



“REASONS TO REJOICE”

*“Your Words were found, and I ate them,
and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” Jeremiah 15:16*

I and II SAMUEL

Lesson 7

In Lesson 6, Samuel reminds Saul that if he obeyed the Lord, he would be blessed, but if he didn't, he would be judged. Even though Saul was now the king of Israel, God was still in charge, and in order for him to prosper, Saul needed to follow the Lord. In the next three chapters we see Saul's true character revealed. He seemed to begin his reign as king in a humble fashion, but soon he was disqualified because of the attitude of his heart. He enters into sin, which ends up costing him the Kingdom. His pride began to interfere with God's will.

I pray that we pay close attention to the sins that Saul commits, and guard our own hearts against pride, envy, and partial disobedience.

First Day

- 1. Read chapters 13-15 together as a unit to get an overall picture of the story, then go back and concentrate on chapter 13. What is the main point of this chapter? Briefly summarize it in one or two sentences.*

Verse 1 is translated differently in various versions of the Bible. It is a little confusing as to what exactly this is referring to. Some translations write that Saul reigned over Israel 42 years. “The Hebrew text of I Samuel suffered in transmission, and the length of Saul's reign is not clear. Paul implied that it lasted 40 years (Acts 13:21). If Saul was 30 in I Samuel 11:1-12:25, then quite a few years have passed between chapters 12 and 13. Saul's oldest son has had time to grow up and become a commander of one of Saul's armies.” (The LifeChange Series) Although it is unclear exactly

how much time has passed, the writer seemed to have jumped immediately to this incident which led to God's rejection of Saul as king. This is an important step in the history of Israel and the reign of David as king.

2. *Who was responsible for the victory in Geba? Who took the credit? (I Samuel 13:1-4)*

3. *What sin causes someone to take credit for a victory that wasn't their own?*

Jonathan is Saul's oldest son (13:16). Although Jonathan was a very capable military leader, his father wanted to take the credit for his victory. Saul had allowed pride to set in and distort his perception. He seemed to have a problem with wanting to please and impress men instead of God. He cared too much about what he looked like in front of other people (I Samuel 15:24, 18:7-8). He literally began to toot his own horn!

4. *What does God's Word say about "tooting our own horn"? (Have you ever been guilty of this?)*

- a. Proverbs 25:27*
- b. Proverbs 27:2*
- c. Proverbs 25:6-7*
- d. 1 Peter 5:5-6*
- e. Jeremiah 9:23*

This victory angered the Philistines greatly. They rallied together to attack Israel. Find a good map of Israel and locate all the cities mentioned in this chapter to help you get a visual picture of what was happening.

5. *Read I Samuel 13:5-12. Why did Saul offer a burnt offering? What was he supposed to wait for?*

The Israelites became very fearful and began to hide in various places. Some even fled across the Jordan. Saul and his people seemed to

forget that they were supposed to depend on God. Saul grew impatient while waiting for Samuel to get there, who was still supposed to guide Saul in God's will. Only priests from the tribe of Levi were allowed to offer the sacrifices, and Saul either offered it himself or had someone else do it. Either way, to assume the role of a priest was strictly forbidden by God (Deuteronomy 12:5-14). Saul was supposed to be God's representative, but he acted directly against God's Word. Because he was under pressure from the approaching Philistines, he decided to disobey Samuel and the Lord and take matters into his own hands. This always ends in tragedy, doesn't it? We can't allow the pressure we feel in the situation to dictate our behavior.

- 6. What does God's Word say about patience? List any verses you find.*

- 7. Explain the phrase "the patience of Christ" in 2 Thessalonians 3:5. How is Christ an example of patience? (Hebrews 12:1-3)*

- 8. Have you ever stepped out and acted when God told you to wait? What was the result? Why is this so dangerous? What usually happens if we react under pressure, or allow our emotions to control our behavior?*

- 9. How do we develop patience? Read Galatians 5:22, 2 Peter 1:5-8.*

- 10. What was the reason Saul gave for his actions when he was confronted by Samuel? What do we call that?*

We will end here for today. Saul made some pretty foolish mistakes. Let's see if he redeems himself tomorrow.

Memory Verse of the Week: *“A man’s pride will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor.” Proverbs 29:23*

Second Day

Practice your memory verse. Ask the Lord to give you a humble spirit.

Saul turned God’s work into a personal battle. Unfortunately, this was the beginning of the end for Saul.

1. *Read chapter 13 again. Saul rationalized and denied his sin when he was confronted. Compare this to David’s response to sin in Psalm 32.*

2. *In spite of clear teaching in the Word of God, we often still rationalize our sin. Are you ever guilty of this? What does Proverbs 28:13 tell us to do?*

3. *What was Saul’s punishment? Why did he receive such a strict judgment?*

4. *Saul was attempting to approach God, but God was not pleased with his approach. How do people today try to do the same thing? What is the “acceptable” approach? (John 14:6)*

Even though Saul was handsome, tall, and popular, the spiritual qualifications for a leader were supposed to be the condition of his heart. The heart of man has always been what concerns the Lord (I Samuel 16:7).

After Samuel left Saul, only 600 men remained with the king (13:15). Besides having more men, the Philistines had more sophisticated weapons. The Israelites had to fight with slingshots and bows and arrows, because they had no iron weapons or any facilities for turning their tools into iron. The Philistines possessed the secret of melting iron. Iron was typically used for tools and weapons of attack, while bronze and the copper alloys were for defensive armor and objects that didn't need hardness and sharpness of edge and point. (Goliath's armor was bronze, but his spearhead was of iron (I Samuel 17:5-7).

If any Hebrew wanted to have his farming tools sharpened, he would have to pay a Philistine, and their prices were very high. The Philistines were closing in on them from all sides. They sent out "devastators" or "raiding parties"(vs 17) to plunder Israel's land. "The purpose of these Philistine contingents was not to engage the Israelites in battle, but to plunder the land and demoralize its inhabitants." (LifeChange Series)

5. Who were the only two Israelites with swords?

6. Why do you think God wanted Israel at a disadvantage?

The Philistines went out to the "pass of Michmash." Michmash was a town of Benjamin, east of Bethel, on the road to Jerusalem. This "pass" was a steep and precipitous path from Michmash to the city of Geba.

7. Read I Samuel 14. Briefly summarize this chapter. What is the main point? Who are the main characters?

We'll end here for today. Tomorrow we'll take a look at another sin that Saul commits. Like I said before, this is the beginning of the end for Saul.

Third Day

What's your memory verse? How does it apply to our lesson this week?

1. *Read I Samuel 14:1-23. What did Jonathan and his armor bearer decide to do?*

2. *Why do you think Jonathan "didn't" tell his dad his plan?*

The ephod (vs 3) was worn by the priest and was a distinctive part of the sacred dress of the Levitical priesthood. You can read a description of the ephod in Exodus 28. Ordinary priests wore a simpler linen ephod (I Samuel 22:18) as Samuel did as a child (I Samuel 2:18).

It was a smart move to travel between the narrow pass because the Israelites were at such a disadvantage without weapons and manpower. This would limit the amount of weapons that could be used. There was a sharp, high rock on each side of the pass that resembled hills. One was called Bozez, which means "shining," and the other was called Seneh, which means "the acacia."

Jonathan refers to the Philistines as the "uncircumcised" in verse 6. This was a term of reproach, calling them pagans.

3. *What do we know about Jonathan's character? Was he like his dad?*

4. *Explain Jonathan's battle plan. What happened? Why were the Philistines afraid?*

5. *Why wasn't Jonathan afraid of the Philistines? Who else showed this kind of courage in Numbers 13-14:10?*

God was not limited by the size of Jonathan's army, nor is He intimidated by the size of your problem! Jonathan trusted that God could do anything He wanted!

6. *How does this encourage you in the trials you face?*

7. *Has God ever called you to step out in faith, "against the odds"? What happened?*

Saul and his men heard the noise and took roll to see who was missing in the camp. Saul commanded that the Ark of God be brought to him so he could ask the Lord what to do. As he talked to the priest, the noise of the battle increased, and Saul got nervous. He told the priest to "withdraw his hand," referring to the use of the Urim and the Thummim, which were withdrawn from the ephod to determine God's will. He didn't seem to want to wait for the answer, acting immediately by jumping into battle.

8. *What did Saul decide to do, and who joined him?*

Israel was able to push the battle all the way to Beth Aven, a place in the mountains, east of Bethel.

9. *Read I Samuel 14:24-35. What foolish oath did Saul place his people under? Why did he do this, according to verse 24? Were his motives good?*
10. *By placing them under this ridiculous oath, what did he force the people to do?*
11. *What did Jesus say about taking oaths? Read Matthew 5:33-37, along with Proverbs 20:25.*

Oaths, or solemn promises, were often made to confirm covenants (Genesis 26:28), ensure protection (Genesis 31:44-53), guarantee duties (Genesis 24:3,4), and fulfill promises (Nehemiah 5:12,13). They were obligatory (Numbers 30:2-16) and maintained even in deception (Joshua 9:20). God didn't ask His people to make vows or oaths, but if they did, they were expected to keep them.

12. *Have you ever gotten yourself into trouble by making a promise or an impulsive statement that you hadn't thought through? What should we do when we realize we've done this?*

13. *What can you say about Saul's leadership skills so far?*

Saul made his first mistake in chapter 13 when he offered a sacrifice, which was the function of the priests. Here in chapter 14, Saul makes his next mistake, giving a senseless order for his men to abstain from food, causing them to sin. Guess what? He still has more mistakes to come. Let's learn from his mistakes and depend on the Lord for His wisdom, putting our own opinions aside.

Fourth Day

Practice your memory verse.

1. *Read I Samuel 14:24-52. Who unknowingly went against Saul's command?*

Honey was a very desirable food in the east. It was eaten directly from the honeycomb, or prepared various ways. Wild honey was frequently found in rocks (Deuteronomy 32:13) and in trees (I Samuel 14:25).

2. *When Jonathan found out about the oath, did he agree with it?*

The people were so hungry that they began eating meat with blood in it, which was strictly against God's law (Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 7:26,27). Israel believed that blood was sacred. Because life was in the blood, and all life belonged to God, it couldn't be eaten or just poured on the ground. It had to be drained from the animal and poured out as a sacrifice at the foot of the altar.

3. *How did Saul try to rectify the problem he created by making this oath?*

4. *Saul thought a sacrificial vow would ensure him victory when his heart wasn't right before the Lord. What does he later learn about this in I Samuel 15:22?*

5. *Read I Samuel 14:36-52. Whose idea was it to seek counsel from God?*

6. *When Saul did seek counsel, did God answer him? Why or why not? What does Psalm 66:18 say about this?*

Saul seemed to think there was sin in the camp, and they cast lots and found out that the guilty party was Jonathan.

7. *Saul wanted to keep the oath and have Jonathan, his own son, killed. What did the people do? (What should Saul have done?)*
8. *Was Jonathan willing to suffer the consequence of his act? Contrast how Jonathan responded to an accusation with how Saul did.*
9. *Why do you think Saul was actually going to go through with it?*

The people pleaded for Jonathan's life, so he was released. The rest of the chapter summarizes Saul's victories over various enemies of Israel.

10. *What was the name of Saul's wife? Daughters? Who was the commander of his army?*
11. *Why do you think God allowed Israel to continue to have victory?*
12. *What character traits in Jonathan would you like to see in your own life?*

Jonathan is a godly man who later becomes best friends with David. (I can't wait to get to that chapter!) Anyway, may we trust God like Jonathan did, believing Romans 8:31, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Fifth Day

Write your verse from memory.

1. *Read I Samuel chapter 15:1-9. What did God want Saul to do? Why? Read Deuteronomy 25:17-19.*
2. *Why do you think God wanted them to be wiped out completely, including women and children? Was God just being “mean”?*
3. *Did Saul obey the Lord completely? What did he do?*
4. *Read I Samuel 15:10-23. What did God tell Samuel? How did he respond? Why?*
5. *Why did Saul set up a monument?*
6. *When Samuel confronted Saul with his sin, how did he respond this time? (Or, should I say, who did he blame this time?)*
7. *What great truth does Samuel share with Saul in verses 22 & 23?*

God desires complete obedience, not partial. He wants us to heed His voice, not rebel against His Word and remain stubborn, seeking our own way.

8. *How was Saul rebellious and stubborn?*

9. *What do these verses say about obedience?*

a. *Psalm 51:16-17*

b. *Proverbs 21:3*

c. *Mark 12:29-31*

Religious ceremonies are meaningless if our hearts aren't right. It is not the ritual or the ceremony that is pleasing to God, it's the attitude of our heart and our devotion to Him. Simply "being religious" never has, or never will, please the Lord.

10. *Is there anything in your life that you do to "please God" that has become simply a ritual? How can you change that?*

11. *Should you obey God's Word, even if your heart isn't right? Explain.*

12. *Explain how "partial obedience" is actually "disobedience."*

13. *Examine your own heart. Is there any way that you have been disobedient to the Lord by partially obeying Him?*

See you next week as we continue learning why "obedience is better than sacrifice!"