



1 Samuel 12-14

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By Chuck Smith

CHAPTER 12

The children of Israel had demanded that Samuel appoint them a king like the other nations. This came as a personal affront to Samuel and hurt him very deeply. He accepted it as a personal rejection of him by the people. Samuel took it to the LORD in prayer. God told him that they had not really rejected him, but had rejected God from ruling over them. God told him to listen to the people and appoint them a king.

So then Saul was introduced into the scene. God tells Samuel that Saul is the one that has been chosen to be king over Israel. So Samuel gathers the people together and they had the tribes pass by. The tribe of Benjamin was taken. When they had the tribe of Benjamin pass by, the family of Kish was taken. When that family passed by, they chose Saul. They found him hiding among the luggage and brought him over. Samuel then proclaimed, "Here is your king!" And the people said, "*God save the King!*" But others said, "Why should he be king? Why should Saul be the chosen?"

Then Nahash, the Ammonite, came against the men of Jabesh-gilead with his armies. The men of Jabesh-gilead sent out messengers and said, "Look, we don't want to fight you. Let's have a treaty and we will pay you tribute." Nahash agreed to a treaty providing that they could gouge out the right eye of every man. So the men of Jabesh-gilead said, "Wait a minute, let us have seven days to think it over." Then they sent messages concerning this horrendous price for a treaty. When Saul heard this, he took the yoke for the oxen that he had been plowing with, and cut them in pieces. Then he sent the pieces throughout Israel and said, "*So shall the man's oxen be cut to pieces, who does not respond to the call.*"

So a vast number of men gathered with Saul, and with a marched attack, they came against the men of Nahash from Ammon. They defeated him thoroughly. The people were excited and said, "*Where are those who were saying, 'Shall Saul rule over us?'*" They were ready to now proclaim him as king. Samuel then called all of the people to come to Gilgal to have a coronation of Saul as king.

So this gathering that we have in chapter 12, in Gilgal, is for the purpose of reaffirming the kingdom and having a coronation for Saul as king over Israel. So in verse 15 of the previous chapter:

And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed the sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly. [So it was a great gala celebration.]

So Samuel now addresses the people, and this is pretty much his swan song. It is obvious that he is no longer to have the position of leader over the people of God. He humbly steps down that Saul might now assume the position of king over Israel. This is Samuel's last public message to the people of Israel. He is defending himself. He seemed to be quite sensitive that they rejected Samuel and took this rather personally. So he shows it in his final speech as he talks to the people of the kingdom that they have desired.

Samuel said to all of Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that you have said unto me, and have made a king over Israel. And now, behold, the king is walking before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my

childhood unto this day.

This is sort of the end of the career for Samuel. You remember that when he was just weaned, he was brought by his mother according to her covenant with God. He was placed there with Eli in the temple of God. There, he began ministering in the temple, doing errands. He was just a little errand boy, dressed in linen ephod, going around the temple and attending to the temple rituals. Now he is an old gray-haired man. All of his life he had walked before the people and before the LORD, being faithful and true. He said:

Witness against me this day before the LORD, and before his anointed: [Saul] whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or who have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it to you. And they said, You have not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither have you taken ought of any man's hand. And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.

So Samuel is again affirming the fact that he was fair and honest in his leadership. He wanted them to testify to that, and they did. He could have received, and rightfully so, wages from the people but he did not. As we saw earlier, he was a sort of a circuit riding preacher. He would go to Bethel, to Gilgal, and to Shiloh in a circuit ministry. Yet, he did not charge the people.

This was much like Nehemiah when he came back to build the walls of Jerusalem. The others who had come and done the work had received salary and wages, but Nehemiah refused, though he could have taken it. He didn't want to be chargeable to the people. So Samuel has them bear witness.

And then Samuel said unto the people, It is the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt.

He is going to give them a brief synopsis of their history within the proper setting and life. He is going to show them the place of God in their history. I think that it is always good for us to see the place of God in your history. The history of the United States: what a tremendous place God had in the history and birth in this nation. I highly recommend to you the book, *The Light and the Glory*. You'll never find it taught in the public schools, but it is a very clear and accurate research of the history of the birth of our nation. A new book has just come out on the same subject, but I forgot the name. Again, it is showing the place of God in the development in the founding of our nation. It is tragic when we forget that. It is tragic when we misinterpret our history and we begin to attribute our greatness to something other than God. We begin to attribute our greatness to a free democracy, or to a free enterprise system, or some other sick thing. We owe our greatness to God. It was the fact that our forefathers were looking to God for wisdom and guidance in the founding in this nation. Thus, Samuel is seeking out the place of God in their history.

It was the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. Now therefore stand still, that I might reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which He did to you and to your fathers. ["Just listen to me for a while. I want to tell you everything that the LORD has done. I want to show you the place of the LORD in our history."] When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place. And when they forgot the LORD their God, he sold them into the hands of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. And we cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve you. And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, [probably Barak] and Jephthah, and

Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you dwelled safely. And when you saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, you said unto me, No; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king.

They did have a Theocracy where God was King. But they wanted a Monarchy. They wanted a man that they could look at. They wanted to be like the other nations. So it was a tragic time in their history, moving in a downward movement from a Theocracy to a Monarchy. They forsook the LORD from being their King, and now had a man, Saul, as their king.

Now therefore behold the king whom you have chosen, and whom you have desired! and, behold, the LORD has set a king over you. [‘So here he is. This is the man that you wanted and desired.’] If you will fear the LORD, and serve Him, and obey His voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both you and also the king that reigns over you continue following the LORD your God:

In other words: be obedient still to God, keep His commandments and follow Him. The whole purpose of God was for Saul to be God’s instrument in leading the people, that he would be submitted to the LORD so that his reign would actually represent what God desired for the nation.

You see, no man can really rule who is not ruled. You’ve got a tyrant. There is a chain of authority. When Jesus was coming to the house of the centurion to heal his servant, the centurion said: *“It is not necessary that you come to my house: I understand authority, because I have authority. I am under authority, and I have authority. I say to one man, Go, and he goes; to another I say, Come and he comes; I know you have authority, all you have to do is say the word, and my servant will be healed.”* Here the centurion expressed what authority is really all about. “I am under authority and I have under me, men.” There is a chain of authority. Now this chain of authority should never stop until you get to God.

You husbands who say, “I’m the boss of this home!” -- God help your home. “You’ve got to listen to me. You’ve got to obey me. I am the man of the house, the boss.” Here you’ve got an intolerable situation. You can only exercise authority as you are under authority. Unless you recognize God as the authority over you, then you cannot adequately exercise authority within your home. When Paul said, *“Wives, be in subjection under you own husbands, as unto the Lord;”* you see, Paul said for the husband to be the head of the wife, as Christ is the head over the husband. A husband who is not under the Lordship of Christ cannot really have lordship over his family and exercise it properly. I will also go so far as to say that if a husband is not under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, then the wife often has to jump from his authority, to the authority of the Lord. Since the Lord’s authority over her is higher and greater than her husbands, she can only be subjected under her husband as he is in subjection unto the Lord. Being the husband doesn’t make you the ruler of the house. What does is being under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Don’t forget that. Always exercise your authority with that consciousness that you are under the authority of the Lord.

Saul was to be the king, but the Lord was to be over Saul.

Fear the LORD, and serve Him, and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandments of the LORD, then both you and your king that reigns over you will continue following the LORD your God: [In their history, when the people turned away from God, they were conquered by their enemies. When they served the LORD, He gave them victories over their enemies] But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers. Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes. Is not today the day of wheat harvest? I’m going to call unto the LORD, and He’s going to send thunder and rain; that you may perceive and see that your

wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king. [He wanted them to realize that this was a great sin. He impressed it upon them.]

Now during the time of the wheat harvest, the rainy season is over. They just don't get much rain at all after April. "This is the first day of wheat harvest, and God's going to show you something, to demonstrate to you that what you have done is a grievous sin against God: I am going to ask Him to send thunder and rain."

So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all of the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we do not die: for we have added unto all of our sins this evil, to ask us a king.

Here is their confession. Notice there wasn't any repentance. "Please ask God to not kill us." But there wasn't any repentance or renouncing of Saul. They didn't say, "Well, we will take God as our king. We'll go back." There are a lot of times when people acknowledge what they have done wrong, but there is no repentance with it. How important that there is repentance with the acknowledgment of sin. Unless there is repentance, there is no real change.

So Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: you have done this wickedness: yet don't turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; and turn not aside: for then should you go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain.

Notice, when people turn aside from God, they turn to vain or empty things. Have you ever noticed what stupid things people do when they turn aside from God? Brilliant men who have turned aside from God can get caught up with all kinds of weird beliefs. Standing on their heads, or hanging on their heels; and I've seen them do both. They are trying something to satisfy that inner gnawing and thirst. The Bible tells us in Thessalonians that when people reject the truth, *God allows them to be deluded. When they have not the love of the truth, God will bring them into a delusion; where they will believe a lie rather than the truth.*

God created man to worship. Built within each man, there is a worship drive. I've got to worship something. Now, when I don't satisfy that drive in worshipping God, I'll worship something like my dog. Have you ever seen dog worshippers? I have. People will even worship their Porsche. I have a fellow in my neighborhood who worships his little car. He had his name on its plate. So it really is just a projection of himself. He is out there with a dust cloth everyday. He only drives it on certain occasions, because he had a car that he drives usually. The drive to worship is within us, and if we don't worship God, we'll worship all kinds of strange things. You are driven to worship. Something within drives you to worship. We can't help ourselves. We've got to worship.

So Samuel warns them not to turn aside from worshipping the LORD, because they will begin to worship vain things that cannot profit nor deliver. They can't help you when you are in trouble. Hey, when you're really in trouble: pray to your dog and see how much help he will be to you. These vain things cannot deliver you when you are really in need. They are just vain.

When Jeremiah was called of God to prophecy to Israel, God said that *His people had committed two evils; the first one was forsaking Him the fountain of living waters, they have hewn out for themselves broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*

In the Holy Land, because it is such an arid area, they depend a lot on cisterns for their water supply.

Cisterns are huge caverns that have been chipped out of the rock. The rain water is diverted into these huge caverns. They have a whole on the top, like a well, and you let your bucket down to pull the water out. In time, by the end of summer, the water has wiggled tails and everything else in it, because it is nothing but a cistern or reservoir.

Here, God, “the fountain of living water,” which means running water, an artesian spring, an ever fresh source and supply; God says, “*They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters.*” But you can’t be without [worship:] or water. So they carve out [cisterns:] philosophies, ideas, or concepts. God calls these “*broken cisterns that can’t hold water.*” So they live by some philosophy that can’t hold water, some kind of concept that can’t hold water. The worship of God is essential to keep you from foolishness.

For the LORD will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake: because it has pleased the LORD to make you His people.

Now that, to me, is a thrilling thing. I am a part of God’s people because it pleases the LORD to make me so. It pleases the LORD to make you His people. I love that. Jesus said, “*You didn’t choose me, I chose you, and ordained you, that you shall be my disciples.*” Paul says that you were “*chosen in Him before the foundation of the earth.*” We are here tonight because God was pleased to make us His people. How that thrills me. God chose that I should be one of His people.

Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:

Now, they had said to him, “Hey, we have sinned: and added this wickedness by asking for a king; but don’t stop praying for us.” It is interesting that Samuel was known as a man of prayer. Actually, he was born as a result of prayer. His mother Hannah was there in the temple with great bitterness because she was barren. The priest thought she was drunk and ordered her to get rid of her booze. She told him that she had not drunken anything. Her heart was heavy because she was seeking a child from the LORD. The priest said, “*Go your way, and may God grant you your petition.*” So she had a child, and she called him Samuel, which means ‘asked of God.’ So there is even prayer within his name, ‘asked of God,’ early when he was weaned and brought to the temple, where he began to minister unto the LORD.

In Psalm 99:6, the Psalmist speaks about Moses and Aaron as priests, and Samuel who stood before the LORD in prayer. So when the Psalmist wants to give examples of a man of prayer, he turns to Samuel. When he wants to give an example of priests, he turns to Moses and Aaron. In Jeremiah it says, “*Though Moses and Samuel would stand before Me: for these people, I cannot listen to them.*” But God, in choosing a man of prayer, He chooses Samuel and the prophet Jeremiah.

The fact that Samuel said, “*God forbid that I should cease praying for you,*” shows that he had been praying for them all the while. Samuel was a man of prayer. In saying, “sin,” he is referring to the sin of prayerlessness. “If I should cease to pray, it would be a sin against the LORD.” Why? Because the LORD commands us to pray, the Lord encourages us to pray. And not to follow this command is a sin against the Lord.

God forbid that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth will all your heart: for consider how great things he has done for you. [“Remember the great things that God has done in your life. Serve the LORD with all of your heart. Fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth.”] But if you shall still do wickedly, you shall be consumed, both you and your king.

So here is a warning. Whenever God warns you about anything, you better listen. Many times we think that the warning of God is not necessary. "Lord, I know that, --who doesn't?" We sometimes chide God because He warns us about a certain thing. Watch out! In that every thing that God warned you, is usually the place where you still stumble. God doesn't warn us needlessly, though sometimes we may think so. God knows us better than we know ourselves. Whenever God warns you, you better pay attention. *"For if you do wickedly, you will be destroyed, and your king will be consumed."*

CHAPTER 13

Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, [so we passed a year quite quickly all within one verse] Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

So the rest of the people were 'business as usual' back in their different villages. Saul, for the first time, had a standing army. A thousand under his leadership, and a thousand under Jonathan. And here is how the story goes:

Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet through out all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear. And all Israel heard say that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, --

So here is Jonathan out doing the fighting, and Saul is blowing the trumpet. But all the people hear that Saul is out destroying the Philistines. He is taking glory for another man's work. And this is, of course, involved with a bit of pride. A man who started out so humble begins to develop the dreaded thing of pride. One of the seven things that God hates is a proud look, or haughty spirit. The Scriptures warn us that *"pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."* A man who started out in such deep humility, gets a taste of glory and adulation, then he begins to feed on it. *"So Jonathan smote a garrison of the Philistines at Geba, and Saul blew the trumpet in Israel. So all of Israel heard that Saul had smitten the Philistines."*

--and that Israel also had in abomination with the Philistines. [Or was held by the Philistines as an abomination] And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.

So having the Philistines' garrison at Geba, having been smitten by Jonathan, the Philistines were going to retaliate and seek to wipe out Israel. So the two nations are preparing for war. So Saul calls the people of Israel to gather at Gilgal and assemble so that they might face the Philistine army.

And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven.

So Saul called the men of Israel to come to Gilgal, and the Philistines gathered a tremendous army with thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen. *"The sand as in the sea:"* means that there were so many that you couldn't count them. There were more than you can count of hosts of infantry.

When the men of Israel saw [the Philistine army, they realized] that they were in a strait, (the people were distressed,) then the people hid themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. [They saw that the Philistines had a real tremendous army.] And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the

people followed him trembling. [This was an awesome, fearsome scene. The Philistines with these chariots were like tanks. The children of Israel were defenseless against these chariots.] He tarried for seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from Saul.

Now Samuel had said to Saul, “Look, I’ll be there in Gilgal in seven days.” He, no doubt, sent out an SOS to Samuel. Seven days came and Samuel had not shown up yet. The people were beginning to scatter.

And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him. And Samuel said, What have you done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: so I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

Now Saul was not a priest. He had no business offering a sacrifice to the LORD, not being a priest. This was the duty of the Levites, they were the priestly tribe. He had no right to approach God, even being the king. He did not have the authority to offer a sacrifice. Saul was intruding in an area where God did not call him.

Now, we remember Saul was to be proclaimed the king of Israel, but he hid himself. We pointed out the folly of trying to hide from the call of God. When God has called you to a task and you try to hide from it, we call that folly. It is equally foolish to venture into a task for which God has not called you. God did not call Saul into the priesthood, and for him to enter into that area was just as much folly as it was to try to escape the call of God.

I’m afraid that a lot of people today are serving the LORD out of pressure. Not because of a calling, but because of the pressure to do certain things for God. If you are doing things under pressure, you are not comfortable with it, and you are resenting it, this is not good for you. We should not do anything that God has not called you to do.

Saul was offering a lame excuse. He did develop into a man with a lot of excuses. Quite often they were religious kind of excuses, as we will see soon. *“The Philistines were there, and you didn’t show up. So I forced myself to offer a burnt offering.”*

But Samuel said Saul, You have done foolishly: because you did not keep the commandment of the LORD your God, --

Whenever you fail to keep the commandment of the LORD your God, you’re acting foolishly: because God knows what’s good for us. Whenever I cross with God’s will, God’s Word, -- that is foolish. Because that is saying, “I know better than God in this situation.” It is foolish to think that I know better than God.

You have done foolishly: for you did not keep the commandment of the LORD your God, which he commanded you: for now would the LORD have established your kingdom upon Israel forever. [God would have perpetuated his family, the dynasty of Saul.] But now your kingdom shall not continue: the LORD has sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be captain over his people, because you have not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.

So, because of his disobedience and rejection of God from reigning over him, God has rejected him from ruling over the people. God is seeking a man after His own heart. He sought a man and anointed him. We know the story ahead, we know that David is that man after God's own heart. God chose him to be the captain over his people. So Saul was rejected, and from here on, its down hill for him.

An interesting thing about Saul: though God has now rejected him from being the king over Israel and anointed another one to be king, he will continue to stay on the throne. He will seek, by using force, to hold the throne and to overthrow God's anointed to keep him from the throne. He is holding on to that which is no longer his, seeking to drive out from the kingdom the man whose right it is.

We have much like that in the world today. You see, when Jesus died upon the cross, He has paid the price for the redemption of the world. It now technically belongs to Jesus. He bought, and paid the price in full. However, Satan continues to sit on the throne, and is doing his best, by force, to keep Jesus from reigning. But the day came when Saul was disposed, and David sat upon the throne. Even as the day that is not far from the future, which I trust and pray, Satan is destroyed; and then Jesus will take His rightful place and rule upon the throne over the earth. His kingdom will come, and His will is done here on earth, even as it is in heaven.

The Lord has rejected Saul and has sought a man after His own heart, commanding him to be captain.

And Samuel arose, and got up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six hundred men.

He had an army of three thousand, which meant that 2,400 were deserters. Of course, the best of the volunteers are gone too. Six hundred men to face thirty thousand chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and an innumerable infantry of the Philistines.

And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode there in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. And the spoilers came out of the camp of the of the Philistines in three divisions: one company turned into the way that leads to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual: and another company turned the way to Bethhoron: and another company turned to the way of the border that looks toward the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness. Now there was no smith found throughout all of the land of Israel: [blacksmith, that is] for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears: but all of the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his plow share, or coulter, or axe, or mattock. Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads. So it came to pass on the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but only Saul and Jonathan his son had spears. And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.

So here you have people from the iron age, with swords, spears and chariots: fighting against 600 hundred men equipped with only two spears and swords among the crowd. The rest of them had sticks, slings, sharp objects, or sharpened ox goads. What a mismatch: this vast army of the Philistines against this rag-tag group that is following Saul.

CHAPTER 14

Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man that

bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side. But he did not tell his father. And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron: and the people that were with him were about six hundred men; and Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone. [Jonathan and his armor bearer slipped out of the camp. Back in the camp, the grandson of Eli was there wearing the ephod of the high priest.] And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side, and on the other side: and the name of one was Bozez, and the other's name was Seneh. The forefront of the one was situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah.

So there is this pass that is there today: on the north side and on the south side, there are these two steep rock outcroppings. These jagged rocks go just about straight up. The passage goes between these two rocks, but those who are standing up on the rocks can easily defend the passage because of the advantage of the height shooting down at those coming through. This is where Jonathan is heading. This passage leads to the whole army of the Philistines who are over there with their chariots. He is heading towards Michmash in this passage that is guarded by the Philistines.

And Jonathan said to the young man that bore his armour, Come, and let us go over to the garrison of the uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.

"Come on, let's go over and see what God might want to do today. Who knows, maybe God might want to wipe out the Philistines. If God wants to wipe them out, He doesn't need the whole army. God can wipe them out using just one man as easily as he can the whole army." I love the logic of this because it is sound. You see, there is the proper understanding of the greatness of God: God really doesn't need a man to do his work, He doesn't need a multitude of men. God can work through one man who is committed and dedicated to Him. He doesn't need the whole army. It is no problem for God to work with many or with few. All we need is God to work.

It may be that God wants to work. How are you going to find out? You can only find out by venturing out in faith. Step out and see what God might want to do. I love to venture out in faith. To me it is exciting, and I do it all the time. I step out in faith to see what God might want to do. I love it. Sometimes I find out that God doesn't want to do anything, and that's all right. Then there are those exciting times when God does want to do something. Man, that is always exciting to see God work. But you have to make yourself available: "Lord, here I am. Do You want to work today? Let's go for it. If not, that's all right too. But Lord, I am available in case You want to work."

And Jonathan was just going over on the possibility: 'It may be that God might want to work; let's go over and see.' He realized that if God was with him, he could wipe out the whole army of the Philistines by himself -- as long as God was with him. As Paul said to the Romans, "*If God be for us, then who can be against us?*" Oh, that we might realize the full implication of that. If God is for you, then who can be against you?

So the armourbearer said unto him, Do all that is in your heart: behold, I am with you according to all that is in your heart. ['Hey, that's the kind of friend I am. You seem to be crazy: go for it. I'll go with you. Do what's in your heart, and I'll go along.' I like that.] Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto these men, and we will discover ourselves unto them. ["We will let them discover us."] If they say thus to us, Hey you guys wait down there; and we will stand in our place, and we'll not go up to them. [In other words, "We will search for the alternate plan."] But if they say to us,

Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD has delivered them into our hand: and this shall be a sign to us.

So they set out sort of a fleece before the LORD: “We will go there, and if the guys say, ‘Hey, wait there; we’ll come down,’ then we will take appropriate action. If the guys say, ‘Hey, come on up here;’ then we will know that God is going to deliver them into our hands. That will be the sign, and we will go for it: we know that God is going to deliver them into our hands.”

So both of them were discovered by the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews are coming out of their holes where they have hid themselves. [They were making fun of Jonathan and his armour bearer.] And the men of the garrison said to Jonathan and his armourbearer, Come up to us, and we will show you a thing or two. And Jonathan said unto his armour bearer, Come up after me: for the LORD has delivered them into the hand of Israel. And Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, --

These cliffs are so sheer that it will take an expert rock climber to get up them. I’ve watched these guys climb up the face of a cliff, putting the resin on their hands. They are so careful that they get that hold with their fingers, and then they work around their foot. Then they pull themselves up one. I’ve watched them and it’s fascinating to me. I don’t want to do it, but it is interesting just to watch.

And Jonathan and his armour bearer must have been pretty skilled rock climbers. If you look at that cliff that they scaled to get into the garrison of the Philistines, you could think them to be experts. And Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet. The climb up these rocks must have been enough to just wear a person out. By the time that they got up there they would have been exhausted.

The Philistines fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him.

In other words, Jonathan had a rod and he was knocking the guys over with it. And the armour bearer is coming behind, going through with a spear. So you can see the action going on here. Jonathan is knocking the guys over, and this guy is coming along doing them in. They are starting to wipe out this Philistine garrison that’s on the top of the rock there.

That first slaughter, [the initial contact] which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, they killed about twenty of the Philistines, within about a half acre of ground, which a yoke of oxen can plow. [In a half a day.] And there was trembling in the host, of the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling.

Now, if the LORD is in it, then we can do it. Now the LORD demonstrates that He is in it: He begins to shake the place. There is a tremendous earthquake and things begin to shake. What it does is it begins to terrify the armies of the Philistines. Now what if Jonathan had never gone? One man in cooperation with God can turn the tide. God only needs one man in cooperation with him. He can turn the tide of evil that’s flowing over our nation today. Oh, may God raise up that man.

And the watchman of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another. [God thrust them through, and the Philistines begin to fight with each other: and they were wiping each other out.] Then said Saul unto the people that were with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armourbearer were not there. And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God. For the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel. And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise of the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said unto the priest,

Withdraw thine hand. [The guy was going to try and get an answer whether or not to go, but Saul said that they did not have time for that.] *So Saul and all the people that were with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture. Moreover the Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time,* [Some of them said, "We're going to go with the winners;" so they had joined with the Philistines] *which went up with them into the camp from the country round about, even they also turned to be with the Israelites that were with Saul and Jonathan. Likewise all of the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines were fleeing, even they also followed hard after them in the battle.* [All of these guys that were hiding jump in to the fight when they see the tide's turning.] *So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Bethaven.* [The LORD saved Israel because Jonathan dared to venture in faith.] *The men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eats any food until evening, that I may be avenged on my enemies.*

Now this was a foolish vow: when Saul sees that the battle is going in Israel's favor, he announces the curse. Notice the pride: "Until I, Saul, is avenged of his enemies;" rather than - the LORD has defeated the enemies.

So none of the people tasted any food. And when they came to the woods; there was honey on the ground. And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey was dropping; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people were afraid of the oath. [The curse that Saul had made.] *But Jonathan heard not his father charge the people with the oath: so he put forth 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 eyes were enlightened.*

That means he was refreshed. They had been fighting all day and the blood sugar was getting low. They were getting tired and weary from chasing and fighting the Philistines. So when Jonathan got hold of some of that honey, that quick charge into the bloodstream refreshed him. He was ready to go again.

Then some of the people said, Your father strictly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man that eats any food this day. And all the people were fainting. Then Jonathan said, My father has troubled Israel: see, I pray you, how my eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey. How much better it would have been for the people if they had been able to eat freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines? [This was a foolish thing. It would have been much better if the men had been able to eat freely of the spoil. They would have had the strength to destroy a lot more of the Philistines if it had not been for that vow.] *So they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint. And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground: and the people started eating them with the blood.* [They didn't bother to drain the blood fully. They just started roasting the flesh and eating it.] *Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, You have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day. And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say to them, Bring here every man his ox, and sheep, and slay them here, and eat; and don't sin against the LORD in eating with the blood. And so all of the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew them there.* [They had a huge barbecue.] *And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built to the LORD. And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and let's spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them alive. And they said, Do what ever seems good to you. Then the priests said, Let us draw near hither to God.* [Or, "let's find out what God has to say about this."] *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 receive any*

answer. And Saul said, Draw close to me, all of the chief of the people: and let's know and see where this sin has been today. [God wasn't answering, so there must have been something wrong.] For, as the LORD liveth, which saved Israel, though it be Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But there was not a man among all the people that answered him. [Nobody would tell what Jonathan had done.] Then said he unto all Israel, Be you on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on one side. And the people did say to Saul, Do what seems good to you. Therefore Saul said to the LORD God of Israel, Give us a perfect lot. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped. And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. And it fell on Jonathan. Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what you have done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and, lo, I must die for that. And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for you shall surely die, Jonathan. And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who has wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he has wrought with God today. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.

Now again, this shows the rashness and folly of Saul: ready to put his son to death for this infraction because he violated - not God's Word, - but Saul's word. Though he didn't even know what his father had said, yet Saul was going to kill Jonathan (who had brought the victory to Israel.) Thank God the people had enough sense to stand up against Saul at this point. They rescued Jonathan from Saul's folly.

Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place. So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them. And he gathered a host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them. Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchishua: and the names of his two daughters were these; the name of the firstborn Merab, and the name of the younger was Michal: and the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host was Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. And Kish was the father of Saul; and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel. [Abner is the chief general, who was also Saul's cousin.] And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto himself. [He put them into his army and royal guard.]

We are beginning to get a profile of Saul. This profile is important, and I try to point it out as we go. He was a man who had all kinds of potential and possibilities. The possibilities for his success was tremendous. He was the most handsome guy in all of Israel, and he was bigger than anyone else as well. He came from a good home. With all of his good looks and size, Saul also had humbleness. All of this began to change: the power that was vested to him seemed to go to his head. We begin, already, to see manifestations of foolishness. Samuel said, *"You have done foolishly. You have intruded in an area where you have no business being."* Jonathan also said, *"Wow, dad really troubled Israel today."* The foolishness of wanting to carry out the vow lead to the destruction of his own son.

In the next chapter we will see real folly manifested. We will see the heart of his mistakes.

I would like to encourage you to take ventures in faith this week. Maybe God wants to work and all He needs is you. Just make yourself available. The world has yet to see what God can do through one man who is totally committed to God. May we commit ourselves to the work of God: venturing out in faith, and trusting in Him to do His work through us.