

Jonathan Leads the Armies – 1 Samuel 14:1-52

Introduction:

Saul is the newly appointed king of Israel. The people wanted to have a military leader as king, but when the Philistines attack, all the people run and hide. Saul is unable to rally the troops and unite the people. He tries to act as priest, offering sacrifices on behalf of the people, but this only causes Samuel to walk out on him as well. It also costs him the kingship. Chapter 13 ends with Saul in a desperate situation: he only has six hundred men who stick with him against an army too big to be numbered, and only he and his son have weapons. Things could not get much worse.

Yet when things are at their worst this is where God shines forth the brightest! One person seems to have faith big enough to save a nation. He knows God is bigger than any foe the nation will face. Saul is not that man, which is sad, for God desired this kind of man to be king. Today's lesson introduces us to one who had the heart to be a king, but he did not have the calling. Nonetheless, God will use him to bring a great victory for Israel. Who is this man? Jonathan, the son of Saul.

A Faith-fueled Raid – 1 Samuel 14:1-15

1. What plan does Jonathon propose? (v. 1) How many men will he take with him? What do you think about Jonathan's plan?
2. Where is Saul when Jonathan decides to go on his excursion? (v. 2) Who is with him? Why is this important?
3. What does Saul think of Jonathan's plan? (vss. 1-2)
4. Verses 4-5 describe the access to the Philistine garrison. How easy would it be to go "check out" the enemy's camp?
5. In what way is the faith of Jonathan revealed in verse 6?

6. How supportive is the armour bearer of Jonathan (v. 7)? How important is it to find people who will stand with you no matter what?
7. What was “the plan” (vs. 8-10)? What will be the sign that God was going before them?
8. Jonathan and his armour bearer reveal themselves to the Philistine sentinels. How do the Philistines respond to Jonathan (v. 11)?
9. What invitation do the Philistines give to Jonathan (v. 12)? What does this indicate to Jonathan?
10. Verse 13 describes a very difficult ascent to get to the Philistines – which may account for their arrogance. Yet what happens when Jonathan and the armour bearer reach the sentinels (vss. 13-14)?
11. What happens within the main camp of the Philistines when word gets out the Israelites are fighting back (v. 15)? How does God add to the confusion and terror in the camp (v. 15)?

Saul Rallies His Troops – 1 Samuel 14”16-23

12. What did Saul’s watchmen see, much to their surprise (v. 16)?
13. What does Saul do in verse 17? Why?
14. What does Saul start to do in verse 18? Why?
15. Does Saul carry out his attempt to seek God in this battle (v. 19)? What changes his mind?
16. Saul leads the few soldiers who stayed with him into battle. What did they discover (v. 20)? What other advantage does Saul’s army gain according to verse 21? Finally, who else joins in the battle in support of Saul (v. 22)?
17. Verse 23 gives us an important message. What message is it? What was God teaching the nation through all this?

Saul's Foolishness – 1 Samuel 14:24-30

18. What might be the purpose of the oath Saul made as his troops were fighting the Philistines (v. 24)?
19. What temptation was set before the people as they entered the forest (vss. 25-26)? How did the people respond? Why?
20. What did Jonathan do as he entered the forest (v. 27)? Why does he act differently from the other soldiers? What was the result of Jonathan's actions to his own health?
21. Jonathan is informed about the oath his father made. What does Jonathan think about this command (vss. 29-30)? What consequence was there because of what Saul said?

More Consequences – 1 Samuel 14:31-46

22. The troops fought all day, and were very tired at the end of the day. What did the people do in response to their great hunger (v. 32)?
23. It is reported that the people are sinning against the Lord (v. 33) as they were eating the blood with the meat (cf. Deuteronomy 12:23). What is Saul's solution (v. 34)?
24. What does Saul do according to verse 35? Why is this important?
25. What does Saul want to do according to verse 36? What is the advice of the priest?
26. What happens when Saul asks God if he should attack the Philistines further (v. 37)?
27. What does Saul conclude when God does not answer him (v. 38)? What is Saul willing to do (v. 39)? What does the people know (and we know) that Saul does not? What do they say?

28. In verses 40-42 we find Saul casting lots to see who sinned. Who ends up being the guilty party (v. 42)? What terrible sin did Jonathan commit (v. 43)? What is Jonathan willing to do? What does this tell us about Jonathan?
29. What is Saul willing to do (v. 44)? What does this say about Saul?
30. How do the people respond to what Saul wants to do (v. 45)? What do they conclude? What does it mean “they ransomed Jonathan”?
31. What does Saul do now that the people have sided with Jonathan (v. 46)? Was this a good strategy?
32. Would this be the last time Saul would face the Philistines (cf. v. 52)?

Conclusion:

In this chapter, Saul is seen to make several blunders, from sitting inactive with the enemy all around him, to attempting to kill his own son, the hero of the battle. In many ways, Jonathan appears to be a much more capable leader than his father: he is brave, God fearing and respected/loved by the people. However, Jonathan will never be king, because of Saul’s sin (cf. 1 Samuel 13:14). A new leader will rise up, one who is brave, God fearing and commands the respect/love of the people.

Our chapter ends with Saul looking for brave, strong men who could fight by his side in the battle against the Philistines. This is the open door through which God will lead a new man, one after God’s own heart. But before we are introduced to this new leader, Saul’s future will be determined. He will be utterly rejected by God, opening doors for evil spirits to torment him. How sad it is when a person chooses to go his or her own way instead of God’s way. That is Saul’s story.