

# Saul: Unstable in All His Ways

## 1 Samuel 14

- I. INTRO → Making tough decisions in life...
  - A. ME: Strategic mind for others / Analysis Paralysis for me (worse w/ age)
  - B. WE: Can you relate? What do you do when you have a difficult decision?
    1. Do you act impulsively, overly confident in your “gut”?
    2. Do you get caught in analysis paralysis?
    3. Do you not act at all b/c you fear change or failure?
  - C. RECAP LAST WEEK:
    1. In 1 Samuel 13, Israel faced a Philistine threat under Saul's leadership.
    2. As they waited for Samuel to offer sacrifices, Saul grew impatient and performed the ritual without the priest, disregarding God's command.
      - a) He listened to his fears and doubts instead of the truth of God
    3. Samuel rebuked him and predicted the loss of his kingdom b/c of it.
    4. The chapter closed with the Philistines dominating Israel, leaving only Saul and Jonathan armed.
- II. *[1] One day Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who carried his armor, “Come, let us go over to the Philistine garrison on the other side.” But he did not tell his father.*
  - A. Our story begins with Jonathan, without informing his father Saul, proposing to his armor-bearer to go to the Philistine garrison.
  - B. Saul meanwhile was encamped in Gibeah with around six hundred men, including Ahijah the priest. Nobody is aware that Jonathan left camp.
  - C. To reach the Philistine garrison, they had to navigate two rocky passes named Bozez and Seneh. One crag faced north toward Michmash, and the other faced south toward Geba.
- III. *[6] Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, “Come, let us go over to the garrison [fort] of these uncircumcised [barbarians / derogatory insult the Israelites used to use]. It may be that the LORD will work for us, for nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few.” [7] And his armor-bearer said to him, “Do all that is in your heart. Do as you wish. Behold, I am with you heart and soul.”*
  - A. **GOD**: Nothing can hinder what the Lord wants to do...
  - B. **BAP**: Confidence in the Lord; confidence in faith; confidence in leadership;
- IV. *[8] Then Jonathan said, “Behold, we will cross over to the men, and we will show ourselves to them. [9] If they say to us, ‘Wait until we come to you,’ then we will stand still in our place, and we will not go up to them. [10] But if they say, ‘Come up to us,’ then we will go up, for the LORD has given them into our hand. And this shall be the sign to us.”*
  - A. Jonathan and his armor-bearer decided to confront the Philistine garrison, believing the Lord could grant them victory regardless of their small size. They devised a plan: if the Philistines invited them up, it would be a sign from the Lord.

- B. If you think, “Wow, Jonathan is very different from his dad,” then you are quite astute. That’s kind of the point. Jonathan had the right kind of heart, but b/c of his dad’s disobedience the kingdom will never come into his hands.
- V. *[11] So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. And the Philistines said, “Look, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves.” [12] And the men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor-bearer and said, “Come up to us, and we will show you a thing.” And Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, “Come up after me, for the LORD has given them into the hand of Israel.” [13] Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, and his armor-bearer after him. And they fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer killed them after him. [14] And that first strike, which Jonathan and his armor-bearer made, killed about twenty men within as it were half a furrow’s length in an acre of land. [15] And there was a panic in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. The garrison and even the raiders trembled, the earth quaked, and it became a very great panic.*
- A. When they revealed themselves, the Philistines beckoned them to come closer. Jonathan, trusting that this was an answer to prayer and the sign he asked. He attacks...And... Nothing can hinder what the Lord wants to do!
- B. God is on the move here, but now we see his hand in the supernatural:
1. It's crazy enough that he killed 20 men, but look... There was PANIC:
    - a) In the camp... in the field... among all the people
  2. Beyond that, there is a supernatural DREAD that is falling on the people
    - a) The garrison shudders... the raiders tremble... the earth quakes
  3. The end result of this? A very great panic. God is on the move!
- VI. *[16] And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude was dispersing here and there. [17] Then Saul said to the people who were with him, “Count and see who has gone from us.” And when they had counted, behold, Jonathan and his armor-bearer were not there. [18] So Saul said to Ahijah, “Bring the ark of God here.” For the ark of God went at that time with the people of Israel. [19] Now while Saul was talking to the priest, the tumult in the camp of the Philistines increased more and more. So Saul said to the priest, “Withdraw your hand.” [20] Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and went into the battle...*
- A. Meanwhile, as the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin observed, they see the Philistine multitude scattering in confusion.
- B. Saul realizes that someone from camp is fighting and does a quick census before realizing that Jonathan and his armor-bearer are missing.
- C. He instructs Ahijah to bring the ark of God to ask of the Lord (to cast lots & see if they should help), but as all of this is happening, the commotion escalates.
- D. Halfway through inquiring of the Lord, Saul halts the priest, and he and his men join the battle.
- E. As they draw near the Philistines, they see a crazy sight - the Philistines have turned on each other in the chaos, and Hebrews who had previously sided with them switched allegiance to join Saul and Jonathan's forces.
- F. Additionally, Israelite men who had been hiding pop out of the ground like gophers and they join the fight as well

- G. I guess they didn't even need to come...
- H. Let's think for a moment about Jonathan:
  1. He knows what is TRUE: (1) God wants to use his family to save Israel, (2) Nothing can hinder what the Lord wants to do
  2. In light of what he knows, he takes action → that's a good leader
- I. I wonder how many of us:
  1. Know who God is (his TRUE character)
  2. Know what God wants (what is TRUE) → e.g. the nations
  3. Ask God if and how we should act (what we should DO)
  4. And then actually do it... Inaction?
  5. Or, do you just not even think before you act? What does that look like?

VII. *[24] The men of Israel had been hard-pressed that day, so Saul had laid an oath on the people, saying, "Cursed be the man who eats food until it is evening, and I am avenged on my enemies." So none of the people had tasted food.*

- A. While Jonathan was getting ready to kick some Philistine butt, Saul had been pacing around the camp panicking.
- B. You can almost picture the scene from a movie: the commander storms around his tent, smacking his wine cup off the table, yelling at his generals, and complaining about how no one has the courage or ability to kill the enemy.
- C. Finally, in a fit of frustration, like a toddler, Saul makes a rash oath forbidding them from eating, under threat of a curse, until he defeats his enemies
- D. As the people passed through a forest, they discovered honey on the ground, but despite its abundance, no one dared to eat it out of fear of the oath.
- E. Unaware of the oath, Jonathan tasted the honey and found his strength renewed.
- F. When the soldiers filled him in, Jonathan lamented, realizing that the victory over the Philistines could have been even greater if the men had been allowed to eat

VIII. *[31] They struck down the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. And the people were very faint. [32] The people pounced on the spoil and took sheep and oxen and calves and slaughtered them on the ground. And the people ate them with the blood. [33] Then they told Saul, "Behold, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood." And he said, "You have dealt treacherously; roll a great stone to me here." [34] And Saul said, "Disperse yourselves among the people and say to them, 'Let every man bring his ox or his sheep and 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 them there. [35] And Saul built an altar to the LORD, the first altar he built to the LORD.*

- A. When they finally finish attacking the Philistines, the people are ravenous - like animals... literally
- B. They pounce on the livestock, kill them, and eat them raw, consuming the food with blood, which was a violation of the Law (Leviticus 17:10-14).
- C. Some come and complain to Saul, but let's be honest - this is kind of his fault!
- D. Regardless, he sets up for the priests to perform sacrifices to repent // good

IX. Saul's not done yet - he still has Philistines to kill. He wants to attack at night. *[36] Then Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night and plunder them until the*

*morning light; let us not leave a man of them.” And they said, “Do whatever seems good to you.” But the priest said, “Let us draw near to God here.”*

- A. The priest reminds him...
- X. *[37] And Saul inquired of God, “Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will you give them into the hand of Israel?” But he did not answer him that day.*
  - A. This bothers Saul and he starts wondering why God isn’t answering. So he assumes that God must be silent for some sin
- XI. *[38] And Saul said, “Come here, all you leaders of the people, and know and see how this sin has arisen today. [39] For as the LORD lives who saves Israel, [even if] it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die.”*
  - A. This is Saul’s second rash vow of the day.
  - B. 1st → Don’t eat || 2nd → Even if my son is the cause of sin I will kill him
  - C. So Saul starts praying and the priest casts lots to see who is to blame and, sure enough, it lands on Jonathan
- XII. *[43] Then Saul said to Jonathan, “Tell me what you have done.” And Jonathan told him, “I tasted a little honey with the tip of the staff that was in my hand. Here I am; I will die.” [44] And Saul said, “God do so to me and more also; you shall surely die, Jonathan.”*
  - A. Jonathan is ready. Saul is ready. Saul is legit going to kill his son.
  - B. What’s his deal? Is he concerned with saving face? With sin?
- XIII. Well, the people step in and defend Jonathan (how embarrassing!) *[45] Then the people said to Saul, “Shall Jonathan die, who has worked this great salvation in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day.” So the people ransomed Jonathan, so that he did not die.*
  - A. The people are the voice of reason here, not Saul.
  - B. They realize this is a ridiculous situation and if Saul had not been rash then he wouldn’t have made a vow, and if he hadn’t been rash he wouldn’t have been so quick to want to kill his son. And, God wouldn’t want your “child sacrifice!”
  - C. The whole situation is weird, and it underscores Saul’s weak character
- XIV. CONCLUSION
  - A. What question is the author answering, or what point is he trying to make? **The crack in Saul’s kingly foundation continues to spread → prepping us for David**
  - B. **His insecurity, his weak faith, and his poor understanding of truth lead to bad decisions and rash actions, not that different from another historical figure**
  - C. Jephthah was the son of Gilead and a prostitute. Despite initially being rejected by his half-brothers, he became a mighty warrior. When the Ammonites threatened the Israelites, the elders of Gilead sought Jephthah’s leadership and his gang to help them. He was a thug, an illegitimate son with anger issues. Jephthah agreed to lead them and **vowed** to God that if he were victorious in battle, he would **sacrifice** the first thing that greeted him upon his return home.
    - 1. Well, Jephthah achieved victory in battle, but tragically, the first thing to greet him upon his return was his only daughter, who ran out to meet him.
    - 2. Distraught but bound by his vow, Jephthah fulfilled his oath, and his daughter spent a period of mourning before her life was sacrificed.

3. Both of these stories (Jephthah and Saul) are stories of **Rash Arrogance and Weak Theology**
  4. In Jephthah's case, God had sent Israel to kill the Ammonites in large part because they were guilty of sacrificing their children to their false god!
  5. Jephthah essentially does the same thing, treating God as no different from Molech
  6. If Jephthah had a little understanding and not just a lot of chutzpah, he might have realized that God would take no pleasure in such a sacrifice.
    - a) Jephthah believed (falsely), didn't ask God for wisdom, and then acted rashly before (vow) and after (sacrifice)
- D. Compare Jonathan and Saul
1. What is TRUE? Nothing can hinder what God wants to do, and God wanted to use their family to defeat the Philistines
  2. What should they DO?
    - a) Jonathan believed, asked God, and acted on that belief
    - b) Saul didn't believe, didn't ask, and then acted rashly
  3. Herein lies the flaw in Saul's character: He is not a man of faith, so he doesn't take God at his Word, and he doesn't ask God for wisdom, and then when he does act he doubts or acts rashly
- E. *James 1:5–8, [5] If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. [6] But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. [7] For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; [8] he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*
1. Do you lack wisdom? Ask God in faith without doubting
    - a) This means you believe God will tell/show you what to do and you will act regardless of the odds
  2. Jonathan could have asked and then panicked, frozen in indecision
  3. That's what Saul did. He started to ask the priest, then stopped. He doubted and made a vow. He panicked and figured he should kill his heir
  4. Don't be like Saul.
    - a) Saul acted without asking
    - b) Saul didn't act when God was clear
    - c) Saul was double-minded, unstable in all his ways
- F. Three self-assessment questions. When you are in a situation (maybe now):
1. **Have I asked?**
    - a) So many act without involving God (jobs, relationships, decisions)
  2. **Am I asking in faith, willing to act on whatever God says?**
    - a) Sometimes we ask, already knowing what we want to hear, and then ask again when we don't like the answer (re: black sheet)
  3. **Now that God has spoken, what are you waiting for? Obey.**
    - a) Example: Church planting
- G. Difficult decision on the horizon? **Truth. Ask. Believe. Obey.**