and outclassed by the Philistine military that had come against them.

Apparently the Philistines decided not to make the mistakes they had made before and underestimate the power of Yahweh because more than once Yahweh had come to Israel's aid against the Philistines and so they brought the largest number of troops they could hoping to succeed against such a great power as Yahweh against the people of Yahweh. And so the people then saw the numbers of Philistines and instead of trusting in God they just despaired and decided to hide in caves and such. Then it says in verse 7 And some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead as for Saul he was still in Gilgal and all the people followed him trembling.

Now what it's saying is that the Jews some of them were hiding in caves locally others crossed the river to get away and so Saul's army was melting away they were defecting from him. He started out with only 2,000 with him and now most of them are defecting and he's got 30,000 chariots coming after him as well as foot soldiers like the sand of the seashore so he's really got occasion to be worried but not if he remembers stories like that of Gideon and others. Jonathan knew that there was nothing to be afraid of because as I said later on Jonathan and his armor bearer attacked a garrison of the Philistines by themselves and just two men and Jonathan encouraged his armor bearer in advance of that attack saying it's no big thing for God to deliver by many or by few if God's for us he can deliver these into our hands just the two of us.

So Jonathan had the faith of Gideon attacking a much larger force than himself with very few on his side but Saul or at least the people that were with Saul didn't have that kind of faith and so they fled and deserted and there were some still following Saul but they followed him trembling they were not a courageous military band it was probably a ragtag group of the ones who were the bravest or the most stubborn who would not defect but they weren't exactly confident in their prospects now it says then he waited seven days according to the time set by Samuel but Samuel did not come to Gilgal and the people were scattered from him so Saul said bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me and he offered the burnt offering now it happened as soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering that Samuel came and Saul went out to meet him that he might greet him now this meeting and this sacrifice was predicted much earlier apparently at least two years earlier when Samuel had first met Saul and given him the signs that he would see these prophets would meet him and they would give him a

couple loaves of bread and some other prophets would meet him and the spirit would come upon him these were the very first signs that God gave to Saul predicted by Samuel but at that same time back in chapter 10 in verse 8 Samuel had said you shall go down before me to Gilgal and surely I will come down to you and offer burnt offerings and make sacrifices of peace offerings seven days you shall wait until I come to you and show you what you should do now these instructions as they are recorded here in chapter 10 do not sound like they are very explicit about when this will be and it's possible that this is an abbreviated account it's entirely possible that Samuel on this occasion told him what the occasion would be when it would be the time when you have to maybe when the Philistines and you are preparing to go to battle certainly the king of Israel would be expected to lead the armies of Israel against the Philistines but the timing would be everything and so it was that in the first two years there was no confrontation between Saul and the Philistines but the time came for it and that time might have even been prescribed by Samuel on this earlier occasion we just don't have all the details of it but certainly we read that Samuel expected Saul to know that he was obligated to wait for seven days for Samuel to come now Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin and therefore was not even related to the families that were authorized to offer sacrifices only the Levites and particularly the priesthood of Aaron were allowed to offer sacrifices and although Samuel was not actually of the line of Aaron he was a Levite and he had sort of filled in God had raised him up to fill in when Eli and his sons had died so Samuel was you know had an established authority to offer sacrifices in the place of a high priest but Saul had no such authority so he was supposed to wait for the authorized agent now you wouldn't go to battle without offering sacrifices to God first because it was understood you need God on your side especially when you're so outnumbered as they were in this case they need to appeal to God they need to you know atone for any offenses that God may be holding against them they need to make sure that they've pleased God and that he's on their side so they need to offer a sacrifice before they go into battle and frankly pagan nations would do the same thing to their gods I mean it was understood that military encounter between two nations was really a conflict between the gods of different nations that's how they understood things so getting their gods on their side was something any nation would do before they went to war Israel of course especially since they had a real god who could actually help them were expected to do that and did that but Saul realized that as Samuel had not arrived he'd waited seven days and Samuel had not arrived now clearly Samuel arrived before that seventh day was over because no sooner had Saul offered the sacrifice than Samuel shows up so Saul just kind of gave up on waiting just a little too soon apparently just an hour or two sooner than he should have and he saw the people melting away he saw his army dispersing and he thought well if this goes on any longer there's going to be no one here left I'd better get things moving I'll offer the sacrifice maybe it'll bring cohesion and it seems like something that we'd think well that's really understandable Samuel didn't show up when he said he would Saul was just trying to honor God before going to battle he was obviously going to have to go to battle he had to offer a sacrifice to God and

worship God why shouldn't this be why shouldn't someone cut him some slack here well first of all it was well known that not everybody was allowed to officiate at the altar therefore Saul was intruding knowingly into the office of the priesthood but more than that he had been specifically told by the prophet of God a prophet whose words had been verified by signs multiple signs that he was speaking from God he'd been told to wait seven days and wait for Samuel to tell him what to do and Samuel had come and offered the sacrifice so Saul his faith was clearly tested severely tested and all of us have failed under tests before so we can't really personally condemn him but we can't justify his actions either he really didn't do what he was told to do and this may have been a deliberate test to see if he's going to obey God or act on his own like other kings would do other kings would act on their own but he's under orders to follow the instructions of the prophet of God and Samuel waiting as long as he did was very possibly a deliberate testing of Saul's obedience and he in this case failed that test though no doubt he was well intentioned he knew that he was not supposed to do what he did he just thought under the circumstances he had little else that he could do you know when Jesus was fasting forty days in the wilderness the Bible says his hunger came back when you fast for forty days most of that period of time you don't feel hungry it's just something about the physiology of a long fast that your body loses its hunger fairly early on and you don't get hungry again until the end when your body is actually starving when your body has nothing else that can burn as fuel but its own tissues that's when the hunger returns after a long fast like that and the Bible says Jesus fasted forty days and after forty days he was hungry which means he was actually on the verge of dying at that time Satan came to him and said why don't you just turn these rocks into bread now if Satan had come to him earlier when he was not on the verge of death when he was not starving to death and said why don't you turn these rocks to bread Jesus might readily have said well you know it's not necessary I'm not dying man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God certainly God will show up before I starve to death but when Jesus was actually starving to death it's like Saul at the seven days had passed there was no deliverance Samuel had not shown up something's got to be done or else it's going to be a disaster Jesus could have reasoned that way he could have thought well my father hasn't told me to break the fast yet I'm supposed to be living by every word that proceeds out of his mouth and he hasn't shown up to give me permission but if he doesn't come now I'm going to die so I might as well act that was the temptation Jesus resisted that temptation and when he did resist it the devil left him for a while and the Bible says the angels came and ministered to him God was mindful of his needs and God did send the angels to meet his needs but he waited until the last moment of extremity when it seemed like it was almost too late a lot of times God will do that he'll wait until we think it's too late I would have trusted God up to this point but now I can just see disaster is around the bend I've got to act without God on this and sometimes living by faith for finances is that way you know there's a bill coming up due you know there's rent coming up due within a few days and you're short or you need something and the test is will you do something on your own if you're living the way that

I'm talking about like George Mueller's way of living he had a commitment that he would just trust God and not tell people his needs but many times it came right down to meal time and there's no food there and he was greatly tested of course to tell somebody his needs to ask for money but he had a commitment that he didn't feel God wanted him to do that and as far as I know he never failed that test either in fact he had a policy that even if they were totally out of money and needing money and didn't know where the next money was coming from that if someone would walk up and say Mr. Mueller I feel like the Lord's told me to make a donation to your ministry do you have any needs he'd say well I've made a agreement with God I won't talk about those things with anyone but him he wouldn't give any indication that he had needs even though he had them because he felt God will come through before it's too late and God always did come through before it was too late but not much before often it was just about the moment that it was going to be too late and then God came through and that's how God often will test somebody's faith I have to say that I have failed that test a few times not very many that I can recall I can think of two or three times in my life living that same way that almost always the money came just at the last minute but there were times that seemed like this is the last minute and isn't there and I let somebody know my need I borrowed money and I paid it back because the money came in anyway it would have come in even if I hadn't failed the test and that's what Samuel would have arrived on time even if Saul had not moved ahead he didn't know that though Jesus didn't know when the angels would come and minister to him all he knew is that he's on the verge of death it seems like God's too late or almost too late therefore perhaps I better act on my own Jesus didn't do that Saul did he acted ahead of God and yet it turned out that Samuel did come on that seventh day just a few hours later than Saul had run out of faith and patience and so it happened as soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering verse 10 Samuel came and Saul went out to meet him that he might greet him and Samuel said what have you done? and Saul said when I saw that the people were scattering from me and that you did not come within the days appointed and that the Philistines gathered together at Mikmash then I said the Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal and I have not made supplication to the Lord therefore I felt compelled and offered a burnt offering see that's the thing a lot of times when we cave in under temptation it's because we feel compelled circumstances seem to require it how can I hold out and wait for God to show up when the disaster is looming right now I'm under pressure and those pressures are just part of the way God deals with people when he's training them and testing them in their faith Saul was a brand new king he was untested up to this point and his special responsibilities as the king of Israel would be that he had to obey God to the letter about everything and it's not unlike God to put a man to a test this much so that he feels compelled to disobey God or else to trust God and he says I just felt compelled and Samuel said to Saul you have done foolishly you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God which he commanded you for now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever but now your kingdom shall not continue the Lord has sought for himself a man after his own heart and the Lord has

commanded him to be commander over his people because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you of course he's referring to David though he didn't go out and find David until some chapters later then Samuel arose and went up to Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin and Saul numbered the people who were present with him about 600 men so of his 2,000 around three quarters had deserted him now notice this Samuel said to Saul if you had been obedient to God God would have established your house your dynasty in other words your kingdom forever now that's the promise he later made to David through Nathan the prophet that God was going to establish David's house and his seat on the throne forever apparently Saul could have had that with his house instead of David's God went to seek David because Saul failed but think of what that means it certainly tells us that God's plans are conditioned because apparently if Saul had not failed then God's plan would have been for the house of Saul to be the kings of Israel forever but Saul's failure changed the plan it's like the plans are alterable or conditioned upon our behavior that's true in general in fact we saw that the prophet said that to Eli in chapter 2 and verse 30 the Lord said to Eli I said to your father and the house of your father that you'd walk before me forever but now far be it from me says the Lord for those who honor me I will honor and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed in other words I made a promise that this would be Saul in your household forever that's 1 Samuel 2.30 but it's conditional there are many promises God has made that have forever attached to them but they are conditional whether he mentions it at the time or not that's just the way he deals that's why I think it's quite naive for certain people to assume a belief in eternal security based upon certain passages that talk about forever and life eternal and so forth well it's forever potentially on the condition of faith on the condition of your continuing loyalty to God it's forever Saul's kingdom would have been forever if he'd been more obedient but he wasn't so it's not going to be God had to change a plan and he sought another man to establish a forever kingdom so Samuel rebuked him and left so Saul is left without the prophet of God without any confidence that God is on his side in fact he's been told that God is upset with him and he's going to go to battle having 600 men on his side against this overwhelming army Saul is left in a very unenviable situation verse 16 Saul, Jonathan his son, and the people who were present with them remained in Gibeah of Benjamin but the Philistines encamped in Michmash then raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies one company turned to the road that leads to Ophrah to the land of Shual another company turned to the road to Beth Horon and another company turned to the road of the border that overlooks the valley of Zeboiim toward the wilderness so these three raiding companies of the Philistines apparently are moving forward while this enormous army of the Philistines is just hanging back waiting for the action they're sending forth some raiding parties to stir up something to see if they can get the Israelites to come out and fight now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel for the Philistines said lest the Hebrews make swords and spears but all the Israelites would go down to the Philistines to sharpen each man's plowshare his mattock and his axe and his sickle and the charge for the sharpening was a pimm for the plowshare, the mattocks

the forks and the axes and to set the points on the goads a pim is about two thirds of a shekel of silver a shekel of silver would be like a day's wage so the Philistines would charge two thirds of a man's day's wage if they worked twelve hours a day which is likely during the sunlight hours that would be like eight hours wages to sharpen your tools and yet these tools were apparently the only metal the Israelites had so we have to assume that when they gathered to fight as an army they were bringing sickles and axes and plowshares and things like that whatever metal things they had which had been sharpened at great expense by the Philistines but were not really instruments of combat now Jonathan and Saul were the exceptions for some reason they were permitted to have swords I don't know if they were permitted by the Philistines to have swords as a concession feeling like two swords against us all who cares or if Saul and Jonathan secretly had swords and the Philistines didn't know it because obviously there had been some previous battles there had been some of the enemy fallen I would think that a nation as unarmed as Israel was would not miss the opportunity to plunder those that were killed in battle of their enemies and take their weapons so there would be some source of weapons but not much so it came about on the day of battle that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people who were with Saul and Jonathan but they were found with Saul and Jonathan his son and the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Mishmash you know I've often wondered about this you know there wasn't a sword or spear in any of these Israel's hands only the two commanders Saul and his son had weapons and the others had what sticks and stones and slingshots and pitchforks and what you know I guess so but it just seems weird that that would be so when they have in fact had previous battles they've seen the Philistines routed before them certainly they would have had a lot of weapons they could have collected so where were those weapons it seems probable that the Philistines being their overlords had come and collected their weapons just like tyrants always want to do you know collect the guns that's what Hitler used to do he made you know gun laws to take the guns away from peoples to keep them Serbian tyrants are smart that way apparently the Philistines although Israel had had an opportunity to collect weapons never had the power to throw off the Philistine oppression therefore the Philistines could make the rules which apparently meant you can't keep these weapons you can beat your weapons into plowshares and your spears into pruning hooks if you want to but you can't have swords except Saul and Jonathan since he's your tin horn ruler will indulge him and his son with a sword each so that's how things stand essentially unarmed small band of Israelites two leaders who each have swords God is not with them or at least God has rebuked him that doesn't mean God's not with them but Samuel's not with them giving him guidance which is what he needed and so in chapter 14 it says now it happened one day apparently during this standoff when things were not exploding into battle yet this is how it started one day that Jonathan the son of Saul and the young man who bore his armor said come let us go over to the Philistine's garrison on the other side but he did not tell his father and this is a shame because Saul ended up making some foolish vows that ended up complicating things here and Saul was sitting in the outskirts of Gibeah under

a pomegranate tree which is in Migron the people who were with him were about 600 men now there's nothing wrong I'm sure with a man even the king sitting under a pomegranate tree in the shade he's got to sit somewhere but it just sounds like such a dereliction of duty you know the nation is at war the enemy is mobilized and the king with 600 men we see him sitting now obviously there's nothing wrong with sitting every general at war has times when he sits so this is not necessarily a criticism of him but there certainly is a contrast between him and Jonathan Jonathan is active Jonathan is aggressive Jonathan is mobilized he's eager to engage the enemy and Saul and his 600 men are kind of just sitting in the shade not moving Ahijah the son of Ahitub Ichabod's father remember Ichabod he was born the day Eli died the son of Phinehas the son of Eli the Lord's priest in Shiloh was wearing an ephod but the people did not know that Jonathan had gone now it's interesting here Ichabod's brother was the priest apparently Ichabod though he was born of the priest was not the oldest the oldest in the family of the priest would be the high priest Ichabod's brother we had not known about before but he existed and now we're told that he was the one wearing the ephod and it says the people did not know that Jonathan had gone now between the passes by which Jonathan sought to go over to the Philistine garrison there was a sharp rock on one side and a sharp rock on the other side obviously a narrow pass between them probably one that was narrow enough that only one man at a time or at the most two could pass through which made it a rather defensible position for an army of one or two since the enemy could only come one at a time and it says and the name of this was Bozes and the name of the other was Sina that's the names of those two rocks they named rocks in those days we do too I'm sure we have names for mountains and so forth Gibraltar Gibraltar yeah the rock of Gibraltar right the front of one face northward opposite Mishmash and the other southward opposite Gibeah then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor come let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised it may be that Yahweh will work for us for nothing restrains Yahweh from saving by many or by few so his armor bearer said to him do all that is in your heart go then here I am with you according to your heart now his armor bearer was a stout fellow too he didn't say hey don't you realize there's just two of us and there's a garrison of them over there you want me to put my neck on the line like that no he just said whatever you want I'm with you I got your back you lead I'll follow you and we'll just take our fate into our hands and let Yahweh decide the outcome then Jonathan said very well let us cross over to these men and we will show ourselves to them if they say to us wait until we come to you then we will stand in our place and not go up to them but if they say to us come up to us then we will go up for the Lord has delivered them into our hand and this will be a sign to us so it's kind of like Gideon's fleece how do we know if God's going to deliver the enemy into our hands well we'll look for this sign although this was not so much a miraculous sign Gideon was asking for something that would be an obvious miracle the fleece being wet and the ground dry or the fleece being dry and the ground wet but this was not so much a miracle it was more a matter of you couldn't predict which reaction the Philistines would have would they say well you stand there until we come over to you or would they

say you come over here and Jonathan if it's this way then we're not going to assume that we're going to fight them we can just pretend like we're defectors or something but if they say come over to us then we go with guns blazing because God has delivered them into our hands we're going to take them so both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines and the Philistines said look the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden mocking the fact that the Israelites have been cowards maybe in fact thinking of these to be a couple of defectors from Saul's army not knowing who they were then the men of the garrison called to Jonathan and his armor bearer and said come up to us and we will show you something so Jonathan said to his armor bearer come up after me for the Lord has delivered them into the hand of Israel and Jonathan climbed up on his hands and knees with his armor bearer after him and they fell before Jonathan and as he came after them his armor bearer killed them so Jonathan knocked him down and his armor bearer came back behind him and killed him I don't know if Jonathan was using a club and his armor bearer was using his sword or whatever but it was a two-stroke kill for each of these Philistines Jonathan knocked him down probably maybe knocked him out or disabled him and the armor bearer killed him off and so this is how they killed all of them 20 men they killed the first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor bearer made was about 20 men within about half an acre of land and there was trembling in the camp in the field and among all the people the garrison and the raiders also trembled and the earth quaked so that it was a very great trembling notice how often we read this that the earth quaked when it's really talking about people trembling just a note this is the way the Hebrew poetry or idiom speaks the reason that's important is because we read of earth quaking in a lot of prophetic passages too and some people not knowing the Hebrew idiom just assume this is talking about literal earthquakes where in fact the earth quaking is often referred to as something that is of course not the earth wasn't really shaking it's as if it was people were trembling so violently it's as if they would shake the earth itself is basically how this is intended and so now the watchman of Saul and Gibeah of Benjamin looked and there was the multitude melting away that is the multitude of the Philistines and they went here and there so Saul's at some distance he doesn't know what's going on he doesn't know where Jonathan's out there he just sees the watchman and says you know the Philistines are kind of running away from something we don't know from what but the Philistines are running away and so Saul is of course encouraged and decides he better take advantage of the situation and Saul said to the people who were with him now call the roll and see who has gone from us and when they had called the roll surprisingly Jonathan and his armor bearer were not there apparently they had all been together at one point and Jonathan and his armor bearer had snuck off to do this thing again without telling his father and Saul said to Ahijah bring the ark of God here for at that time the ark of God was with the children of Israel this means of course it had come back I don't know if it's saying that it wasn't with them at the time the writer wrote if the writer is saying that the ark of God was not with them at the time of his writing and it was in the time of the story he's telling then we'd have to have this writer writing after the Babylonian exile

that's when the ark was permanently lost to Israel and a writer after that time might say well back then they had the ark with them however it's not likely that this was written quite so late as that and so it's probably referring to the fact that the ark had at one time been taken from them by the Philistines but now had returned so it was with them again at this time as opposed to how it had been at a former time now it happened while Saul talked to the priest that the noise which was in the camp of the Philistines continued to increase and Saul said to the priest withdraw your hand now withdraw the hand it's hard to know what that means in fact it's hard to know what the priest was doing the priest was supposed to be inquiring of the Lord no doubt so it was probable he was putting his hand into the breastplate to pull out the urn and the fulmin and to get some guidance from God why the ark had to be brought as well I don't know it's possible that since Samuel wasn't there the next best symbol of God's presence other than the prophet himself would be the ark and so Saul needed to have some kind of encouragement that somehow God was with them so the ark came and the priest and probably the priest was we don't know exactly how the urn and the fulmin worked but many people think it was these two stones in the bag that he wore on his chest the priest would pull out and somehow they would tell the mind of God there's a great deal of speculation as to how this worked but when Saul said to the priest withdraw your hand apparently what he meant was we're running out of time we need to strike with Aaron we don't have time to consult God about this right now we just have to move same mistake he had made earlier then Saul and the people who were with him assembled and they went to the battle and indeed every man's sword was against his neighbor and there was very great confusion that is the Philistines their swords were against each other this is a very common thing that God did often in order to save Israel from their enemies and that was just when Israel was outnumbered or when they were not armed so well as their enemies God would often just use their enemies to kill their enemies you know enemies would kill each other this is what happened in Gideon's battle when Gideon attacked the Midianites the Bible says that God turned the Midianites against each other and they were killing each other at a later date when over a million people of the enemies of Israel came against Jehoshaphat the king of Judah God told him that he should not fear these great armies because the battle was the Lord's and that Jehoshaphat should just send the musicians out and the priests to worship the Lord so they did they sent their musicians out to worship the Lord on the battlefield and it says the Lord turned the enemies against each other and they killed each other off so it's a really common strategy of God to show that it's not by Israel's might that there's security lies God can just make the enemy kill each other off which is really kind of an insane thing to do but God just turns them crazy and confused the word confusion is used in these cases the enemy gets confused they don't know who's the enemy and who's not now that takes some real crazy confusion to not know that the guy who's armed in the same armor you're wearing is on your side they went kind of crazy and you know the devil doesn't really have much ingenuity of his own we give him credit for being wise but he really just copies other things he's not very creative and his greatest strategy against Christians is one he

borrowed from God the one that God used against Israel's enemies make them think that they are each other's enemy and kill each other off then the devil doesn't have to do anything to them just get the Christians to fight among themselves and then it just neutralizes their effectiveness and their power against the enemy and so we see that this is what Satan does we don't have any direct persecution against us in this country I mean maybe we do a little bit but not as much as normal but we have divisiveness the highest concentration of evangelicals probably in the world is probably in North America and think of what could be accomplished by a spiritual force that large if they were united if they were devoted if they were marching shoulder to shoulder against the enemy but the devil knows that and he's done some really interesting things in causing crazy divisions divisions that are insane people who are friends splitting up marriages splitting up churches splitting up over trivial things the hand of Satan in it is so evident because it's irrational but I just think the devil just learned that strategy from God because God has used that strategy in defeating Israel's enemies divide and conquer and get the enemy to kill each other then Israel doesn't have to have weapons what do they need weapons for they don't have to fight and if the church just divides and fights each other then Satan's side doesn't have to even be armed they can sit back under a pomegranate tree if they want to and just watch the battle go by watch us undermine our own objectives this is what God did to the Philistines there was great confusion every man's sword was against his neighbor moreover verse 21 the Hebrews who were with the Philistines before that time who went up to them into the camp from the surrounding country they also joined the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan now these were apparently Israelite defectors remember there had been thousands with Saul but then when they saw the hordes of Philistines they decided they knew what side of the bread the butter was on this was not going to go for Israel I think I'll defect to the other side maybe they won't be too hard on me you know if I'm standing with Saul I'm going to be someone they're shooting at if I come over to their side they'll probably be more merciful so there had been Hebrews who had defected to the Philistines but now they were encouraged by seeing what Jonathan had initiated and the victory that God was giving them so they came back over so the forces of Israel swelled a little bit in their ranks likewise all the men of Israel who had hidden in the mountains of Ephraim when they heard that the Philistines fled they also followed hard after them in battle so the Lord saved Israel that day and the battle shifted to Beth-Avon now the story is not over it sounds like that's the end of it there's some little details that have to be told here in the next verses that took place during the battle but this is a summary God turned the battle and the victory to Israel not because of Saul Saul had been disobedient to God but because his son Jonathan was a man of faith and power and boldness and courage Jonathan trusted God and Saul he was just sitting around watching it happen under the pomegranate tree or whatever now what's interesting about this is the influence that one man's faith or one man's courage can have on a demoralized group of God's people here there were people who had actually defected to the enemy and there were people who had not defected to the enemy but had hidden because they were terrified they

didn't want to go to battle against the enemy and then there of course there were the trembling troops that had stayed with Saul all these people were useless there was an enemy to be defeated there were objectives to gain there was liberty to be obtained for Israel and all these people were useless some of them actually had defected and become traitors others were just useless neutralized by fear by discouragement by the assumption that we can't win and then here Jonathan and his armor bearer two guys only they decide I think we can win if God's on our side we can win this and they go out and step out in faith and they have such good results that suddenly all the discouraged ones they decide to come out and be encouraged and join the battle too and that is no doubt an encouragement to us to think that we live in times where Christians have many of backslidden some of them are just hiding out doing nothing for God afraid to speak up afraid to make the culture angry at them afraid to engage the enemy but one person yourself maybe by actually breaking that curve and being the one who just decides to trust God and move forward and change things can encourage others to do the same thing and then you'd be surprised what a movement can be started you know one person who's going to be uncompromising one person who's going to speak out for God in a situation where others are afraid to speak out and so forth then others who have been afraid previously or been discouraged you know they see God begin to move and they step forward too and suddenly there's more resources doing the same thing and any one of us could possibly be someone that God would use that way when you're in a compromised time where the churches are really just not confronting the enemy at all they're just kind of digging in and trying to preserve their gains then one person who stands up and says but we're going to follow Jesus in an uncompromising way and we're going to speak up about what we're supposed to speak up about and we're not going to be afraid of the culture or afraid of the enemy it encourages people eventually sometimes people just say that's what I thought too I just never heard anyone else saying it so I just really was afraid not everyone really likes Rush Limbaugh and his personality and so forth but one thing that is obvious about Rush Limbaugh is that he was the first of the people who were political conservatives in this country to really come out on the radio and start you know just being in the face of the liberal media which was everybody else but him at the time I remember hearing people say you know he's saying what I always thought but I never heard anyone else say it so I didn't know anyone else thought it and I just kept my ideas to myself but when he came out and began to speak certain things those who had always thought that way but felt intimidated by the seeming liberal majority found out that they weren't in the minority after all they were just the silent majority they were the silent ones who were afraid to speak up but as soon as there became somebody speaking up they felt affirmed they felt like wow I'm not the lone ranger here I'm not the only person who thinks this way and there's become a very vocal conservative movement and I don't say that in order to promote either Rush Limbaugh or the conservative movement necessarily because I don't agree with everything that's in those movements or in Rush's program I'm just saying that there's a phenomenon that you can see of how one man finally speaking up against what

everyone else is saying causes other people to come out of the woodwork and say you know I always thought that way too I just didn't know anyone else did and so those who were hiding in their caves come on out and join in the fray and I'm not necessarily trying to equate you know the political battles between conservatism and liberalism with something necessarily spiritual although there are spiritual aspects to it I'm just saying that Jonathan is the guy who because he moved forward he stepped out he went public he joined the battle when no one else was doing it suddenly all the people who didn't who agreed with him but were afraid to say so came out and then of course there was more of a considerable movement now verse 24 and the men of Israel were distressed that day for Saul had placed the people under an oath this is something that happened earlier that we had not heard about saying cursed is the man who eats any food until evening before I have taken vengeance on my enemy so none of the people tasted food now notice Saul he's really grandstanding here you know I'm going to take vengeance against my enemies well he hadn't even been willing to engage the enemy and it's not his enemies it's the enemies of Israel and of the Lord it's not the personal enemies of Saul it's not like he's got some personal glory to vindicate here he's kind of making himself the guy who this is all about me this is about me because I'm the king these people are my enemies I'm going to avenge myself although he hadn't really done much to do anything in this battle his son had done all the work so far but Saul wanting to inspire people with a sense of devotion to God and to the duty had proclaimed a fast and a curse on anyone who eats food until evening well that's not a really good time to be fasting when you're chasing enemies for hours and fighting and you know it's like it's good to fast at times but it's not very smart to proclaim a fast on a day of really active exertion especially when that active exertion is not just winning a sports event but winning your country's freedom against enemies and saving your life against enemies this is just a foolish thing for Saul to do he just did it in a moment of excitement as he saw something's happening it looks like things are going our way we're going to honor God by fasting now there's better times to do that so no one of the people tasted food now all the people of the land came to the forest and there was honey on the ground this is as they're pursuing the Philistines they're chasing them through a forest there's apparently a beehive there low to the ground somewhere and honey was dripping on the ground and when the people had come into the woods there was the honey dripping that would have given them some calories and some energy that they needed but no one put his hand to his mouth because the people feared the oath but Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath therefore he stretched out the end of the rod that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb and put his hand to his mouth and his countenance brightened he was getting exhausted it kind of gave him a second wind brightened his face up like wow now I'm feeling like I can go another ten hours of this you know I was running out of steam but this was really a good thing to have this honey then one of the people said your father strictly charged the people with an oath saying curse it as the man who eats food this day and the people were faint but Jonathan said my father has troubled the land look now how my countenance is brightened because I

taste a little of this honey how much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found that is when they drove the Philistines out the Philistines left their camps with all their food and provisions there Israel could have eaten those things and been strengthened and energized for even greater victory but instead because Saul put them under oath they leave all this food behind while they're hungry and they're faint and he says for now would there not have been a much greater slaughter among the Philistines now they had driven back the Philistines that day from Michmash to Eijlon so the people were very faint and the people rushed on the spoil this is after sundown apparently when the evening had come so now they could eat so they rushed on the spoils the sheep the ox and the calves and slaughtered them on the ground but the people ate them with the blood that is they were so ravenous they didn't wait as the Jews were supposed to do to drain all the blood out of the animals that takes a while by the way it's not like they just couldn't wait for the food to be prepared you have to drain out the blood for some hours you hang the carcass of the animal and the blood drains out slowly eventually it's drained out then it's clean because the Jews could not eat anything with blood in it these people weren't willing to wait the hours it took to drain the blood out so they just cooked it up as it was and ate things with the blood then they told Saul saying look the people are sinning against the Lord by eating with the blood and he said you have dealt treacherously roll a large stone to me this day and Saul said disperse yourselves among the people and say to them bring me here every man's ox and every man's sheep slaughter them here and eat and do not sin against the Lord by eating with the blood so every one of the people brought his ox with him that night and they slaughtered it there that is under supervision to make sure that it was drained before they ate it and Saul built an altar to the Lord and this was the first altar that he built to the Lord so the offerings he had offered prematurely at Gilgal must have been on an existing altar this is the first time he actually built a new altar someplace and Saul said let us go down after the Philistines by night and plunder them until the morning light and let us not leave a man of them and they said do whatever seems good to you then the priest said let us draw near to God here so Saul asked counsel of God shall I go down after the Philistines will you deliver them into the hand of Israel but he did not answer him that day God wouldn't answer and Saul said come over here all you chiefs of the people and know and see what this sin was today for as the Lord lives who saves Israel though it be Jonathan my son he shall surely die but not a man among all the people answered him so Saul was unaware that Jonathan had broken the oath Jonathan had been unaware of the oath when he did it there was not very much communication going on their walkie-talkies apparently were down that day and so they weren't able to really get the information out to everybody so Jonathan had innocently broken the oath Saul didn't know about it and so he makes another stupid oath and says well whoever is responsible for the violation today they'll surely die even if it's Jonathan my son now saying that did not mean that he suspected that it was Jonathan his son he's just saying I don't care what the rank is of the person he's going down because he's caused God not to want to talk to me there's a reason why God is not answering us and it must be

there's sin in the camp and I don't care who it is Saul had a way of kind of over over speaking and he was just you know saying it could be anybody it could be my own son and he'll die well of course little did he know that his son was the one and it says then he said then he said to all Israel you be on one side my son Jonathan and I will be on the other side and the people said to Saul do it seems good to you therefore Saul said to the Lord God of Israel give a perfect lot so Saul and Jonathan were taken in the casting of lots but the people escaped so Saul and Jonathan were on one side the people on the other side and the lot was to decide was the offense on the side of the rulers or on the side of the people it turned out to be on the side of the rulers Jonathan and Saul were on one side and they were singled out so the people escaped they were absolved then Saul said cast lots between my son Jonathan and me so Jonathan was taken then Saul said to Jonathan tell me what you have done this is almost exactly like the the identification of Achan in the book of Joshua how someone was at fault and so one tribe was taken then one clan was taken one family then one person was taken and then when it was identified who was Joshua said take him give glory to God confess what you have done so here Saul said ok Jonathan you are the one who is guilty tell me what you have done and Jonathan told him and said I only tasted a little honey with the end of the rod that was in my hand so now I must die and Saul answered God do so and more also for you shall truly die Jonathan again Saul just being extreme of course he had sworn apparently that whoever it was would die but it was a stupid oath like Jephthah's oath in this case though while Jephthah kept his oath Saul got talked out of it so Saul is a little wishy-washy on the on the character side but the people said to Saul shall Jonathan die who has accomplished his great salvation in Israel certainly not as the Lord lives not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground for he has worked with God this day so the people rescued Jonathan and he did not die then Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines and the Philistines went to their own place now no doubt Saul was probably relieved not to have to kill his son Jonathan but he only acquiesced to it under the pressure from the people realized that the people would not cooperate with Saul would not let him kill his son Saul is making this profound oath may God do more to me so to me and more if I don't kill you Jonathan and then the people talk around and say oh okay no I won't it's like he didn't take his oath as seriously as people like Jephthah did because he wasn't a man who was stable he wasn't a man committed to honesty apparently and keeping his word it says so Saul established his sovereignty over Israel and fought against his enemies on every side against Moab against the people of Ammon against Edom the kings of Zobah and against the Philistines wherever he turned he harassed them and he gathered an army and attacked the Amalekites and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them that story is told in the next chapter now the sons of Saul were Jonathan and Jishui and Malchushua and the names of his two daughters were these the name of the first one was Merab and the name of the younger was Michael of course Michael became married to David later on these three sons that are mentioned would be in addition to Ish-bosheth who maybe was not born yet at this time but this is kind of a summary statement of Saul's conquest it mentions his conquest of the

Amalekites like I said the details of that are given in chapter 15 it says in verse 50 the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimeas and the name of the commander of his army was Abner the son of Ner Saul's uncle Kish was the father of Saul and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel now there was a fierce war with the Philistines all the days of Saul and when Saul saw any strong man or any valiant man he took him for himself so he was a collector of valiant men for his bodyguard or for his army and of course that is one way that David came to his attention his scouts his talent scouts as it were his recruiters had gone out and seen that Jesse had a stalwart son that had potential but he had not been recruited yet perhaps because he was too young at the time but we'll find out later on we've run a little over time so we're going to stop here